



BULB LOG.....16-10-2003



Crocus sativus x2

It is peak time for the Autumn flowering crocus, the bulb house is full of their beautiful scent. None are more scented than *Crocus sativus*, the saffron crocus, whose long stigma give us that wonderful spice that colours and flavours rice so well. It is a pity that it is so miffy in cultivation for us, it always breaks down into masses of small corms that never get back to flowering size. I have no idea how the producers that grow them by the million do it.

Crocus sativus corm
and stigmas

I just bought these at the Discussion Weekend last week. They were grown in China and the corm is 3cms across - they were a bargain as not only do we get these fabulous flowers but I reckon I will get my moneys worth in the saffron that I am collecting from them.





Crocus cambessedesii

I first illustrated *Crocus cambessedesii* a few weeks ago but I just had to show it again as the potful gets better by the day. It comes from Majorca and Minorca but is perfectly hardy for us under cold glass. I am sure that it would grow in a well drained spot outside but because of its small size it is better appreciated in the bulb house.



Remove dead flowers

It is important to remove the faded flowers as they go over because, when the weather turns cold and damp, the dead remains will absorb moisture and start to rot - this rot can transfer down to the bulbs. Remove them with a sharp upwards tug, you can place your fingers on the gravel to prevent the bulbs being pulled up.



Narcissus leaves 13.10

Many of the bulbocodium narcissus have well developed leaves now so you must pay careful attention to make sure they do not dry out. In bright weather, like we have at the moment, I water approximately every ten days.



Crocus speciosus 'Oxonian'

In a trough is *Crocus speciosus* 'Oxonian' this is an excellent named clone with a yellow throat so it must be a selection from the sub species *xantholaimos* that I showed in a previous log but it is much larger than the ones we have raised from wild collected seed.



Crocus pulchellus & *kotschyanus*

Remember I said that I get confused with some of the autumn crocus? Here are two *Crocus pulchellus* (left) and *C. kotschyanus* (right). Both are similar both have white stamens but none of the books list them as being similar. *Pulchellus* is often associated with *speciosus*, and botanically it is, but I think that it looks more like *kotschyanus* to the gardener: not much wonder I get confused!



Crocus pulchellus seedlings

Just to confuse things further this is a group of *Crocus pulchellus* seedlings that we raised. They are bigger than the ones in the previous picture and have different markings, I am wondering if they have hybridised with *C. speciosus* or is this just variation within the species. The truth about growing so many plants in a small area is you are bound to get hybrids in the seedlings.



Fritillaria pluriflora seed

Talking about seed it is time to clean and sow any bulb seed that you collected. We are in the 'time window' for sowing that will give best germination results for most winter growing bulbs like :- *Crocus*, *Erythronium*, *Fritillaria*, *Narcissus*, etc. As you can see from the picture I do not fall into the 'sow seed thinly' school - bulbs like company and we have a limited amount of space so I am in the 'cram them in' school, and they do fine.

Remember to sow your *Narcissus* and *Crocus* deeply for best results, it has only just struck me that I have never tried sowing *Erythroniums* at depth so I am doing some trials now to see if they prefer this and will report the results next year.



Cyclamen coum seedlings

One thing that did strike me a few years ago while reading a very interesting article on the germination of cyclamen seed, was that placing them in the dark improved germination. I added two and two and thought that that equates exactly to being buried at depth, so I have been trialing this and have found a much better and quicker germination when I sow cyclamen seed halfway down the pot, the pots are left in an open frame and these are this year's Cyclamen coum sown when the seed was ripe in June.



Crocus banaticus, Romania

I will leave you this week with a montage of views of a lovely pot of Crocus banaticus raised from seed that was collected in Romania. It displays the variation that you can get even in six corms - that is why I find growing bulbs from seed so exciting.