



*Galanthus 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'*

POTOMAC VALLEY  
CHAPTER  
NORTH AMERICAN ROCK  
GARDEN SOCIETY  
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Jim McKenney, Editor  
jimmckenney@jimmckenney.com  
<http://www.pvcnargs.org/>



*Narcissus jonquilla*

## CALENDAR

**Today:** get out and hear the peepers and wood frogs, cardinals, robins, titmice, chickadees, mourning doves and song sparrows; keep an eye and ear out for Vs of geese.

March 15, 2008 US Botanic Garden Conservatory  
**Roy Klehm** of Klehm's Song Sparrow Nursery speaking on dwarf peonies.  
Coffee 9:30, talk at 10 A.M.

May 24, **our spring plant exchange** at Alice Nicolson's home; details to follow.

June 28, **our summer picnic** at the home of Freddi and Dick Hammerschlag, details to follow.

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**Next deadline April 15, 2008**

**It's dues time: send your renewal check for \$15 to Margot Ellis, 2417 North Taylor Street, Arlington, VA. 22207**

### Chairman's Message

Several things come to mind as I start to write this. A couple of nights ago Alice Nicolson held a meeting of the Eastern Winter Study Weekend 2009 committee at her house, and each of the participants reported significant progress toward this event. Alice will report this in detail elsewhere in this newsletter, but I am pleased to tell you that we have selected a hotel and have signed a contract with them. Furthermore, she has been able to line up an impressive array of speakers. I'm also happy to announce that Jim

McKenney has agreed to coordinate the raising of sale plants for this event, a considerable relief to me as I was afraid I would have to take on that job.

While on the subject of growing plants for the EWSW, may I suggest that everyone give some thought to how they can help? We'll need a prodigious number of plants to pull this off – probably more than one thousand! If you can't raise or contribute plants, perhaps you can contribute potting mix, garden space, label making/printing skills: we'll need all the help we

can get. We have a lot of seeds from the NARGS 2006 and 2007 seed exchanges that are germinating now and others that have self-sown in our gardens that will be potted up this spring and summer. If you are growing plants from recent seed exchanges and will have any to spare, they will be welcome. If you have some interesting things that have seeded around, please pot them up and pass them on to Jim. Also, the NARGS Seed Exchange person, Laura Serowicz, [seedintake@twmi.rr.com](mailto:seedintake@twmi.rr.com), will be starting the Surplus Seed Round on March 9. If you requested it on your original order, they will send you the surplus seed list and you can select from it. Even if you didn't order any seeds the first time around, you could probably e-mail Laura and get her to add you to the list. If only 10 members were each to order 10 different species of seed and grow them and if 5 plants of each were to survive we would have 500 plants we could sell for \$2 apiece and bring in some useful revenue. Because of the shortness of time, I would suggest ordering species that do not require special treatment to germinate. The club will provide any pots needed. Any left-over plants could be sold at Green Spring next year.

Dick and Freddi Hammerschlag have kindly invited us to hold our picnic at their place in Highland MD this year on Saturday, June 28. This is in keeping with spreading the location of our events around the area. Thank you Dick and Freddi. There will be more about this in our next issue.

Plans are also afoot to have a bus trip in late July this summer. See the next issue of the *PVC Bulletin* for more information.  
Paul Botting

**Board of Directors Meeting  
Potomac Valley Chapter, NARGS  
February 9, 2008**

The Board of Directors meeting was called to order by the president, Paul Botting, at 11:45 a.m. on Saturday, February 9, 2008, at Brookside Gardens immediately following the lecture by Sasha Borkovec.

Board members present were: Paul Botting, Margot Ellis, Alma Kasulaitis, Jim McKenney, Alice Nicolson and Betty Spar. Freddi Hammerschlag, Linda Keenan and Elaine Lahn were unable to attend.

Treasurer's Report

Margot Ellis reported that there is about \$4400 in the checking account.

Newsletter

There was a general discussion about the desirability of reducing the cost of postage by distributing the newsletter by e-mail instead of sending a paper copy. It was noted that a number of members prefer to receive a hard copy even though they have e-mail capability. It was decided that Alice Nicolson would provide Betty Spar with a list of those members who wish a paper copy and Betty would then mail those members a copy.

[Editor's note: the Editor currently does this and is willing to continue to do this unless Betty really wants this task..]

Website

Jim McKenney reported that Paul Botting's article on Styrofoam troughs is on the website.

2009 Eastern Winter Study Weekend

Alice reported that they still need one speaker. Betty Spar highly recommended someone from the USDA who could speak on climate change. Alice also said that they have a hotel contract which has not been signed and that the deadline for signing is February 15.

George Phair Memorial

Betty Spar reported that the plants for the memorial have not been purchased yet but that they would be in the near future. They will be planted along the walk around the Visitor's Center at Brookside Gardens.

Meetings

The next meeting of the PVC will be on March 15 at the U.S. Botanic Garden. The speaker will be Roy Klehm of Klehm's Song Sparrow Farm and Nurseries.

Green Spring Plant Sale

Following a brief discussion, it was decided not to participate in the plant sale this year since the PVC is in the midst of planning the EWSW, which is scheduled for early 2009. Alice will tell her Green Spring contact why we won't be participating this year but that we will the following year.

Plant Exchange

The PVC plant exchange will be Saturday, May 24 at Alice Nicolsons.

#### Summer Picnic

Paul Batting announced that the Hammerschlags have offered to have the picnic at their home. A motion was made and duly seconded to accept the invitation by the Hammerschlags to host the picnic. The motion passed unanimously. It was suggested that perhaps the Mason-Dixon Chapter could also be invited to the picnic.

#### Trough Clinic

There was considerable discussion about the possibility of having a trough clinic with the Allegheny and Mason-Dixon Chapters in the vicinity of Harrisburg, PA or perhaps at Barry Yinger's nursery in late July. It probably would involve the better part of two days taking travel time into account. A field trip was also discussed. If there is a trough clinic, that could be counted as our field trip.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Sandra Carlson  
for Freddi Hammerschlag

#### **Update on the 09 Eastern Winter Study Weekend**

The **dates** for the meeting are Jan 30-Feb 1, 2009.

**Venue** is the Sheraton Reston. Rooms at \$89

**Speakers and Schedule**- Confirmed speakers to date are; Roux (2), Tyler on Hellebores, Turland on Mediterranean, McLaughlin on Mid-Atlantic, Bridgen on South American, Avent on Aroids (we schedule him for Fri night, he leaves on Sat for a collecting trip), Critz on Primulas, Olwell on global warming. It was suggested we ask Richard Olsen since he did an excellent job for SI Hort 2 wk ago.

**Breakouts** - Karen Rexrode will do plant photography, and Bill Aley from USDA (?) might talk on plant import regs and perhaps even facilitate import permits. A third slot remains unfilled. Ideas?

**Vendor Report** – Jim D. gave an update on his contacts. To date we have: NARGS books, PVC, Pine Knot with hellebores, Diana Nicholls with cyclamen and other

Others interested are: Asiatica/Barry Yinger, Sandy's Plants, Putnam Hill, Stonecrop, Wrightman Alpines, and Rick's Custom Nursery.

**Plants** - Diana is keeping the list of plants we are growing. So far she has only a list from Paul. Jim McK has agreed to supervise the plant sale though not to grow quantities - that's still up to members.

**Title and Logo** - although we have a theme (positive aspects of global warming) we don't yet have a catchy phrase; some ideas were bandied about - "A new day - a new way" - "Zone denial - not denial any more" We need more tweaking or a new set of words - all are encouraged to let their brains range free on this. Dan Weil is working on logo sketches.

**Jobs filled** - Anne Mazaitis volunteers to organize table decorations (tho not plant giveaways). As mentioned above, Jim McKenney volunteers to organize the plant sale.

Alice Nicolson

#### **Winter in Washington**

It is almost the end of February. I should be in England. When I'm at work here and the telephone rings, it is definitely for me. In England, at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, where I would normally be doing my research on African plants at this time, a nearby call is almost always for someone else. When I receive e-mails here about urgent matters I usually have to respond to them in good time. When I read the same messages while at Kew, I just smile and say to myself "too bad," and get on with what I am doing. Here, because everyday matters can be so distracting and time-consuming, I may go several days without looking at a research plant, living or dead. At Kew it's what I do all day long every day.

So why am I here? Bad luck: the herbarium building where I work at Kew is having some major construction work done and, at the same time, the dried specimens that I study are caught up in a major reorganization of the collections. I was advised to postpone my trip. Thus for the first time in more than a decade I will get to spend an entire winter in Washington. So far the weather has been mild and wet, and most of the precipitation has been in the form of rain. I

wasn't looking forward to cold and snow, and I am quite used to moderate temperatures and dampness, so that's fine with me.

Being home for the whole of February and March does have some good features. It affords me the opportunity to do winter pruning of a wide variety of woody plants that are best trimmed at this time of year. It is a good time for making cuttings of certain conifers, such as junipers and false cypresses (*Chamaecyparis*), something that we don't often do. There is more time for planting seeds, especially those that need a cold period for germination. And there are all of those wonderful nursery catalogs to peruse, although I am not sure if their dwindling numbers in recent years is mainly due to nurseries going to on-line only sales – Seneca Hill promises to do that next year – to some nurseries going out of business or to our being stricken from mailing lists for not ordering.

Our garden is always going to be a disappointment relative to the gardens in southern England at this time of year. We do have our showy and often fragrant trees and shrubs that can be attractive or at least fragrant now, such as Winter Honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima* and *L. x purpusii* 'Winter's Beauty'), Japanese Apricot (*Prunus mume*), Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), Sweetbox (*Sarcococca confusa* and *S. hookeriana* var. *humilis*) and the beautiful *Camellia* 'Spring Promise'. Other shrubs that are just starting to bloom are that native, spring-flowering witch hazel, *Hamamelis vernalis* and Asian shrubs *Abeliophyllum distichum* 'Rosea' (the pink-flowered form of the 'White Forsythia'), *Mahonia bealei* and *M. japonica*. Some early bulbs are still hanging on, such as the daffodil 'Rijnfeld's Early Sensation' and various crocuses, while others are starting to open, such as *Crocus imperati* subsp. *suaveolens* and *C. tommasinianus*. The first flowers have appeared in the rock garden and troughs, including three species of *Draba* and one *Aubrieta*.

All of my partial winters in southern England, working in one of the most exciting botanical gardens in the world, have left me a bit jaded. It is impossible for our local gardens to match up or even to compete with those at Kew at this time of year, let alone all of the other features of Kew, such as the new alpine house – weird as it might be architecturally, it still has some very nice plants in it – and all of the other

glasshouses (we call them greenhouses). The thousands of *Crocus vernus* will be putting on a display just inside the Victoria Gate. The nearly as numerous 'February Gold' daffodils will turn the edge of the walkway across Kew Green, outside of Kew's Main Gate, into a ribbon of gold. Blue sheets of scillas and chinodoxas will be covering large patches in the woodland garden. A variety of early camellias will be coming into bloom. What do we have in endless numbers: chickweed, mouse-ear chickweed, dead nettles and many crocuses that have been pruned by the resident rabbit. It's just not fair. Oh, to be in England (if only the dollar weren't so weak).

Robert Faden  
The Expanding Garden

### Dixie's New Year's Day List

The annual New Year's Day visit to the Faden garden had been preceded by a few days of nearly 70 degree temperatures in December, followed by a typical winter chill. The autumn was neither early nor late, warm nor cold. Early winter rains had broken a drought that had seemed unending since spring. One might say it was a typical New Year's Day, but I have no idea what that is. I had noted little in bloom in my own garden and was not surprised to find a dearth of blossoms at the Fadens. I have forgotten the temperature of the day, but it was mild enough for many young children to play in the park near the Faden garden.

Our New Year's Day search rarely results in a blinding display of color unless one has a well-placed *Camellia japonica* or *C. sasanqua*. The Fadens had blooms on several camellias but it was not the best year for floral display. Although Bob and Audrey may not agree with this, I was taken by the color on some well-placed chrysanthemums, one from Bobbie Diebold's garden, another a descendant from cultivar 'Hillside Pink'. In past years, there may have been an occasional bloom; but this year there really was a nice display. Their galanthus collection, originally from Alice Nicolson, is always a winner and looked wonderful.

Here's the list:  
*Aster (Ampelaster) carolinianus*  
*Camellia* 'Snow Flurry'  
*Camellia* 'Winter's Beauty'  
*Camellia* 'Winter's Star'

*Dianthus japonicus*  
*Galanthus*—see Alice Nicolson’s contribution  
*Jasminum nudiflorum*  
*Osmanthus heterophyllus* ‘Variegatus’  
*Viburnum x rhytidophylloides*

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Alice Nicolson had little to add.

*Erica carnea* 'Springwood Pink' - pt shade  
*G. elwesii* var. *monostictus* - full bloom  
*G. elwesii* subsp. *elwesii* – full bloom  
*Hamamelis virginiana*

Jim Dronenburg’s list was small, as compared with previous years; he had nothing new to add to the list except a single bloom on *Chimonanthus praecox*. None were spotted by the Fadens or Alice. I had one open bloom. It is interesting to me that Dan and Jim, about as far north as any member, had a bloom and I, about as far south, also had a bloom.

Warren Schor has contributed several unusual bulbs in the past but his list was also sparse but he added the cultivated form of *Crocus laevigatus* often called *fontenayi*.

Anna Mazitis listed *Rhododendron mucronulatum*, *Osmanthus heterophyllus* (still in full bloom), *Daphne x burkwoodii*, *Daphne x transatlantica* 'Jim's Pride' and Bobbie Diebold’s chrysanthemum. Hint, hint, Bobbie. As Anna has included *Daphne x transatlantica* ‘Jim’s Pride’ in the previous New Year’s Day lists, I decided I needed to have this plant for my winter garden and had unsuccessfully searched for it. I did find and purchased D. ‘Summer Ice’ locally. It has not stopped blooming since I planted it in October. A little research showed that D. ‘Summer Ice’ is a variegated form of D. ‘Jim’s Pride’.

Betsy Bradford enjoyed the blooms of a treasured pale pink camellia, a seedling from her mother’s garden that had survived that horrendous winter in the mid-1970s.

Editor Jim McKenney had bloom in his cold frame; but as that does not fit within the parameters of this article, those plants have not been listed. I highly recommend visiting Jim’s garden blog for the list of plants and pictures of his many well-grown cold frame plants. I appreciated his pictures of *Arum italicum*. So it isn’t blooming but what a delight on a gloomy winter day. It looks pretty good on a sunny day too.

<http://mcwort.blogspot.com/2008/01/plants-of-interest-on-new-years-day.html>

A camellia in my neighborhood was in full bloom before Christmas and throughout most of January until the heavy frosts darkened the flowers, as in past years. The plant owner had not planted the camellia and had no idea of the species or cultivar but offered to let me photograph the plant. I sent the picture to David Parks, of Camellia Forest Nursery, who responded “My guess is that this is a sasanqua 'Kanjiro'. A very showy bloomer although often late fall blooming which means it can get frozen. I do not have this variety but it is grown quite a bit because it is a fast grower. 'Dazzler' may be the most similar plant I currently have.” Personally, I will sacrifice some buds to a freeze in return for the chance of a fabulous display during the Christmas season.



In addition to enjoying the above camellia, one of my three *Iris unguicularis* has been in bloom since sometime in late November. The other two have not bloomed and have been in the ground for several years.

Cecie Phair reported that George’s *Helleborus niger*, which is almost always in bloom before

1/1, had nary a bud, no doubt due to seasonal drought. Cecie thinks this might have happened once or twice; but as the plant is nearly 50 years old, that isn't a bad record.

Sue Hodapp reported *Chimonanthus praecox* in bloom since December.

I have been thinking of sure-fire 1/1 bloomers that are readily available. Several participants have *Erica carnea* varieties in bloom regularly, including this year. It isn't unusual---that is what it does---it blooms in the dead of winter. *Daphne x transatlantica* 'Jim's Pride' or 'Summer Ice' are top contenders for such a list. *Prunus mume*, *Helleborus foetidus*, *Hamamelis* species, *Lonicera fragrantissima* are usually submitted by several participants but not this year. *Chimonanthus praecox* is another early bloomer but only Jim D. and I had blooms this year. This wonderful small tree fills the winter garden with yellow blooms and wonderful fragrance for weeks. Happy New Year!

Dixie Hougen

#### **New Member**

Monika Saxton  
6521 Marvin Avenue  
Sykesville, MD 21784  
[mnsaxt@msn.com](mailto:mnsaxt@msn.com)  
410-549-5377 (h)  
202-438-0456 (o)

#### **Lindie Wilson speaks**

Jim Dronenburg

Elizabeth Lawrence was the first really popular garden writer to write of the middle-to-deep South. Her first book, *A Southern Garden*, came out in 1942 and ten volumes of her work are published (four during her lifetime, six assembled after her death from her columns and notes.) For some 13 years she was the garden columnist for the Charlotte Observer, and two books of those columns have been compiled. The first, *Through the Garden Gate*, came out some years ago, and the second, *Beautiful at All Seasons*, came out about a year and a half ago.

On Monday, Feb 18<sup>th</sup>, Lindie Wilson spoke to the Silver Spring Garden Club on the garden and some brave survivor plants from Elizabeth Lawrence's day. Ms. Wilson owns and has kept up Elizabeth Lawrence's house and garden in Charlotte, NC, and is also co-editor of *Beautiful at All Seasons*. She showed her slides of the

garden and some archival slides, showing the pretty-far-gone way it was in Elizabeth Lawrence's last years and the flaming ruin it was when Lindie got there (there was a short term owner between them who did NOT keep anything up). Since then, Lindie has worked the place, keeping to EL's designs and plants, in general, and putting in some of her own as the garden got more shaded over the years as trees grew.

The house and garden are being bought by Wing Haven in the next block, under the Garden Conservancy. Settlement should happen in June, with a sizeable endowment needed. (Anyone so inclined can send a contribution to the Garden Conservancy, which is a 501C3 corporation, earmarked for the Elizabeth Lawrence house). This will keep it perpetually as it is, no chance for bulldozing.

One big surprise of the evening was the presence of Elizabeth Way Rogers of Annapolis, Elizabeth Lawrence's niece and namesake, looking just as elfin as the pictures of Elizabeth herself.

On Tuesday, Feb 19<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Wilson spoke to the Four Seasons garden club at the Potomac location of Behnke Nurseries. Before the lecture, she went to dinner with Cindy Brown and Mary Olien of Green Spring, Alma Kasulatis and Lynn Title of NARGS, Phil Normandy of Brookside, Sandy McDougale of Sandy's Plants, Candace Rollins of Behnke's, Dan Weil and myself. It was quite a collection of people. We went to Fortune Garden in the shopping center at the intersection of Falls Road and River Road---great food, except for Alma's chicken which was not up to snuff and was replaced... (I seriously recommend the Orange Eggplant.)

Jim Dronenburg

#### **Galapagos Prelude**

Maxine and I are going to take a short vacation in March, spending a few days in the Amazonian part of Ecuador, a few in Quito, and several more on a boat in the Galapagos Islands. In addition to the bustle of getting our shots, making sure our passports are in order, and getting all the things we need to take with us, we've been reading books to bone up on what we will see and what to expect. The travel guides have been useful and have in turn pointed us to other interesting books. One is *Tales of a Shaman's*

*Apprentice* by Mark Plotkin. He is that rare bird called an ethnobotanist, and the book follows his experiences in the rain forests of Suriname and the Amazon recording and collecting the plants used by the shamans of indigenous groups to cure their patients of disease. The book combines high adventure and scientific insight – and a treasury of interesting information. Living with the indigenous people for weeks at a time, he sees the destruction of the rain forest and the disintegration of tribal culture under the pressure of impinging civilization. The death of each shaman takes with it irreplaceable medical and botanical knowledge that he and others like him are attempting to preserve.

We're looking forward to our time in Ecuador, with or without shamans.

Paul Botting

### **The snowdrop blizzard**

Imagine you are visiting relatives who live out in the country. While there, you decide to take a drive around the small town where you are staying. Being a gardener, you naturally have your eyes tuned to the local gardens. To better appreciate things, you get out and walk around a bit. Eventually you find someone working in one of the gardens; you introduce yourself, and soon you are being given the tour. It doesn't take long for you to realize that there is something very unusual about this garden. There are irises, daffodils, daylilies, roses, a lily or two, a few hostas; but you don't recognize most of the cultivars. Old *Hosta subcordata* 'Plantaginea' lines the border around the porch. When you ask your hostess about it, she replies "Do you mean that daylily some people call *Funkia*? The August lilies?" The irises are varieties which might have come from Bertrand Farr's pre-WWI catalog. The hemerocallis might have come from Dr. Stout. The garden is a horticultural time capsule: the cultivars all seem to be varieties people grew in your great-grandmother's time.

Some iced tea and cake soon appear, and you and your hostess soon sink deeply into garden lore. When, a delightful afternoon later, you remember the relatives you are visiting (and the supper you are probably holding up) and have to arrange a quick departure, you promise your new friend a thank-you present of some plants from your garden and some current catalogs so she

can see what is going on in the greater gardening world.

Now, reader, try to imagine yourself in that situation. You want to introduce someone to modern tall bearded iris, daylilies, daffodils, hostas, roses or lilies. Where in the world would you start? The overweening, numbing, sometimes seemingly repetitive variation found in current cultivars of those groups defies quick comprehension. The mind reels trying to take it all in: one vacillates between "they all look alike" and "every one looks different".

Is there anything you can do to make any of this palatable and readily accessible to a newcomer? Is there any way of introducing such largess to someone without triggering an exhaustive binge of senseless acquisition?

The title of this piece suggested that it might have something to do with snowdrops. If you find the prospect of meeting and helping out such a naïve, old-timey gardener appealing, and if you enjoy growing snowdrops, then simply take a good look in the mirror to see what someone gardening in the past looks like. It's a sad fact that American gardeners have by and large missed the boat when it comes to snowdrops. Thirty years ago, when outrage in the American gardening public supported bans on the sale of small bulbs such as snowdrops and sternbergias which had been collected from the wild, a small core of snowdrop enthusiasts in the UK was laying the foundation for the snowdrops of the twenty-first century. During the latter part of this period, CITES has made it expensive and difficult for most of us to import snowdrops from the UK.

I imported various snowdrop cultivars decades ago from Mr. Mars of Haselmere and his successors at Avon Bulbs. When my little collection reached two dozen, I thought I was the coolest guy on the block. Virtually everything I had originated before the First World War. I was utterly clueless about what was happening in contemporary snowdrop circles. Then I began to hear rumors. When Chris Grey-Wilson spoke to our group years ago, he said something in passing which astonished me: didn't he say that there were about a hundred snowdrop cultivars in the garden which he had at that time? That set my mind reeling: a hundred different snowdrop cultivars? Then I began to hear more rumors: somewhere I read that there were about three

hundred cultivars; later, another account more than doubled the number!

So, what would I recommend to anyone wanting to get started with snowdrops? First of all, when you see the prices of the named cultivars, you will undoubtedly trim back your ambitions. An individual snowdrop looks ridiculous: they appear best when planted in drifts of dozens. So my first recommendation is to plant whatever is inexpensive enough to plant by the hundreds. Let this be your main effort, and you'll have something beautiful and satisfying to look forward to each late winter.

Other than that, here's what strikes me as a sensible approach: get some very early ones, some main season ones and some late ones. Get some of small stature (the common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, is small although not the smallest), some of medium stature and some tall ones. Flower size varies, too, so repeat this exercise with flower size. There are more double-flowered snowdrops now than ever, but from a yard away they mostly look alike. I've got three, and they more than satisfy my craving for double-flowered snowdrops. Incidentally, the double-flowered sorts are often malformed. But when they develop properly with every multiplied tepal in place and brightly marked with green, they look like enamel jewelry.

*PVC Bulletin*  
Jim McKenney, Editor  
11127 Schuylkill Road  
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Snowdrops derived from *Galanthus plicatus* often have handsome, very broad foliage.

The snowdrop color range is limited to white, green and yellow. The so-called yellow-flowered snowdrops are mostly white with little dots of yellow. Some snowdrops have more or less green on the inner tepals, and some have a variable green flush on the outer tepals.

The snowdrop show also includes a lot of freaks: frankly ugly, malformed sorts which are collected by some as avidly as the most conventionally beautiful sorts are.

Many of the modern cultivars were selected from the varying forms of *Galanthus elwesii*. In this species, the green markings on the inner tepals vary from plant to plant; this makes it easy to recognize individual plants. And when recognition comes, can naming be far behind?

If I were to name every distinguishable plant of *Galanthus elwesii* growing here, I could easily add hundreds of additional cultivars to the already burgeoning lists. But what's the point? The snowdrop is a simple flower, and I'm happy to keep it that way in my garden.

Jim McKenney