

## IN BRIEF

**What** Private garden with a large collection of snowdrops.  
**Where** Near Heidelberg, Germany.  
**Soil** Fertile, well-drained loam.  
**Size** Around 700 square metres.  
**Climate** Warm summers and cold winters. South-facing.  
**Hardiness zone** USDA 8.

While Anne plants more common snowdrops in her lawn, her treasured cultivars are placed in the borders in carefully considered combinations, designed to showcase them to best effect. Here they are partnered with *Crocus tommasinianus* and *Corydalis elata* as an underplanting for *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Arnold Promise', *Rhododendron* 'Graziella' and *Pieris japonica* 'Katsura'.

# A winter awakening

German garden designer Anne Repnaw was never particularly interested in snowdrops – until she brought home her first plant

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## Anne's favourite snowdrops

**1 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Green Mile'** Considered among many collectors to be the finest virescent (green) snowdrop. Apart from a tiny white tip, the outer segments are entirely washed in luminescent green. Well proportioned, it has good presence in the garden. 16cm.

**2 *Galanthus* 'Valentine's Day'** With a silhouette not dissimilar to a shuttlecock, this is an almost perfect inverse poculiform or pterugiform (like a gladiator's skirt) snowdrop, with the outer segments resembling the inner ones. 11cm.

**3 *Galanthus x valentinei* 'Northern Lights'** A study in subtlety, it has chartreuse ovaries and outer segments delicately lined in the same tone. Position where the sun will hit it to bring out its full, luminous beauty. 12cm.

**4 *Galanthus plicatus* 'Seraph'** A pure-white, full-skirted poculiform cultivar, its large flowers giving the effect of ballerinas dancing in the beds. 19cm. ▷

**Above left** Anne Repnaw in her garden with *Galanthus* 'Daglingworth', a striking cultivar first noticed by a galanthophile in a church flower arrangement in the Cotswold village of Daglingworth some 30 years ago.

It was a freezing cold day in February 2010 when German garden designer Anne Repnaw bought the plant that was to change her life. On a visit to her brother in Aachen, she persuaded him to go along to a relatively new snowdrop festival in nearby Nettetal that had been making headlines. "It was sub-zero and blowing a blizzard, and there were all these tiny plants, some of them over €100," she says. "I couldn't really see what all the fuss was about." Nevertheless, she bought *Galanthus* 'Ailwyn', a double cultivar, for a not-insubstantial €30, and planted it in her garden in a village near Heidelberg.

"*Galanthus* 'Ailwyn' is quite an early flowerer, and it came up strongly the following January," says Anne. "Because it's

so full, it's open all the time, even in the most dismal weather." She was smitten and, on her next visit to the Nettetal event, she bought another five cultivars. Before long, she was buying snowdrops online, swapping them with friends and travelling to England on specially organised 'Galanthotours', visiting famous snowdrop gardens such as Colesbourne Gardens in Gloucestershire alongside lesser-known gems including Dr Ronald Mackenzie's Oxfordshire garden and Elworthy Cottage in Somerset.

Ten years on, she now estimates she has around 500 cultivars, running the gamut from her own garden selections to rare ones such as *G. plicatus* 'Golden Fleece', bred by Joe Sharman of Monksilver Nursery, and *G. nivalis* 'Green Mile', a selection introduced by the eponymous ▷



### Anne's favourite snowdrops continued

**5 *Galanthus x hybridus* 'Ivington Green'**  
A new and still rare cultivar, admired for its inverse poculiform shape and huge flowers, which increase even more in size as the season progresses. 21cm.

**6 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Gloria'** A long-flowering, semi-poculiform cultivar that occasionally bears a sliver of green on its elongated, beautifully notched, inner segments. 15cm.

**7 *Galanthus x valentinei* 'Cliff Curtis'**  
A vigorous and relatively inexpensive cultivar, this has snow-white rounded outer segments, which open to reveal a delicate chartreuse shading and a couple of dark green commas on the inners. 18cm. ▷



**Right** Unlike some collectors, Anne likes to grow her snowdrops 'free range' in her garden, rather than confining them to mesh pots. Here, beneath a *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight', Anne has planted *Galanthus* 'Seremony', *G. nivalis* 'Helios', *G. nivalis* 'Dangly Yellow' (in the foreground) and *G. 'The Wizard'* alongside *Cyclamen graecum* and a yellow-leaved *Helleborus orientalis*.

▷ Belgian nursery. "Some of my collector friends prefer to concentrate on only particular species or traits, such as autumn flowering or yellow markings, whereas I have them all and love them all," she says.

She notes that many exciting hybrids have originated in Britain and puts this down to British officers bringing bulbs back from the Crimean battlefields (in the case of *G. plicatus*) and to Henry John Elwes's 1874 collecting trip to Turkey (*G. elwesii*). On the Continent, where there are natural populations of *G. nivalis*, there seem to be more selections of this species.

Inspired by what she has seen on her travels, Anne likes to grow her snowdrops 'free range' in her garden, rather than confining them to mesh pots as some collectors prefer to do. Unnamed or

run-of-the-mill cultivars are planted in the lawn – a sea of white interspersed with purple, pink and blue crocuses in February – while special cultivars are planted into the borders with companion plants to create what Anne describes as "little tableaux of beauty that give me great joy". Favourite partners include hellebores, evergreen ferns, cyclamen, hepatica, ophiopogon and cultivars of *Lamium maculatum*. She likes the white star-flowers of *Lobelia pedunculata* with autumn-flowering cultivars, and finds all creeping sedums useful. The mat-forming golden stonecrop *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina' pairs well with yellow snowdrops, such as *G. 'Ronald Mackenzie'*, a fickle plant she has lost several times, thanks in part to the weather. "It's not uncommon for ▷



Special cultivars are planted into the borders to create what Anne describes as little tableaux of beauty

A cornucopia of different snowdrop cultivars grows amid *Euphorbia x martini* 'Ascot Rainbow', *Helleborus foetidus*, *Ophiopogon chingii* and *Asplenium scolopendrium*. The bed also includes the stump of an old quince tree, left to provide habitat for insects, a fine pink-flowered *Magnolia* 'Galaxy' and a young crab apple, *Malus* 'Royal Raindrops', which Anne loves for its magenta blossom and tiny ruby fruits that last well into winter.

To me they're not just something to be catalogued – it's enjoying them in the garden that makes snowdrops special



### Anne's favourite snowdrops continued

**8 *Galanthus* 'Ronald Mackenzie'** One of Anne's favourite yellow snowdrops, despite its fickle nature. The ovary perfectly matches the shading on the inner segments – a broad golden daub with two dots on either side of the sinus notch. 13cm.

**9 *Galanthus nivalis* 'Angelina'** Although on the short side, this snowdrop has large flowers. The outer segments are washed in a pale green, which contrasts attractively with the large dark green mark above the deeply cut sinus notch on the inners. 11cm.

**10 *Galanthus plicatus* 'Alpha Green Peacock'** Still rare in the UK, this is a tall, upright and easy to grow *G. plicatus* cultivar with a vivid green wash on the outer segments and interesting darker green markings within. 18cm.

**11 *Galanthus x valentinei* 'Mother Goose'** Part of the new group of colour-change snowdrops, 'Mother Goose' combines the best of both worlds – green and yellow. Depending on maturity, the inner segments are conventionally marked in green or beautifully washed in gold. 14cm.

**12 *Galanthus x valentinei* 'Midas'** Another colour-change snowdrop, the inverse poculiform *Galanthus x valentinei* 'Midas', grows best in full sun where the markings on the inner and outer segments are most likely to change from lime to gold. 12cm.

**Above left** Anne installed the beautiful garden pavilion as a present to herself on her 50th birthday. Positioned at the highest point of the garden, it also has underfloor heating meaning that, even on cold days, Anne can sit inside and admire the view of her snowdrops. It is skirted with two neatly clipped *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki' and *Nandina domestica* 'Fire Power' for colour.

▷ temperatures here to drop to -15°C after long mild spells," says Anne. "Without a blanket of snow to protect them, that can be fatal for snowdrops."

To keep her cultivars pure, Anne assiduously removes their seedpods, only allowing a select few to ripen when she hopes they may produce something interesting. "You realise there are so many subtle variations, not just in the flowers and their markings, but in the leaves, their stature and their overall presence. It's a bit like mindfulness-based therapy," she says. "Collecting snowdrops has opened up a whole new world for me."

This is true in more ways than one. In 2014, Anne founded and continues to run the annual Schneeglöckchen-Tage, or snowdrop days, festival in Mannheim's

Luisenpark (where she also designed a winter garden), which now attracts leading snowdrop nurseries and more than 2,000 visitors from all over Europe. She has also recently written a book on the plants, with photographs illustrating more than 90 species and cultivars – flowers, foliage and all. "To me they're not just collectors' items, something to be acquired and catalogued," she says. "It's enjoying them in the garden that makes snowdrops special." □

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

This year's Schneeglöckchen-Tage festival takes place in Luisenpark in Mannheim on 12-13 February. See [luisenpark.de](http://luisenpark.de) for more details. Anne's book, *Some Snowdrops: A Photographic Ramble*, is available from her website, [anne-repnow.de](http://anne-repnow.de), selected bookshops and from Avon Bulbs and Ashwood Nurseries.