

## 22nd August 2005

Well, in spite of the fact that we still have had no rain, the garden is starting to come back to life. The Crocus lawn has been a resounding success with the purple striped globes flowering larger and brighter than I had anticipated. I am taking every opportunity to drag as many visitors as I can to see the display.

The first Rhododendrons of the season have started to flower. These are the huge, crimson flowering, old cultivars that are more trees than shrubs, some reaching approximately 8 metres tall and absolutely covered in bud. The first of the buds on the Camellia japonicas are beginning to open - it seems the camellias here are all mid to late season flowering cultivars, whereas my neighbour has had Camellia japonicas flowering for over a month. The little Edgeworthia papyrifera is covered in creamy yellow pompom flowers and the woodland primrose clumps under the Himalayan Cedar have brought what tends, at this time of the year, to be a rather dark and desolate part of the garden to life.

I relented in February when ordering my bulbs and ordered Tulips – I had resisted until then, thinking their cultivation was a very Leura thing. That is, a lot of work for a relatively short period of pleasure, at a time when so many other plants would be looking their best. My reasoning and self justification was that if I could match the colours of the plants I had planted in the summer border; pale pink, scarlet, purple, pale blue, and lime green, I could fill the holes that would be completely covered later in the season and, therefore, extend the life of the display. The Tulips I chose were 'Scarlet' & 'Party Pink' 'Monet' strains, purple 'Queen of the Night' and the incomparable 'Angelique'. At the moment their glaucous leaves are rising above a sea of forget-me-nots, bringing in the pale blue component, whilst the Cardoons and Lamb's ears should make perfect foils for Tulips 'Queen of the Night' and the pretty 'Angelique'

The other piece of exciting news is the Iris ensata have just started to shoot and, after removing a substantial amount of duck weed from the large pond (used to mulch the species Rhododendrons), I have found the water lilies have also begun to come back to life.

And yes, I do think all the trials are worth it!