

ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs



Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335

Question of the Week: Last week, you wrote about crocuses that will be blooming soon. What's another plant I can look forward to?

Answer: I love snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*). They originated in Europe and there are about 20 species and between 1500 - 3000 cultivars worldwide. "Galanthus" comes from several Greek words meaning milk flower, and "nivalis" means snowy. Snowdrops are tough, pretty flowers that are easy to grow, prefer cool climates, moist but well-drained soil and require virtually no care. Snowdrops pop-up through the snow in late March and are one of the first flowers of spring. These little plants have hardened leaf tips that allow them to break through the frozen soil. While snowdrops are popular in this country, in UK there is a snowdrop collecting frenzy where there are festivals, garden and bus tours, lectures, lunches and even galas surrounding their blooming times. The frenzy is fueled, in part, by horticulturalists that can easily split and cross-pollinate scores of snowdrop varieties. Just recently, one rare snowdrop sold on eBay in UK for an amazing \$2,150, and last year one bulb sold for \$2,500! Because of their value, it is not uncommon in UK for thieves to dig them up. Collectors and growers have resorted to keeping the location of their collections secret and hiring security guards to protect their investment. In the US, "galanthophila" (the passionate collecting of snowdrops) is less common. One thing dampening snowdrop collecting in the US is international trade restrictions under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (C.I.T.E.S.) which requires a permit, complicating importing of snowdrop bulbs and plants (even dead ones) from overseas. In the US, some garden centers have snowdrops available, and there are several catalog suppliers with prices ranging from less than \$10 for a few bulbs to around \$90 for a single bulb.



Snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*)

Fortunately, we have many naturalized snowdrops in our gardens and edges of woodlands. While they don't commonly self-seed because pollinating insects are scarce in late winter, they do produce "bulb offsets". Similar to daffodils, offsets are many new smaller bulbs that grow attached to the mother bulb and after 2 or 3 years flower on their own. Once the snowdrop flowers wilt, but while the leaves are still green, you can intervene by digging up the clump of bulbs, splitting them and replanting. In late spring, the foliage disappears and the bulbs go dormant. Even while they are dormant through the summer months, snowdrop bulbs like to be under the cool shade of a tree.

A wonderful characteristic of snowdrops is that deer and rabbits won't eat them (hopefully!)



"Ask The Landscape Professional" Lectures now available on our website, www.SprigsandTwigs.net (See the "Learn" tab)

Lecture #5 - "Pruning Technique, Tools & Care" March 10 from 3:00-4:00. (Lecture Full)

Future lectures to be announced.

Sprigs & Twigs is booking Snow Removal services now and scheduling appointments for 2015 Garden Design, Spring Leaf Clean-ups, Garden Spruce-ups, Landscape Maintenance, Organic Lawn Care, Mowing and Trimming Services, Stonework and Custom Carpentry Services. Go to www.SprigsandTwigs.net for details. Call us anytime to discuss your landscape needs and to meet with our staff.

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Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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