

Country Notes for February 2022

The mid-point of winter is on 2nd February and with that date behind us we can begin to look forward to the arrival of spring. For several weeks now there have been catkins on some of our trees and with the arrival of February, flowers begin to appear in our gardens.

Snowdrops are usually one of the first flowers, and even during periods of snow they may be seen pushing their way through the snow crystals to brighten our lives. For many of us the snowdrops in our garden will be either *Galanthus nivalis* or *Galanthus elwesii* but there are, in fact, hundreds of snowdrops. There are even enthusiasts who collect these varieties, known as Galanthophiles!

Shortly after snowdrops come crocuses and the little irises known as *Iris reticulata*. Crocuses fall into two general groups, species crocus and hybrid crocus and in my experience the species crocus tend to appear a little earlier than the hybrids, which tend to be larger and blousier. *Iris reticulata* are, in my opinion thoroughly underrated, and I have several varieties in my garden.

For me all the above bulbs amount to the overture, and the symphony is created by daffodils, which arrive with a massive crash of the cymbals! In fact, there are some very early flowering daffodils which sometimes arrive even before the snowdrops. One such daffodil is Rijnveld's Early Sensation which one year were in flower in my garden on Christmas Day! However, the majority appear from the second half of February, and what a joy they are to see. Who can possibly not be cheered, after a long winter, by the sight of a glorious group of daffodils lifting their heads to the sun!

Many of these bulbs may also be seen in hedgerows and beside our lanes and byways, but most have been introduced by humans at some point. *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* are, however, considered to be native to this country and are considered by many to be the ones that inspired William Wordsworth in the Lake District.

Whether planted or native, in gardens or open countryside, there is no doubt that they brighten the second half of winter, gladdening the hearts of all who see them!

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