



SRGC

Bulb Log Diary

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Pictures and text © Ian Young

BULB LOG 05.....15th May 2024



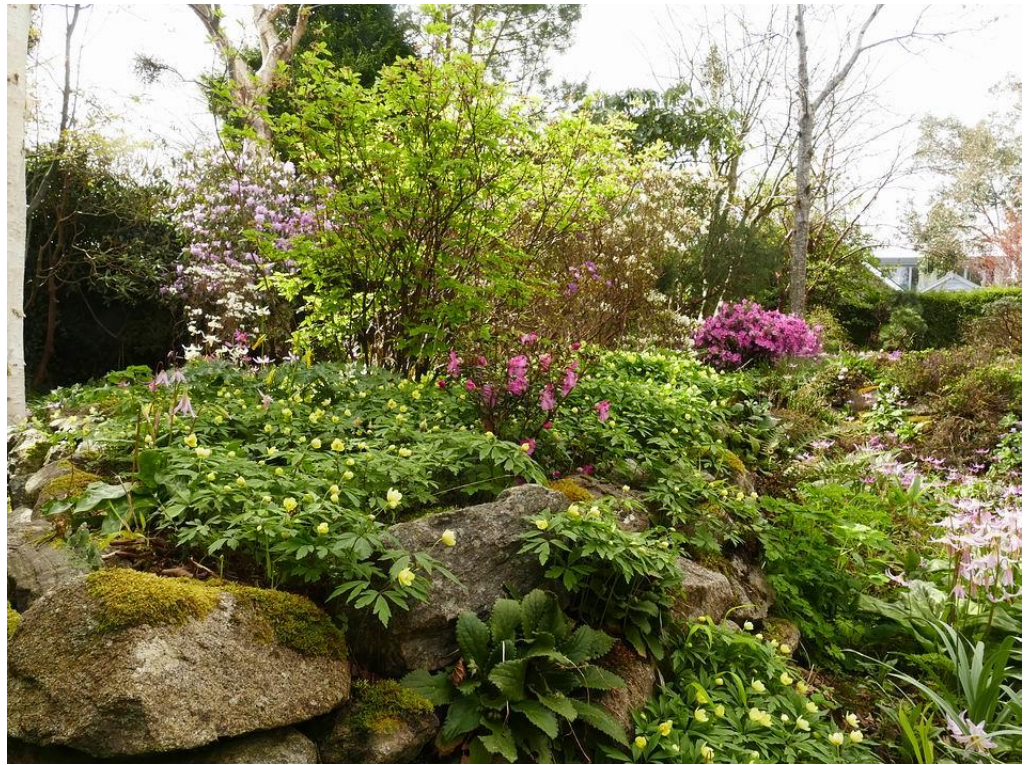
Producing the pictures for the Bulb Log at this time of year is easy - there is so much to see that my biggest decision is what to leave out. I have to think a lot more about what I can write.

There is not a lot of point in just adding descriptions of what you are looking at - that is what the pictures are for - so I asked myself

Why do I garden?

Look at these pictures – this is why I garden. We have been seeking to achieve these vistas for years, learning lessons as we go, the most important being to work with nature. We do this by allowing plants to seed around and accepting that plants do not recognise boundaries. Our progression is epitomised in this

picture by **Anemone x lipsiensis** which started as a small plant at one corner of this raised bed and through the years it has migrated all over the top, grown through the gaps in the rock wall and spread around the base as well. This spread is not by seed, because I do not think this hybrid sets any seed, but by the small rhizome-like roots that always like to be seeking new ground.



Anemone x lipsiensis is a hybrid between the white *Anemone nemorosa* and the deep yellow *Anemone ranunculoides*. The carpet of low growth does not inhibit the many other plants, including the many bulbous species, that grow up through it and when the *Erythronium* and other plants rise up and flower over the *Anemone* in full flower it is a glorious spectacle. This planting or similar combination is repeated all around the garden.

We grow a number of selected forms of **Anemone nemorosa** but last year I found some interesting natural clones growing in a wild population in a local wood and got permission to take a small cutting of one with a pink flush shown on the left the one on the right was more typical of the overall population, I also collected some seed when it was ripe which germinated well. I will seek out a suitable space to release them into the garden later this year.



When painting an artist will often create multiple layers on the same surface as they build up the composition. Sometimes traces of the underlying images can still be seen, called pentimenti, but even when these underdrawings are not visible in the finished painting they still have influenced the final work. This is similar to what happens as we create plantings in the garden where even if they do not grow at the same time the presence of other plants has an influence on its neighbours even when they are part of the different seasonal sequences.



A lifelong interest in plants is another reason why I garden. Since boyhood I have been fascinated by the plants I saw in nature wanting to understand everything about them which has led to my addiction. It is peak Erythronium flowering season and their flowers have taken over from the Corydalis to provide the dominant colour. I have previously written extensively on these fabulous plants in all their detail which you can read about in my free [e-book "Erythroniums in Cultivation"](#). While

gardens are made up of many individual plants it is when they combine and interact that a garden takes on a life of its own. The Corydalis in the foreground are almost over when the Erythronium come to their peak.



Erythronium have evolved in a cool moist climate not dissimilar to our own, making them perfectly adapted to our inclement weather. Opening and closing their flowers in our sunshine and showers to protect the reproductive parts. These pink ones are all forms or hybrids of *Erythronium revolutum* and like all, their flowers are attractive when they are hanging closed (below) as they shield from the rain as well as fully open (above) to attract pollinators.



Whether open or closed Erythronium flowers have an elegance and beauty.



Most of the cream and white ones are forms and hybrids involving *Erythronium californicum* and oregonum.





Erythronium 'Ardivie Bliss' is a hybrid from *Erythronium hendersonii* which gives it the purple colours in the anthers and central zone of the flower.



Erythronium 'Joanna'



The condition causing the flowers to open and close varies from species to species and involves temperature and light. Some such as those of the ***Erythronium sibiricum*** complex need a few more degrees to open.

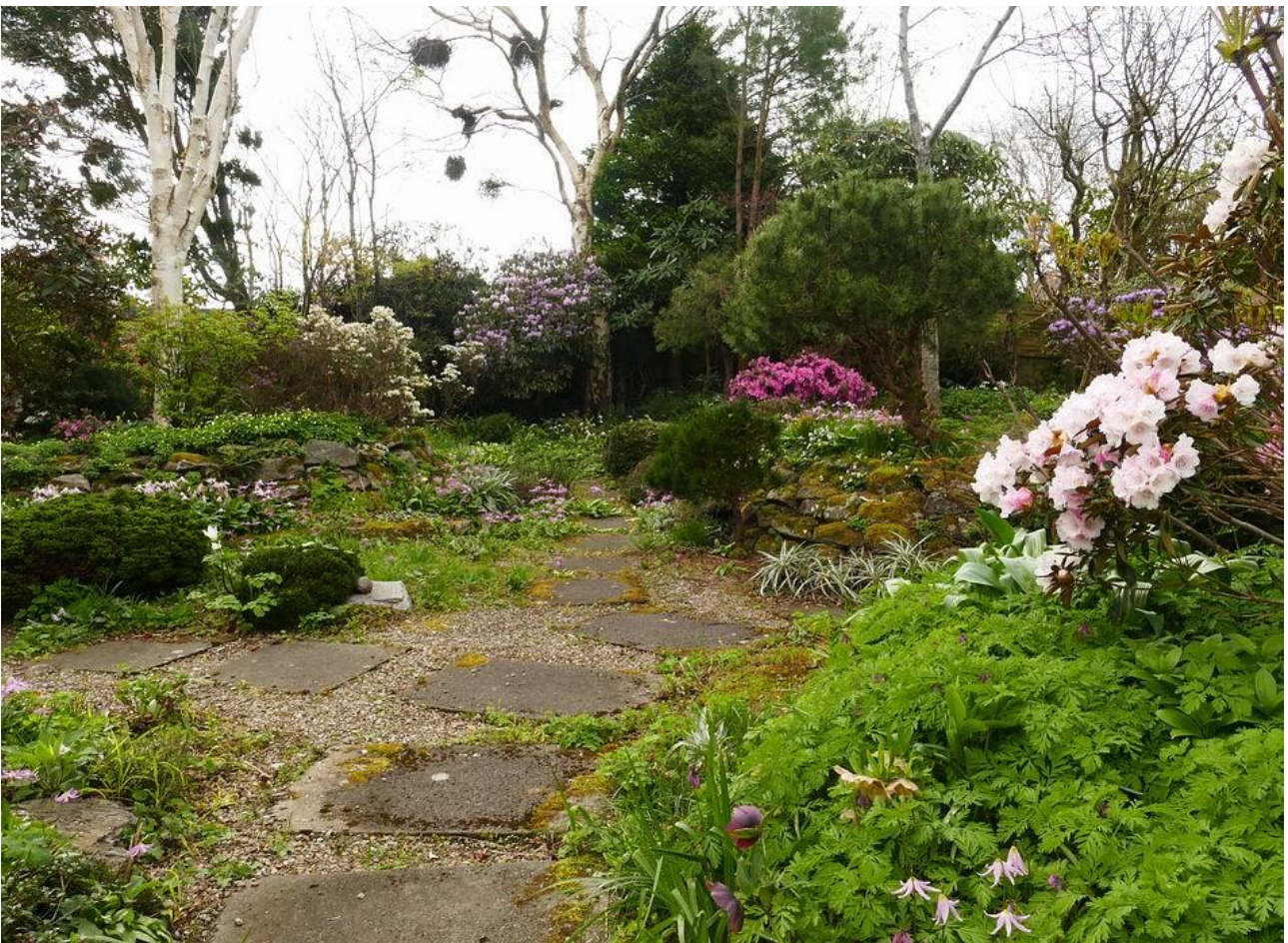




Erythronium americanum is the most reluctant to open its flowers only putting on a display for us when it is in warmish sunshine.



While I have focused in on some individual plants you will notice that they are not growing in isolation but in densely planted communities which, with the exception of the path of paving slabs, cover the ground all across our garden. As I mentioned above, plants do not adhere to boundaries - they will even try and grow over the concrete slabs - especially when moss starts to grow around the edges. I often find seed, including Erythronium, germinating and growing in the thin layer of moss on the slabs as they push the boundaries in an attempt to take over the paths completely.



As I move up the path the largest gravel area opens up to me. Originally we tried to keep the gravel clear of growth but soon realised that the gravel was by far the most successful seed bed we had in the garden. I do spend time removing inappropriate seedlings but through the years I have realised that the best way to stop 'weeds' (a term I really do not like) from growing is to have so many plants that there is no room for them. I am also more willing to accept a wider range of plants that many of you would consider to be weeds to grow. Where the seedling plant only offends my learned understanding of what is acceptable I change my mind set then I ask myself does this plant grow in harmony with its neighbours and if it does I will let it add to the gardens bio diversity.

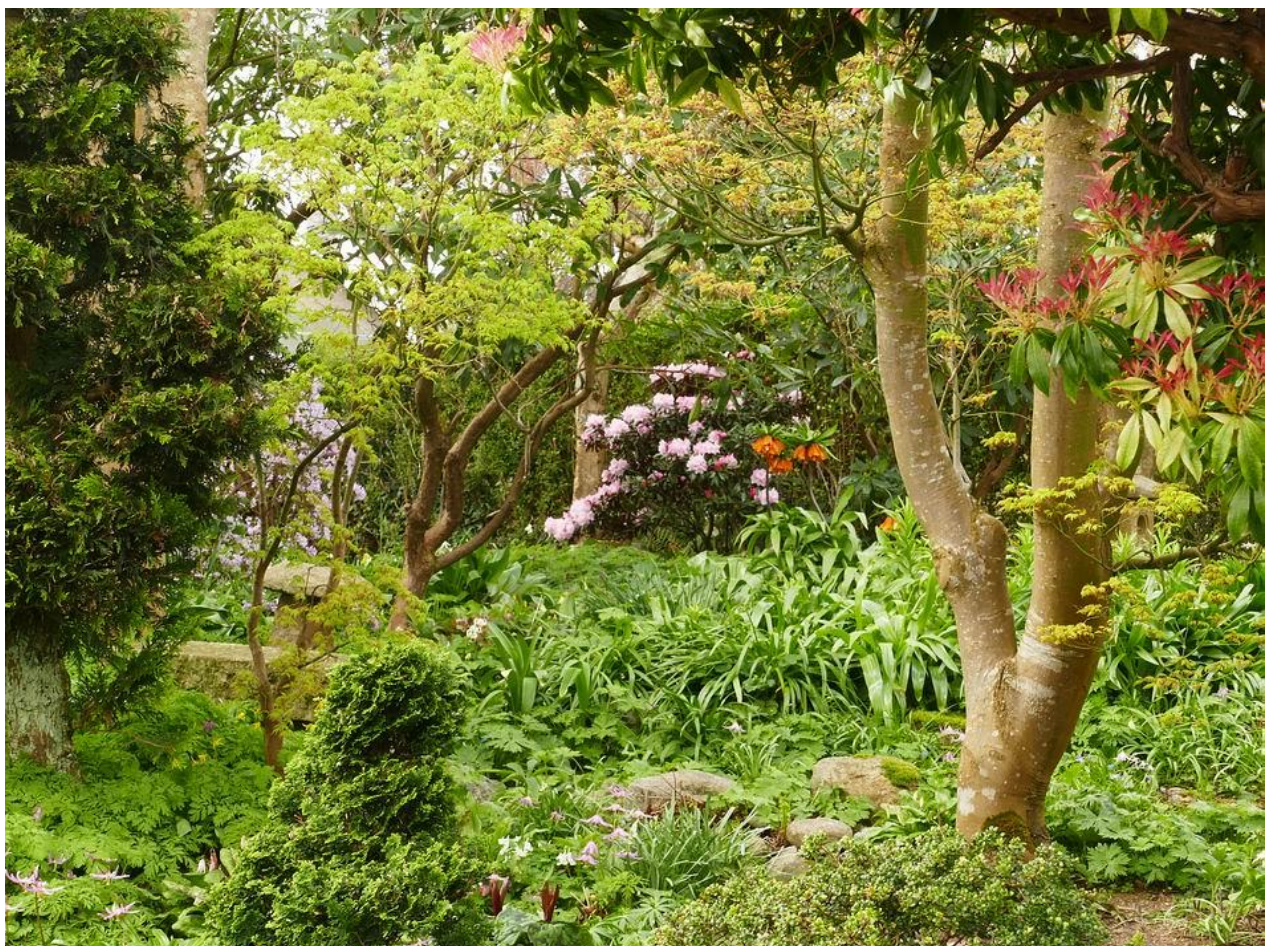


The plantings do not happen at one time but are formed over many years each layer influencing the next. Some plants may die out while others spread out or move and then we will also add others. Digging to add new plants can cause damage in the densely planted ground so we prefer to add either by scattering seeds directly or by sowing them in pots and planting them out as small seedlings with minimum disturbance of the ground.



The dense plant communities provide us with an ever changing sequence of growth here we have Erythroniums from North America seeding around with **Jeffersonia dubia** from Asia are the current highlight.

Wider views show the importance of the trees and shrubs not only for the visual appearance they bring but also the various habitats they create around them.





Along with the aspect of the south facing garden the shade from the trees shrubs give us a range of conditions so flowering times for the same plants varies. Some can flower up to three weeks later in the cooler south end of the garden shaded by the trees and boundary wall. The views across our garden extend across the property boundaries borrowing from trees and shrubs of our neighbours, as they can enjoy views towards those in our garden.



Once we have initiated the plantings with plants such as the Anemone, Erythronium and Trillium we let the plants that take over. The plants take control as they move, spread and increase by clumping and seeding.



At this point in time it is the elegance of the white *Erythronium* flowers dancing in the light that attracts our attention in this busy scene, soon they will be over and another eye pleasing sequence of taller growing plants will rise up through the fading spring carpet maintaining the attraction and interest in this area.



An expanding colony of *Erythronium elegans* is among a number of plants that are seeding around in this area of the gravel path.



The garden has a wide range of habitats, some involving hard landscaping with rocks and slabs.







The yellow **Erythronium grandiflorum** with plain green leaves stands out among its relatives contributing its unique character to the garden.



While my artistic creativity is driven by the overall effect of the plantings in the garden I still have that scientific curiosity that has driven my interest in nature since boyhood studying the details and growth of individual plants that provide the colour palette. Just as I am fascinated by and research the pigments and colours I use in my paintings I do the same with plants. I appreciate and work on the whole effect as well as studying the detail.

You could easily walk past this very small yellow **Erythronium sp. aff. grandiflorum** hiding among the other plants but I knew where to look for it. I wrote about it in my Erythroniums in Cultivation e-book where I suggested it could be a new species. It comes from a remote mountain on Vancouver Island and we understand how isolated populations especially on islands can drive evolution.



Trillium hibbersonii is another diminutive plant endemic to Vancouver Island.



These three pictures show **Trillium hibbersonii** growing and increasing both clonally and by seed in a number of habitats in our garden where it associates best with plants of a similar small size.



Here the other small trillium is (*Pseudo*)*Trillium rivale* is growing in a habitat I have been working on for several years which mimics a site in Southern Oregon that so attracted me when I visited it.



Trillium albidum



Among the many trilliums we have across the garden there are several related to **Trillium kurabayashii** that increase clonally as they clump up as well as setting seeds.



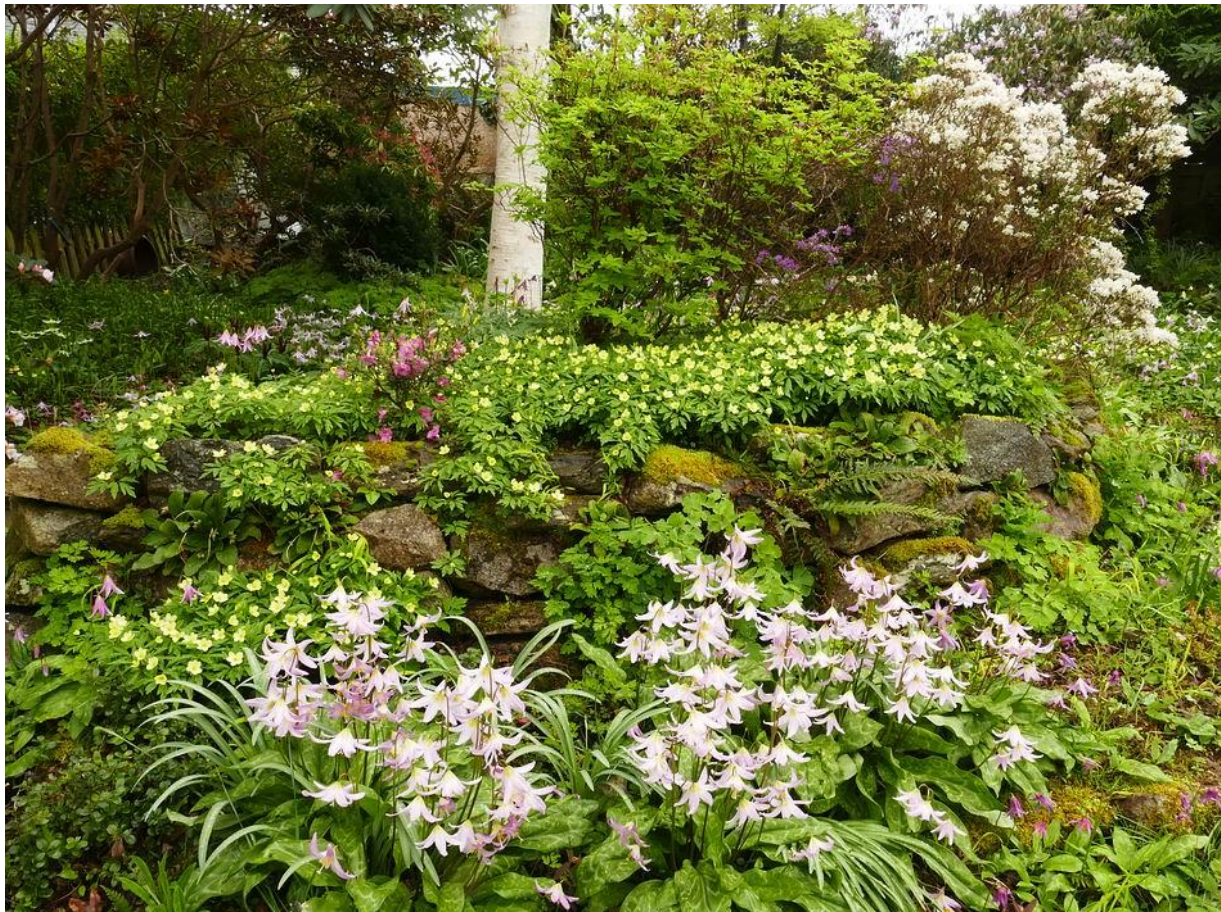
Most Trillium are a good fit with our garden style and its cool moist climate.



The white **Trillium grandiflorum** is also a good grower for us..



For all my life plants and art have been my two main interests and gardening brings them together in so many ways. A painting is built up in layers each applied at a separate time so the viewer can look into the history of the marks but then it is finished. A garden is also built up in layers that come and go in an ever changing vision through the seasons and years.

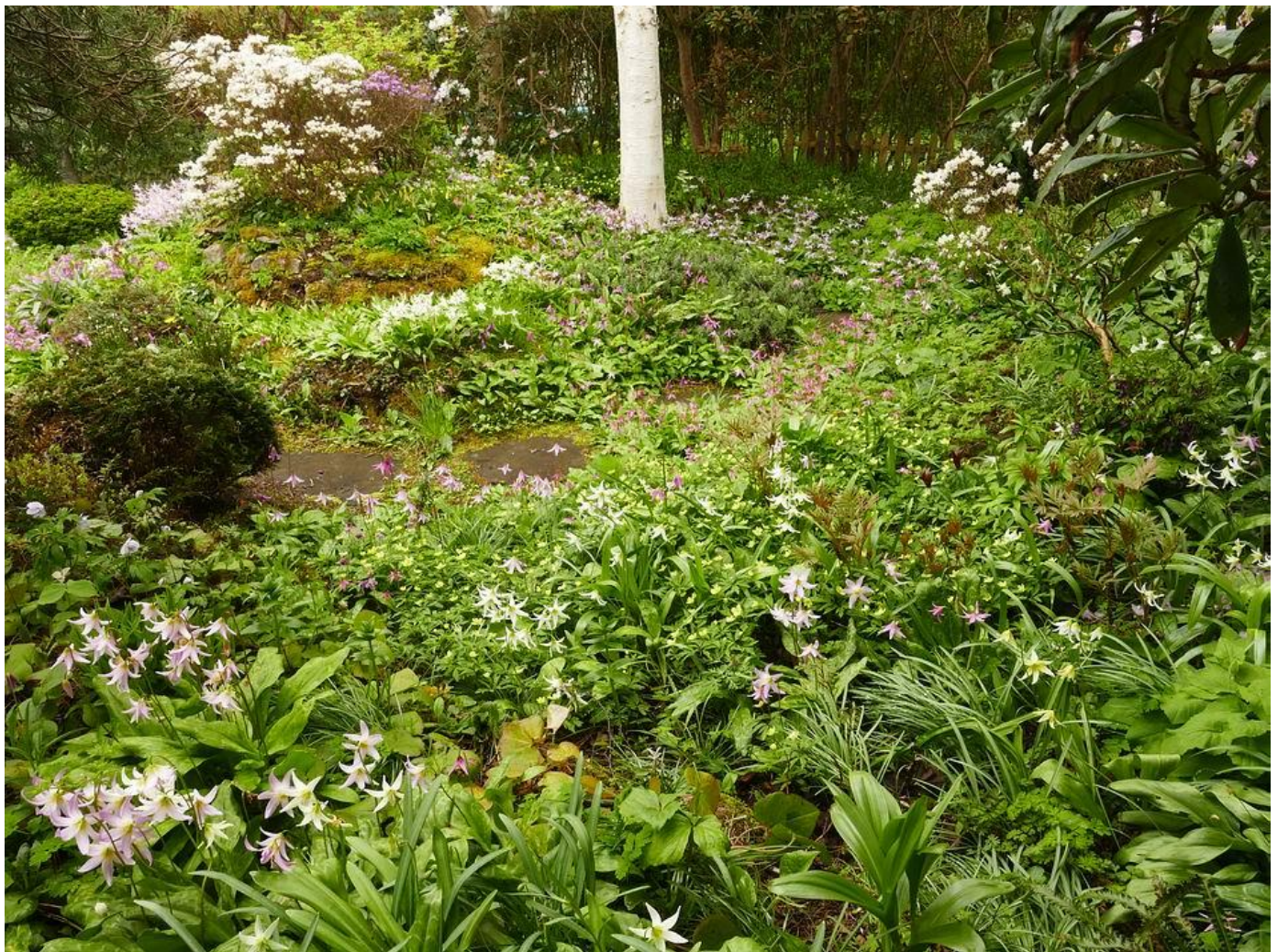


In a painting charcoal provides the graphic structure with the pigments adding the colour while in the garden it is the trees and shrubs that bring the structure with the plants adding the colour. You can only stand in front of a picture and look into it but in this next sequence of images I walk into the creation that is our garden, becoming part of it.



While we are very familiar with our garden but every time we walk round it is like an exploration as new seedlings appear. The mass plantings can also create a feeling that we are walking in nature.





These are self-seeded ***Erythronium revolutum*** hybrids growing through a carpet of foliage.



For aesthetics even the plunge beds where the Erythronium are growing in mesh baskets has to look natural and blend into the garden.



This is why I garden. Why do you garden? Click on this link where you can join me on a walk round the garden in the latest [Bulb Log Video Diary](#).....