

A Key to Cultivated Snowdrops and Select Subspecies and Variations

It’s no secret that I love Snowdrops—growing them, finding them in the wild, and visiting collections have all proven rather addictive. Like many enthusiasts, I often struggle with identification—something I suspect is common, except among the most knowledgeable Galanthophiles. This challenge is partly due to the scattered nature of Snowdrop resources.

Having created a simplified key for common and widespread Snowdrop species found in the UK, I wanted to take it a step further by extending it to cultivated species and hybrids. Here is the result. Perhaps it will be useful to fellow gardeners who, like me, frequently misplace their labels!

Leaves Green (either bright grass green or mat)	Inner petals lacking notch or with notch barely visible (emarginate); leaves supervolute vernation (wrapped)	Anthers taper to a distinctive point (apiculum)	Apex of each inner petal rounded with a very faint notch; inner petals with a diffuse green basal mark	Panjutin's Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus panjutinii</i>)	
			Apex of each inner petals pointed and lacking a notch; basal mark absent or greenish in the middle of segment	Krasnov's Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus krasnovii</i>)	
		Anther apex blunt	Broad-leaved Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus platyphyllus</i>)		
	Inner petals notched (marginate)	Leaves applanate in vernation (flatly opposed)	Leaves typically bright, shiny green, lacking a pale central stripe	Lagodekhi Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus lagodechianus</i>)	
			Leaves bright, shiny green with strong central stripe	Artjushenko's Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus artjuschenkoe</i>)	Not yet recognised as a species and often included under <i>G. transcaucasicus</i> . However, it remains very different.
			Leaves mat, usually with only a faint stripe	Rize Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus rizehensis</i>)	Flowering January onwards <i>G. rizehensis</i> 'Baytop'
					Autumn flowering (September) <i>G. rizehensis</i> 'Lady Latife'

		Leaves supervolute in vernation (wrapped)	Inner petals with two green marks (one basal, one apical)	Foster's Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus fosteri)</i>			
			Inner petals with one green mark (basal only)	Inner petal markings up to (but never greater than) half the length of the petal	Inner petal marking flat-topped at the apex, leaves bright shiny green	Green Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus woronowii)</i>	Various cultivars exist with green markings on the outer petals. Common among these is Cider with Rosie
							A yellow variant of <i>G. woronowii</i> , Elizabeth Harrison , is becoming increasingly popular in gardens
					Inner petal marking rounded to pointed at apex; leaves with a steely-blue tinge; flowers smell like bitter almonds	<i>Galanthus x allenii</i> <i>(G. alpinus x woronowii)</i>	
					Inner petal marking rounded or pointed at the apex, leaves mat	Transcaucasian Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus transcaucasicus)</i>	
				Inner petal markings are greater than or half the length of the petal	Ikaria Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus ikariae)</i>	A variant of <i>G. ikariae</i> , Emerald Isle , with substantial areas of green on the outer petals is now available	
Leaves glaucous (blue- green in colour) to varying	Leaves glaucouscent (becoming glaucous) but not	Leaves pleated, (folded under at the margins)	Leaves strongly pleated on both margins, leaves broad	Pleated Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus plicatus)</i>	Green spot at the apex of the inner petals only	<i>G. plicatus</i> subsp, <i>plicatus</i>	Yellow selections of <i>G. plicatus</i> are
					Green spot at both	<i>G. plicatus</i> subsp.	

degrees	clearly blue-green	to varying degrees			the base and apex of the inner petals	<i>byzantinus</i>	common in cultivation with two of the more abundant being Sarah Dumont Wendy's Gold and Madelaine
			Leaves with variable pleating, often on one side only; narrow in appearance	<i>Galanthus x valentinei</i> (<i>G. nivalis</i> x <i>plicatus</i>)	Yellow selections of <i>G. x valeninei</i> are rather common and include the readily available 'Spindlestone Surprise' and 'Primrose Warburg' as well as more expensive examples like 'Midas'.		
		Leaves without pleats but applanate (flatly opposed) in vernation	Upper leaf surface glaucescent or green background with a clear pale central stripe	Queen Olga's Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus reginae-olgae</i>)	Blooming in autumn, often absent leaves	<i>G. reginae-olgae</i> subsp. <i>reginae-olgae</i>	
	Blooming during winter with other species, leaves present				<i>G. reginae-olgae</i> subsp. <i>vernalis</i>		
	Upper leaf surface glaucescent but without a clear central stripe		Flowering in the absence of leaves during autumn	Peshmen's Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus peshmenii</i>)			
				Leaves well-developed at flowering time in winter-spring	Common Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>)	Yellow forms are common in cultivation and in the wild in Northumberland. These are included within <i>G. nivalis</i> 'Sandersii Group'	
	Leaves distinctly glaucous (blue-green)	Inner petals with two separate green marks, or one	Leaves with supervolute (wrapped) vernation, up to 3.5cm wide	Elwe's Snowdrop (<i>Galanthus elwesii</i>)	Leaves like <i>G. elwesii</i> on the narrower side with hooded tip and	Galanthus x hybridus (<i>G. elwesii</i> x <i>plicatus</i>)	

		large x-shaped marking	with a hooded tip		shallow pleats on margins			
					Green spot at the apex of the inner petal only		<i>G. elwesii</i> var. <i>monostriatus</i>	
			Leaves with applanate vernation (flatly opposed); leaves less than 1cm wide	Slender Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus gracilis)</i>				
		Inner petals with one green mark at apex only	Lower surface of the leaf with distinct longitudinal furrows	Koenen's Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus koenenianus)</i>				
			Lower leaf surface smooth without furrows	Leaves supervolute in vernation (flatly opposed)	Inner petals with green marking at the apex only; leaves narrow at 1-2cm	Alpine Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus alpinus)</i>	Seed capsules developing to maturity	<i>G. alpinus</i> var. <i>alpinus</i>
							Seed capsules not developing to maturity	<i>G. alpinus</i> var. <i>bortkewitschianus</i>
							Inner petals with two green markings at apex and base, leaves 2-3.5cm	Elwe's Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus elwesii)</i>
					Leaves applanate in vernation (wrapped)	Leaves more than 0.6cm wide; autumn to winter flowering		Cilician Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus cilicicus)</i>
						Leaves less than 0.6cm wide; spring flowering	Narrow-leaved Snowdrop <i>(Galanthus angustifolius)</i>	

References

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