



Common's Cribs

Snowdrops

A guide to the Snowdrops you're likely to encounter while out and about in the North East (and some that might crop up)

About Common's Cribs

The Boring Bit

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A few things to remember:

- These cribs focus on the species you're most likely to encounter. They are not exhaustive.
- They centre on the species most likely to be seen (or turn up in) North East England.
- Mistakes happen. The author, just like any botanist, is still learning. If you spot something, please get in touch at jamesmcommon@gmail.com.
- Feedback, discussion and ideas are welcome at the above email address 😊



Common Snowdrop

Galanthus nivalis

- ✓ Flowers single (only one set of petals)
- ✓ Leaves blue-green in colour.
- ✓ Leaves narrow, less than 6mm wide (grab a ruler)
- ✓ Generally, a short, delicate plant
- ✓ Our most common snowdrop (assume its this one)
- ✓ Woodlands, gardens, verges, roundabouts, hedgerows, waste heaps

Flowers double? Try **Common Snowdrop 'Flore-pleno'**. Does it have burly, wide leaves (<9mm)? Try **Giant Snowdrop**. Leaves bright green, not blueish? Try **Green Snowdrop**.



Common

Common Snowdrop

Galanthus nivalis
'Flore-pleno'

- ✓ Flowers double (several sets of petals)
- ✓ Leaves narrow, less than 6mm (like normal Common Snowdrop)
- ✓ Leaves blue-green in colour
- ✓ Often popping up among lots of 'normal' snowdrops
- ✓ An ornamental which is sometimes thrown out into the wild

Please note that other double-flowered cultivars exist – this is just the commonest

Rare



Giant Snowdrop

Galanthus elwesii

- ✓ Flowers single (only one set of petals)
- ✓ Leaves blue-green and crucially, far broader (9mm) than Common Snowdrop
- ✓ Leaf tips hooded (a bit incurved)
- ✓ Leaf bases wrapped around stem (clasping)
- ✓ Gives off a 'Snowdrop on steroids' kind of vibe...

Leaf bases not clasping and leaves appearing folded (plicate)? Try **Plicate Snowdrop**.



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Rare

Pleated Snowdrop

Galanthus plicatus

- ✓ Flowers single (only one set of petals)
- ✓ Leaves grey-green and crucially, far broader (9mm) than Common Snowdrop
- ✓ Leaves with a distinct channel in the centre. They look like they've been folded
- ✓ Leaf bases not clasping as in Giant Snowdrop

As above but with a golden colour above the flower
Pleated Snowdrop 'Wendy's Gold'.

Several hybrids of *Galanthus plicatus* and other snowdrop species are known to exist. If your plant is different to the example here, but also exhibits pleated leaves, you may have one of these...

Rare

Pleated Snowdrop 'Wendy's Gold'

Galanthus plicatus 'Wendy's Gold'

- ✓ Like Pleated Snowdrop
- ✓ Ovary (the chubby bit behind the flower) lime-gold in colour
- ✓ Leaves with a distinct channel in the centre. They look like they're folded outward (pleated)

If your snowdrop has a yellow ovary but lacks the pleated leaves, you may just have one of the **Sandersii Group** (see end)



Not yet recorded locally

Green Snowdrop

Galanthus woronowii

- ✓ Flowers single (only one set of petals)
- ✓ Big fat green leaves, not blue as in Common & Giant Snowdrops
- ✓ Distinctive pale green 'v' marking on inner tepals
- ✓ Gives off a 'Snowdrop on steroids' kind of vibe...

If you're snowdrop has wide, green leaves and a distinctive green marking on the inner tepals, you most likely have this species

Icaria Snowdrop is a far rarer species of 'green' Snowdrop. You can spot it by looking at the inner green markings. In *Galanthus ikariae*, they extended beyond halfway up the tepal unlike here in *Galanthus woronowii*.

Rare

Unlikely, but look out for....

Queen Olga's Snowdrop *Galanthus reginae-olgae*

If you stumble across the peculiar sight of a Snowdrop in October, it could be **Queen Olga's Snowdrop** subsp. *reginae-olgae*. The autumn-blooming subspecies often flowers without the presence of leaves.

Another subspecies of Queen Olga's Snowdrop flowers during late-winter, with other species. This one, **Queen Olga's Snowdrop** subsp. *vernalis* sports a silver central line to its green leaves while young.



Queen Olga's Snowdrop
subsp. *reginae-olgae*



Queen Olga's Snowdrop
subsp. *vernalis*

Since we're in the North East...

I didn't have and couldn't find a picture of this one so have quoted the fab folk at Seedball. You can give them a follow and see the original tweet [here...](#)

'Yellow' Common Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* (Sandersii Group)

Genetic variations sometime arise in snowdrops and can lead to variation in the amount of chlorophyll present. In turn, this can lead to variations in colour.

Snowdrops of the Sandersii Group have long been known to occur in Northumberland and have been the subject of much study and collecting. The originals derive from specimens uncovered in a garden in Belford around 1870.

Unfortunately, records are scant and information on the exact cultivars is often lacking. There are several out there which are very similar.

If your snowdrop is delicate, sports narrow leaves and looks like a Common Snowdrop, it might be one of these...



Snowdrop - *Galanthus nivalis* Sandersii Group
For nearly a century, yellow snowdrops have been known to grow in Northumberland and have been sought out for collectors.
[#sixonsaturday](#)



6:01 PM · Feb 26, 2022