

International Rock Gardener

ISSN 2053-7557





In the areas of the world where Autumn-flowering snowdrops are grown, this seems to be a good year for these enchanting little flowers. The major excitement about these bulbs comes in Spring (I was going to write “hysteria”, but thought that was a tad unfair!) but there are Autumn blooming plants within galanthus and other genera too, and these are equally enjoyed by their devotees. I pause here to differentiate once more that there are “true” Autumn

Crocus – not the oft repeated common name applied in error over many years to what are actually Autumn flowering Colchicum, also foolishly referred to as “Meadow Saffron” – a mistake that could be fatal. If people are able to learn the name Narcissus or Crocus, I have no sympathy with those who claim it is “too difficult” to educate folks to the proper names of such species. Rant over – but you will see that I feel strongly on this point. It’s not often that your editor bangs her own drum so I hope readers will understand!

Anne Wright, whose [Dryad nursery](#) is a small-scale mail-order-only nursery based in Tockwith, North Yorkshire, UK, grows and breeds miniature narcissi, snowdrops, and hepaticas. Anne writes here of her choice of her latest series of Galanthus hybrids which will be registered with the Koninklijke Algemeene Vereeniging Voor Bloembollencultuur [Royal General Bulb Growers' Association \(KAVB\)](#). Anne’s attention to detail in her hybridisation projects is focussed and involves constant monitoring and she clearly excels in this.

The nursery was set up originally simply as a way of disposing of excess bulbs from her hobby, and still has this function, but she also now propagates the plants especially for the nursery list.

The next writer on Galanthus is a new contributor this month, Tim (Timothy) Calkins, from America. Tim has been developing his garden in Reston, Virginia, USA for 30 years, trying to change a suburban yard of under 1/3 acre (0.12 hectare) of sun-baked, grass-covered clay into a variety of garden environments. It includes raised vegetable beds, trough gardens, a small orchard, a small bog, and a mix of sunny borders and shaded areas for winter blooms, spring ephemerals and woodland perennials. Particular enthusiasms include galanthus (he grows 19 species and several hundred cultivars), rain lilies (zephyranthes and habranthus), narcissus, and a growing collection of lycoris. Something is in bloom, if not every day of the year, at least every month.

Final item this month is a brief plant portrait of *Primula frondosa*, from a Czech friend, Zdeněk Řeháček.

Cover image: *Galanthus* ‘Dryad Princess’ – photo by Anne Wright.

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--- Cultivar descriptions --

New Snowdrop Aristocrats for Autumn – text and photos, Anne Wright

In 2013, while enjoying my autumn flowering snowdrops in the greenhouse, I wondered whether the two species I grew – *G. reginae-olgae* and *G. peshmenii* – were fertile if crossed together. On a warm day, when the pollen was running freely from the flowers if tapped, I made the cross between *G. reginae-olgae* 'Cambridge' and my favourite small form of *G. peshmenii*. The ovaries swelled satisfactorily, and seeds were duly sown in May of 2014, germinating the following autumn. The first flowers opened in October 2019, and it became clear that we had something very special.

The flowers were of heavy substance, with corrugated outer segments and a nice variation in height and inner markings. The bulbs were healthy and increased over the next two years, often giving more than one scape per bulb. The outstanding feature, though, was the strong, rich, sweet scent common to the seedlings, quite unlike the usual honey scent of the parents. The leaves were just emerging at the time of flowering, so the flowers were presented well in their pots. Later, as the leaves grew, a complication became apparent: the leaves showed the pale median stripe typical of *G. reginae-olgae*. Had the intended cross actually taken, or were the seedlings pure *G. reginae-olgae*?

In the last three years of flowering, no seed has been set on any of the seedlings.

This autumn I had to fight off several queen bumblebees who appreciated the scent as much as I did, so that I could carefully cross pollinate the seedlings together. If no seed is set this year, I will feel safe in assuming they are sterile hybrids. Considering the unusual texture of the flowers and the distinctive perfume, as well as the vigour of the seedlings, I already feel confident of their hybridity.



Three of the new Dryad Aristocrats group – left to right, Duchess, Princess and Countess.

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I have selected four of the seedlings for naming and registration. These are: 'DRYAD PRINCESS', 'DRYAD DUCHESS', 'DRYAD COUNTESS' and 'DRYAD EMPRESS' – together the **DRYAD ARISTOCRATS GROUP**.



GALANTHUS 'DRYAD PRINCESS'

Flowering at 18cm high, PRINCESS is the tallest of the group so far. The flowers stand clearly on strong stems above the just-emerging leaves. The flowers are attractively rounded, the outer segments joined to the small spherical ovary by a short 'claw'. The spathe is quite short and curved, approximately twice as long as the pedicel. The outer segments are 22mm long, deeply cupped and strongly longitudinally ribbed.

The inner segments are 11mm long x 10mm wide, with an apple-green mark covering the apical third, except for a crisp, white margin. The sinus is an inverted V shape. They are also markedly longitudinally ribbed. The scent is outstanding, sweet and rich, not honey-like. The bulbs are healthy and vigorous, increasing well.



GALANTHUS 'DRYAD PRINCESS'





GALANTHUS 'DRYAD COUNTESS'

COUNTESS is the middle sister, slightly shorter than PRINCESS, at 13cm in flower, and with leaves barely emerging at flowering time. The spathe is slightly shorter than the pedicel, and the ovary slightly more egg-shaped than spherical. The outer segments are slightly shorter at 20mm, and not so deeply ribbed. The inner segments are slightly narrower at 10mm long by 9mm wide, while the inner mark is usually two small triangular dots either side of the inverted V-shaped sinus, occasionally joined by a faint, narrow bridge, and a white margin.

COUNTESS has the same strong sweet scent and vigour characteristic of the group.



GALANTHUS 'DRYAD COUNTESS'





GALANTHUS 'DRYAD DUCHESS'

Flowering at 12cm high, DUCHESS is slightly shorter than COUNTESS, with leaves just emerging at flowering time. Though smaller in stature, DUCHESS has the largest flowers of the group. The spathe is quite straight, and longer than the pedicel, while the ovary is egg-shaped. The outer segments are 26mm long, with a 4mm long 'claw', deeply cupped and longitudinally ribbed, especially in the basal half. The inner segments are 12mm long by 10mm wide and bear the largest mark of the group, a rich emerald green, fading slightly towards the base with the green running along the corrugations to 60% of the length of the segment. Again, the mark has a crisp white margin around the narrow sinus.



GALANTHUS 'DRYAD DUCHESS'





GALANTHUS 'DRYAD EMPRESS'

EMPRESS is immediately different from its sisters, having green markings on the outer segments. It starts to flower at only 11cm high, at which time the leaves are about half the height of the flower stems. The spathe is strongly curved and more than twice as long as the short pedicel. The lighter green ovary is conical, barely constricted where it meets the outer segments, which do not have a strong 'claw'. The outer segments are 24mm long, cupped and longitudinally ribbed, with pale green lines following the 'furrows' from 50% to 75% of the way from the base. The inner segments are 11mm long by 8mm wide, also ribbed, with a green mark covering the apical half, slightly paler towards the base, and a crisp white apical margin around the short, inverted V-shaped sinus. It shares the wonderful scent of the group.



GALANTHUS 'DRYAD EMPRESS'



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The DRYAD ARISTOCRATS group are desirable and vigorous new additions to snowdrop collections, offering matchless large flowers of heavy substance and texture, easy to grow under glass with a dry summer rest, which will fill a greenhouse with a rich perfume on sunny autumn days.

For the future – this year I have used a green-tipped *G. peshmenii* as the seed parent and pollinated it with our best green-tipped *G. reginae-olgae* seedlings to see if we can get more green-marked flowers. If seedlings can be raised, it will be interesting to see how the general habit of the seedlings differs from the reverse cross, and if the terrific scent is retained. If the seedlings' leaves show the pale median line, at least we will have an indication that the cross has been successful.



First flowering of *Galanthus reginae-olgae* x *peshmenii*.

Previous articles in International Rock Gardener by Anne Wright of [Dryad Nursery](#):

[A New Group of Yellow Snowdrops – IRG 66](#)

[Description of new galanthus hybrid - Galanthus 'Dryad Venus' – IRG 98](#)

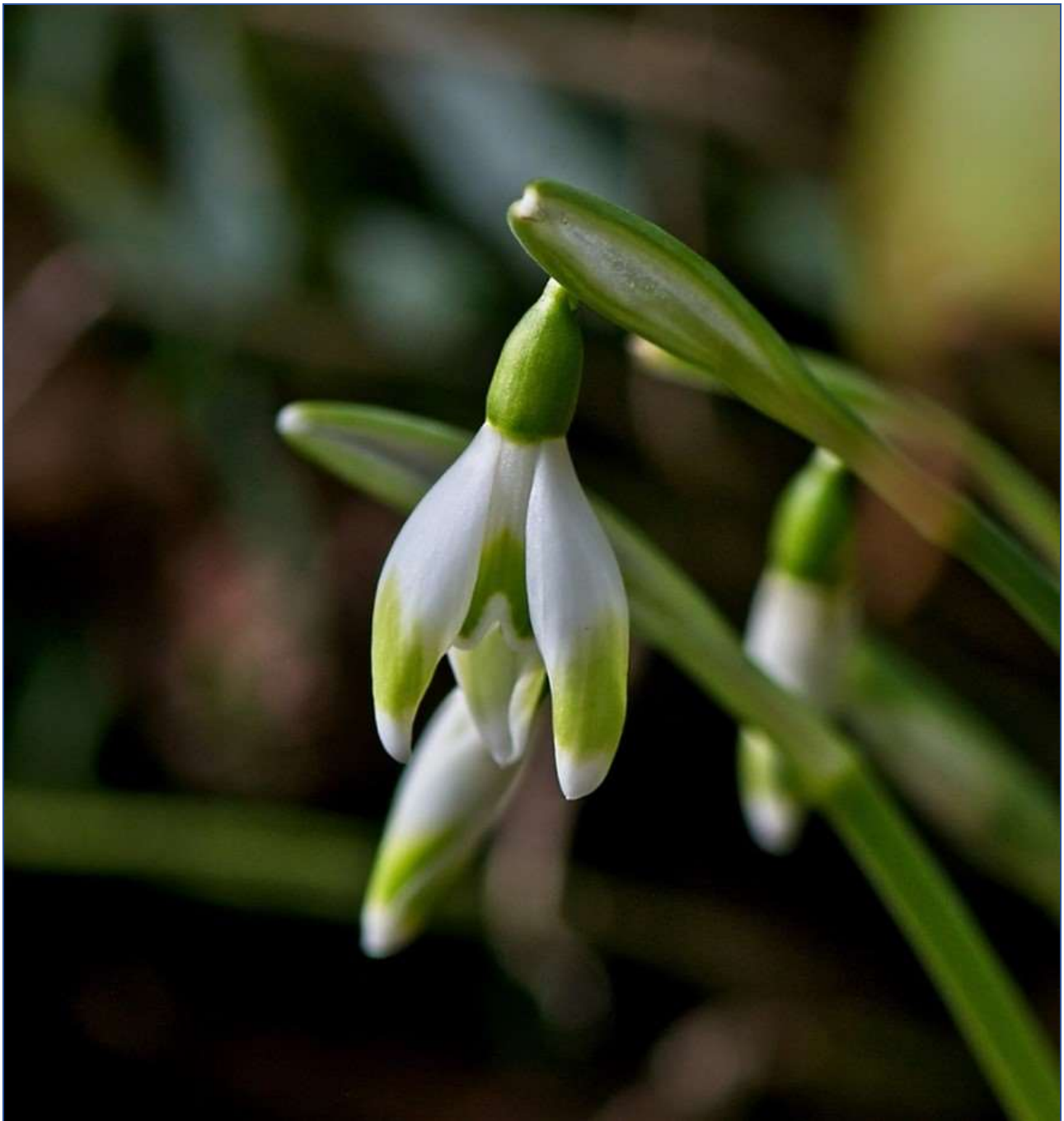
[Chipping and Twin-scaling – a masterclass by Anne Wright – IRG 118](#)

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--- Cultivar Description ---

***Galanthus reginae olgae* 'Elizabeth Lawrence' named by Timothy Calkins.**

Galanthus 'Elizabeth Lawrence', a green-tipped fall-bloomer, is an extremely vigorous *Galanthus reginae-olgae*. It originated with seed collected by Tom Mitchell in the Taygetos mountains, Greece. That seed was then grown by John Lonsdale, Edgewood Gardens, Exton, Pennsylvania (USA), who offered the resulting bulbs 'in the green' in the spring of 2019, as G. r-o seed acquisition number 12613.



Galanthus 'Elizabeth Lawrence'

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I purchased one pot to add to my snowdrop walk in my northern Virginia (USA) garden in April 2019. It first bloomed here November 5, 2019, a single flower on a rather tall scape, well above the barely-showing leaves, with a dark green inverted heart inner mark, and larger, paler green inverted U mark on the apical third of the outers, not quite reaching the apex.



First blooming of 'Elizabeth Lawrence'

I was quite pleased with that first flower, but even more so the next season, when in late October 2020, an eventual 6 flowers appeared. I've grown a number of different snowdrops,

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and never had one with that rate of increase. Although I suspect the rate of growth had little to do with my efforts, it gave me quite a feeling of success, something not all snowdrops do.



Late October 2020

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That feeling only grew the next November 4, when the first of that season's 20 flowers opened. Bloom time varies with weather, of course, but so far here (USDA Zone 7) begins the last week of October to the first week of November. For the 2021 season, 'Elizabeth Lawrence' opened 18 days after 'Blanc de Chine' and 'Tilebarn Jamie', and a week before 'Cambridge'.



November 4, 2021

By early spring 2022, the initial planting was quite congested, and in February 2022, I lifted the pond basket and the by then good-sized clump was divided. The division seemed more like dealing with bunching onions than galanthus, as more than 25 small clusters of 2-3 bulbs each resulted.

Early in September 2022, the transplanted bulbs were lifted again, to check on their health. All seemed in fine shape, with a range of sizes.

So, to recap, from one plant, in just 3 years, upwards of 70 individual bulbs, and from one flower to 20. That's a good doer!

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Bulbs were separated in small clumps, with about half replanted in the original location, half in another, and a few sent to other gardeners.



Representative bulbs on
1mm grid

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Snowdrop walk February 2021

The combination of good looks and great vigor led me to propose to John Lonsdale that *G. r-o* 12613 be named. I suggested, and John concurred, with the name 'Elizabeth Lawrence' after the American garden writer and landscape architect (1904-1985). Elizabeth Lawrence wrote for many years for the 'Charlotte Observer' (North Carolina) newspaper, and authored a number of books, including ***A Southern Garden***, ***Gardens in Winter***, and ***The Little Bulbs***. The last two were particularly inspirational to me, raising my awareness that a winter garden was even a possibility, and that a goal of having something in bloom every month of the year was one I might achieve, with the right plants. Her writing certainly sparked my initial interest in snowdrops and other winter blooms, leading me down the snowdrop path to my own winter garden, and to this unexpected find of a standout bloomer. For all the joy her writing has brought me, I am grateful for the chance to pay tribute, in a small way, to her inspiration.

Elizabeth Lawrence – image courtesy of the Internet.

Today, the Elizabeth Lawrence House & Garden is open to the public as a historic and cultural resource. The house and garden are part of the [Wing Haven Gardens and Bird Sanctuary](#).

Quote from Elizabeth Lawrence:

"Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn."



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John Lonsdale and Tim Calkins in one of John's greenhouses, March 3 2018.

***Galanthus reginae-olgae* 'Elizabeth Lawrence' description:**

Rather unthinkingly, when 'Elizabeth Lawrence' last bloomed in November 2021, I failed to take any measurements of the blooms, and so far this season, delayed by weather or perhaps by transplanting in the spring, only two blooms have appeared as of November 11, 2022. So, the description and pictures below, while generally representative of this cultivar, accord with what one might expect to see from a newly planted bulb, and dimensions may be somewhat larger for a mature plant.

Flowering height 13-15 cm. Scape upright, 2.5 -3 mm thick. Short pedicel almost at right angle to flower. Flowering begins in northern Virginia, USDA Zone 7A late October to first week of November.

Leaves: at flowering time showing, about 1-2 cm. Eventual height 13-15 cm, width 5-6mm. Leaves are dark green with the classic *G. reginae-olgae* glaucous central median stripe.

Receptacle is small relative to the flower, oval 3.5 x 5mm, mid-green.

Outer perianth segments 7mm at widest, roughly 2 cm long, white with large, somewhat ragged pale green thumbprint or inverted U, largely on the apical third but reaching nearly halfway (10mm) from the base. The green mark seems to bleed out from the perianth veins to varying degrees, and while the mark often appears solid it can appear as conjoined

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stripes. Apical margin white. Outer segments are nearly twice as long as inner perianth segments.

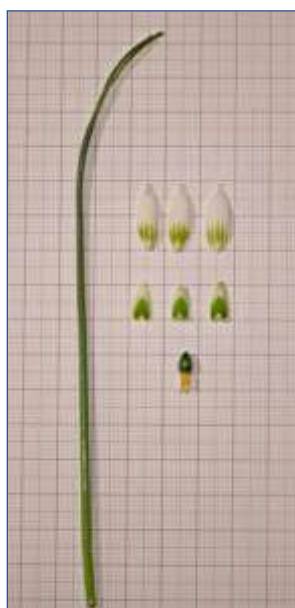
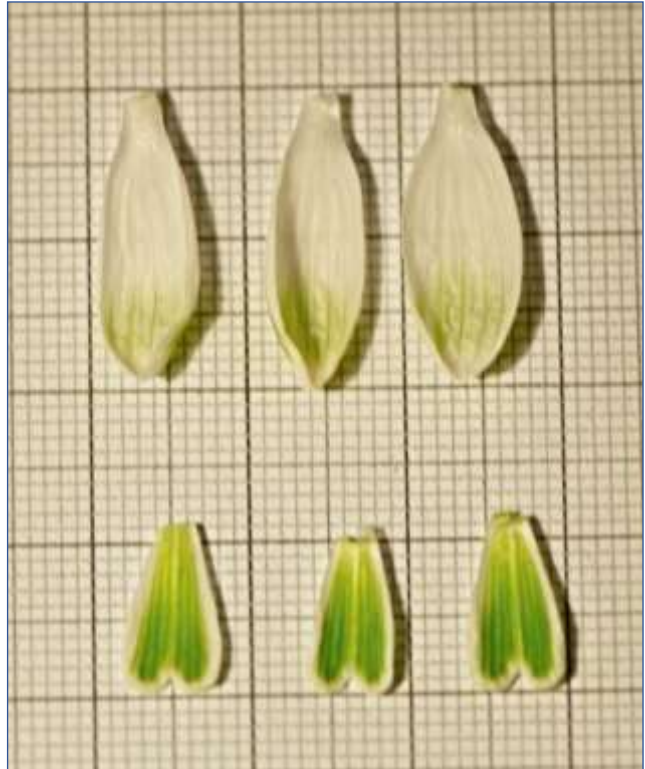
Inner perianth 5mm wide by 10-11 mm long, white, with pointed inverted green heart extending halfway (5-6 mm) toward the base. Apical margin white, thinly (roughly 0.5mm) rimming the sinus.

Bulbs are small, approximately 2.5 to 3 cm in length by 1.5cm in diameter.



Outer and inner perianth segments, interior side.

Outer and inner perianth segments.



Scape, perianth segments, receptacle.



Inner perianth segments, receptacle, and pedicel.



Receptacle and anthers.

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---- Plant Portrait ---

Primula frondosa – Zdeněk Řeháček

I have been growing this primrose off and on since 1981, when I bought it in the former Ornamental Nurseries in Litomyšl. We still have it in the garden now, but since the first one I have I have lost and regained it five times, then always by sowing seeds from different sources. All of these the seeds were from cultivated plants, and yet I never found any seeds in our garden. Maybe I didn't try hard enough.

In nature it grows only in one small area in the Stara Planina mountains in Bulgaria, in the forests and scrubland, at an altitude of 800-2200 m. It forms nice rosettes, composed of spoon-shaped or obovate leaves. The leaves are 3-7 cm long and 1-2 cm wide, with finely irregularly scalloped edges and often so strongly whitish that it gives them an extraordinary charm.

The rosettes spread slowly. Blue-purple flowers with a hint of pink at 4-12 cm tall, also ruffled, are arranged in multiple clusters, up to 15 mm in diameter. It flowers quite early; in our garden it is in the second half of April.

It's said to be easy to grow, but somewhat short-lived, which I can confirm.

It prefers partial shade and would certainly do well in the shade, but I don't know how it would flower. Except in one case where it was planted in a rockery (attached picture from 2018), I have always planted it in heathland, because I don't have such nutritious soil in rockeries.

And they certainly don't tolerate calcium. The longest time I have grown it for, in a slightly



heavier, humus-enhanced soil, is about 6 years.

Primula frondosa –
photo Zdeněk Řeháček.

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Images of *Primula frondosa* grown by other SRGC Forumists.....



Primula frondosa is a rare and protected species of wild plant found only in the Central Balkan Mountains, Bulgaria. This plant is growing in the Bulgarian garden of Stefan Bankov, though the seeds are from Gatineau botanical garden - Canada. Stefan writes that in 2014, he already had the seedling and planted it in the place where it has lived until now and has developed very well in this place. He has not tried to transplant it because it is planted in a narrow place between two rocks, over a very small artificial pond.



Primula frondosa by the little pond, Spring 2016.

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The primula flowering happily by Stefan's little pool, Spring 2022.

Grown by Tristan Hatton-Ellis in Wales.



Cascading down a slope for Kristl Walek in Canada.

Ed.:Thanks to these Forumists for the use of their images!

