



BULB LOG.....06-12-2004



Crocus boryi

A late form of *Crocus boryi*, with some nice purple feathering, keeps the crocus season going through December, unfortunately it has been pretty cold and the flower has not managed to open up.



Spent crocus flower

I have to be vigilant and remove the spent flowers from the crocus as they can very quickly become infected with mould in the cold damp conditions. The secret is to leave them on the plant long enough for the pollen to grow down the tube and fertilise the seeds before you pluck them off. Once they collapse like the one above it is safe to remove them.



Erythronium rostratum seed

I was very pleased to receive, from a friend, some wild collected seed of *Erythronium rostratum*. This is one of the group that I call the 'eastern yellows' and includes *E. americanum* – I am deeply confused by the naming of these. I have only studied them in cultivation, where I suspect we may have hybridisation, so the more wild sourced material that I can get will help me understand the small differences between

the species. The reason for the picture is to show the advantage of soaking the seed overnight in water, to which I add a smear of soap to break the surface tension. The tiniest amount of soap is required and I just rub my finger on the top of the washing up liquid spout and then dip my finger into the water – that is all it takes. You can clearly see how they have plumped up, with the dry seed on the left and the same seed after soaking overnight on the right.



Bulb house

While on the subject of water, I am continually checking our bulbs to see if they require watering. When I water at this time of year I always choose a relatively mild dry day and preferably when there is no forecast of hard frosts. How do I know if they need water? It is a combination of checking to see if the gravel top dressing looks dry, how moist is the sand plunge and do the leaves look at all dehydrated and floppy. Because our weather has been cold it has been four weeks since I last did any watering and today I only had to water about ten pots; if the weather had been mild and sunny I would have had to do much more watering.



Narcissus in bulb house

You can see from the water on the glass roof how cool and damp the conditions are, and the sand in the plunge is still very moist so even though these *Narcissus romieuxii mesatlanticus* are in full flower they still have all the

moisture they need. Another sign that indicates they may require water is if the flower stems start to flop over but this can also be as a result of them etiolating in the low light levels, so weigh up all the factors.



Narcissus albidus albidus SF110

I have several pots of narcissus that I have grown up from bulbils given to me over the years that are now flowering well, like this pot of Narcissus albidus albidus SF110. What I now have to do is to carefully read up the books and look closely at the plants to try and confirm that the names are correct. This is not a chore but a lot of fun and it is the best way to learn about the plants that you are growing – it forces you into looking at them in detail.



Narcissus albidus background

This is the same plant as above but this time I used a background board to isolate the flowers from any confusing or cluttered background - it is a method that I use all the time when photographing plants. On big advantage that I have discovered since I switched to digital photography is that because the background is a uniform colour the file size of the picture, when stored as a JPEG, is significantly smaller - 27.4kb as compared to the picture above, without the back board, which is 41.1kb. (The original pictures are much bigger, these are reduced for the website but the differential is the same.)



Narcissus x2

Here is another comparison to show how using the back board completely changes the picture, isolating the plant from its surroundings, both pictures serve a different purpose.



Narcissus viridiflorus
The back board is particularly useful when photographing flowers like Narcissus viridiflorus which would disappear into a confused background. Our flowers are only just opening some 4 weeks after Anthony Darby showed us his in the 'flowering now' threads of the web site forum. It is a strange Narcissus in that when it flowers it does not produce a leaf, the flower stem doubles up as a leaf, so if you have bulbs with leaves on they will almost certainly not flower. It also has the most amazing scent that smells like a warm wet horse!



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'
The first flowers are also starting to open on Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'; the pots should be in full flower by the end of December. This is a delightful dwarf member of the trumpet daffodils; it is for all accounts like a giant form of *N. asturiensis*.



Narcissus seedling

Above is a portrait of one of our Plunge Seedlings that we have selected as being worth bulking up. It is very close to Henry Taylor's cross N. 'Camoro' and it may well be a seedling from this fertile hybrid between *N. cantabricus monophylus* and *N. romieuxii* – it differs in flowering slightly earlier and the flower shape is slightly different in that it has a wider flare and throat which can be seen in the next picture.



Finally, as this is log 50 in the second year of what was to be a one year project I want to know if you want the bulb log to continue? Or are you all fed up of me droning on every week?

If you would like me to continue for another year then please let us know in one of the following ways.

Make a post to the bulb log feedback in the forum pages or send an email-
Please let us have your opinion.