



BULB LOG 11.....15<sup>th</sup> November  
2023



The weather is the main thing I could write about this month because it has such an overriding influence on the garden, nature and everything we do. You only have to look at the disruption and destruction caused by a series of recent storms that hit so many of us including here in North East Scotland.



Even before the main storm, named Babet, arrived it seemed like there were not any flowers in the garden which is not unusual as we head into winter. However walking round I collected a range of, mostly small, flowers which I used to stage this month's cover image. Scattered across the garden these small flowers are easy to miss but when gathered together deliver quite a colourful statement.

A later flowering group of **Crocus banaticus** survived the storm.



I cut this late flowering **Clematis aff. roylei** back hard every spring and it grows back vigorously with flowers appearing in the summer but peaking during autumn.



The storm was trapped above us for days by opposing high and low pressure fronts leaving us with prolonged heavy rain and gale force winds. To show how we are affected by the power of nature Aberdeen was all but cut off by road and rail for a number of days until the floods and debris was cleared. I found further evidence of the power of these easterly winds coming off the sea in the local wood I walk in most days where mature trees were blown down or torn apart.

The trees that were still in leaf were especially vulnerable. Their leaves acting like a sail providing additional resistance for the wind to push about as it swirled and twisted until massive trunks simply snapped. A few trees were also uprooted.





It is nature's way that the fallen wood is not wasted but it is recycled like the annual leaf fall into the soil. The recycling process involves a range of organisms including fungi, the fruits of which, mushrooms, we see at this time of year. We are all very aware of the wide range of plants we grow in our gardens but we need to realise that there can and should be as much biodiversity in a healthy garden hidden in the soil beneath our feet.



There is possibly more life in the form of flora, fauna, funga and a host of micro organisms below the ground than there are above. The mycelium that produces the mushrooms will grow into feed on and break down the fallen wood. The mycelium also spreads through the ground where it forms an association with the trees and plants releasing nutrients as it breaks down autumn's debris. These nutrients fuel the annual growth of the plants which in turn will collapse and be recycled once again in nature's circular system, a version of which we adopt in our garden.



Every storm eventually passed and although a number of trees suffered some degree of damage the wood is still mainly intact with its biggest threat being the developers.



Despite being thrashed around in an alarming manner the garden escaped unscathed but the winds ripped the leaves from the trees, especially on their exposed east side, robbing us of their glorious autumn colours. Increasing the biodiversity within the garden is an ongoing process and the range of plant forms we have from bulbs, ferns, shrubs up to the

trees all enrich the habitats. This week I enjoyed watching a flock of Goldfinches feeding on the *Betula utilis* var *jacquemonti*, the Himalayan birch, while others scooped the sunflower hearts from the feeders.



Some leaves managed to hold on during the first storm but after a few calm days another storm front came in.



The skies between the storms.



And so the mushrooms I see on my walks are an essential part of the biodiversity but these next ones are all in the garden where they serve the same purpose of breaking down old redundant growth which in turn nourishes and keeps the soil healthy.



If you feed the soil the soil will feed the plants. Allowing the natural process of recycling is an essential part of that process in our garden.







While I enjoy and welcome the mushrooms I don't know enough to identify them or whether they are edible.





In the wood I was attracted to these Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) leaves when the low winter light shone a spotlight on their structure and form.



I was reminded of those leaves again when I returned home and saw the fallen Rodgersia leaves in the front garden.

A later flowering group of **Crocus pulchellus** flowers push up through the fallen leaves and *Celmisia walkeri* but we are unlikely to get warm enough conditions for the flowers to open this year.



The biodiversity and landscaping in our garden offers a much wider range of habitats than the neighbouring gardens. From the herbaceous subjects in the foreground to the drystone walls which provide shelter and a food source to a host of fauna as well as plants as do the small and medium sized shrubs all the way up to the trees .



The storms have robbed us of the mass colourful autumn spectacle in the garden leaving just a hint of what we usually see in the few coloured leaves that were sheltered from the ripping effect of the winds.



Hamamelis



Acer



The pond area provides a further range of diversity of plants and habitats.



Here is an interesting and colourful association between the old and the new. The collapsing yellow and decaying *Roscoea* leaves lying across the recently emerged leaves of *Cyclamen hederifolium*.



The frosts have caused *Roscoea* 'Harvington Imperial' and 'Red Gurkha' to shut down for the year but I appreciate the dramatic colourful effect they leave me with as they go underground until next July/August.



Disporum (Prosartes) leaves fascinate me every year - first they turn yellow then most of the leaf gradually decays, or gets eaten, leaving just the skeleton of the ribs and veins. This process is just starting in this picture with a more developed version of the skeletal remains of the leaves shown below.





Bonsai play their role and the wee birds, Wrens and Tits, can often be seen foraging among them.



The evergreen subjects stand out among the mass of fallen annual growth. Some of these old stems and leaves will be moved to the compost heaps to be returned to nourish and enrich the soil once they have broken down others will be left where they fell provided they cause no harm to the plants that are still in active leaf or growth. We are familiar with the many plants we grow in our gardens but we must also be aware of the diversity of life that lives in the soil breaking down the leaf fall and remains of herbaceous material into nutrients and humus as it feeds.





I leave you this month with a recent painting I made as an expression of a wild grass land.....