



Spring Bulbs at the Lovell Quinta Arboretum

The idea of adding winter interest at ground level by introducing a variety of bulbs was conceived in 2008. Volunteers at the arboretum have added to the small collection of spring bulbs that were already there in Sir Bernard Lovell's day and have, over the years, extended the sites and greatly increased the number of bulbs.

As the arboretum does not have formally marked paths and beds the bulbs must be resilient and easily visible to walkers. Also, hopefully not too attractive to wildlife. Of the thousand crocus bulbs planted ten years ago about thirty have survived the squirrels.

The snowdrops start the display at the end of January, into February, and sometimes March. The single snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* was chosen for most of the planting areas as it naturalises well and is not too expensive. The largest swathe is near the Hebe beds, beneath a copse of silver birches, but there are groups and drifts throughout the arboretum.

Recently we have created some 'dead hedges' to both highlight and protect the emerging flowers. A dead hedge is made from using unwanted branches and brash. The aim is to create a barrier which is wildlife friendly and offers an environmentally better alternative to burning. Two parallel rows of stakes made from slim branches are put in at intervals and infilled with longer branches, and shrubby brash. The first of these can be seen around the birch copse.



At the entrance and around some commemorative benches are groups of the double snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* 'Flore Pleno', bigger and more striking than its single cousin.

Anemone blanda, *Scilla mischtschenkoana* and *Chionodoxa forbesii*; *C. sardensis* and *C. luciliae* bloom there later in March and April. Recently some have been planted by the benches in the 'Silent Space'





Elsewhere there are daffodils, emerging in March. We plant the daffodils in the autumn as dry bulbs. The earliest of these, 'Tamara' and 'Rijnvelds Early Sensation' are near the entrance. Whilst flowering some years as early as February they are rather too tall and susceptible to being blown over.

There are other sites throughout the arboretum, notably opposite the birch copse and in small drifts either side of the Great Avenue.

Narcissus lobularis, the 'Lent Lily,' was chosen for the larger areas. Small and dainty, it is the closest we have to a native daffodil. It is referred to by Wordsworth in his famous poem 'Daffodils'.

Two years ago we introduced *Narcissus obvallaris*, the Tenby daffodil of Wales. Still small, it is bright and eye catching. Both these naturalise well. Around some of the smaller shrubs there is *Narcissus* 'Tete-a-tete' a bright and robust dwarf daffodil.

Later in the spring there are bluebells to see at the far side of the arboretum which were established during Sir Bernard's time.

We have added small groups of snake's head fritillaries, *Fritillaria meleagris*, and camassias and wait to see how well they establish before considering adding more.

Every year we add to the bulb planting areas. Last March instead of buying more snowdrops four volunteers spent a week lifting some of the long established clumps. We divided them and replanted about 5,000 snowdrops 'in the green'. Planting 'in the green' is when the snowdrop has just finished flowering but retains its flower head and green foliage, that has not yet died back. It has proved to be the most successful way of planting these. Newly planted bulbs may take a while to settle and not all bloom during their first season.

This spring we will be planting another three thousand single snowdrops at the end of February to increase the sites and encourage an informal, natural look to add to the beauty of the arboretum.



SG. 2022

