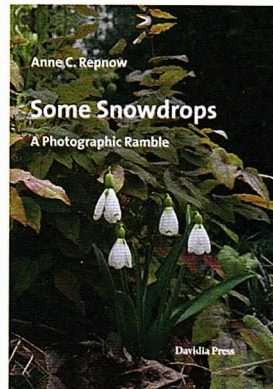


**HEALING WITH PLANTS:
THE CHELSEA PHYSIC
GARDEN HERBAL**
by Holly Farrell

Aster, £25
ISBN 978-1783253043



**SOME SNOWDROPS: A
PHOTOGRAPHIC RAMBLE**
by Anne C Repnow

Davidia Press, £25
ISBN 978-3982244600

An educational and inspiring guide to the medicinal properties of some of the more common garden and hedgerow plants.

Reviewer Rosanna Morris is a freelance writer.

Well-informed, elegantly sufficient and charming, this book showcases snowdrops in the garden and is ideal for anyone who is building a collection.

Reviewer Naomi Slade is a gardening writer, author and designer.

If there were a modern-day herbal to have in your library, it would be this one by gardening author Holly Farrell in collaboration with the Chelsea Physic Garden in London, where medicinal plants have been grown since the 17th century. Indeed, one of the most notable herbals in history – Elizabeth Blackwell's *A Curious Herbal* – was produced in the early 18th century with support of Chelsea Physic Garden. Blackwell illustrated the book using specimens growing there.

While modern medicine has overtaken herbalism today, many still look to the plant world as their medicine cabinet and around 40 per cent of drugs are still plant-based. Farrell's book is ultimately a traditional herbal, listing profiles on 130 plants with notes on identification and uses. But it is also an inspiring and interesting read, as she tells the story of the origins of the physic garden and the use of plants in the history of healing, briefly touching on how herbs are used today in such traditions as Ayurveda.

Farrell also provides ideas for designing a healing herb garden using such plants as angelica, meadowsweet and camomile – all good for digestion – considering conditions and soil types for growing.

In what she says is an introduction to the subject of herbalism, Farrell gives remedies for tisanes, tinctures, syrups and more that can boost mood, calm frayed nerves and aid concentration. She covers the digestive system, aches and pains, women's health, children's health, skin and hair. Bilberry jam can boost the immune system; a honeysuckle infusion can relieve sore throats and cool hot flushes.

In each plant profile, Farrell lists botanical and common names, followed by paragraphs on cultivation, history of healing, harvesting, growing and how to use. Her words are accompanied by Ella Mclean's beautiful colour illustrations, which make it feel in tune with the herbals of old – particularly Elizabeth Blackwell's magnificent work.

Beautiful, elegant and diverse, snowdrops have a unique and addictive appeal and it is this, together with a little judiciously applied peer-pressure from the galanthophile community, that inspired Anne C Repnow to write her distinctive new book.

Intentionally echoing the classic title *Some Flowers* by Vita Sackville-West, *Some Snowdrops* oozes competence and confidence. It is a personal view and selection – Repnow makes no bones about that – but its anchors are firm, both in her background as moderator of the German Facebook group Galanthusfreunde and organiser of the German snowdrop event Schneeglöckchen in Mannheim's Luisenpark.

Following a selection of pleasingly photographed snowdrop gardens and a short background discourse, are profiles of 90 different cultivars each with three pictures of the plant in a garden setting and in different stages of bloom; a style consistent with the quiet detail for which snowdrops are esteemed. Alongside this is

a description of plant, habit, origin and foibles, with anecdotes that introduce sundry passionate, whimsical, eagle-eyed human protagonists.

Repnow's treatment of blooming time, cost and vigour is neat, using a simple sliding scale from early to late, and a number of coins or flowers to indicate proportional cost and ease of cultivation. A high-level approach that elegantly avoids getting tangled up in over-precision. The author's German base and perspective, meanwhile, allows her to include cultivars that may be new to the casual British snowdrop fancier.

This is a book that stands out for its accessibility and warmth. While beautiful, it does not aspire to be fine art or academia: it is real plants growing in real gardens, presented with lightly worn expertise. Whether dipped into to compile a wish-list, or read from cover to cover, *Some Snowdrops* is a useful and interesting addition to the literature on the subject.