

Matt Bishop

Matt's introduction to snowdrops was in 1986 as a sixteen-year-old student at the RHS Gardens, Wisley, where there was a substantial collection. Fascinated by their variation and the subtle differences between them, Matt began to amass his own collection. At the time there was precious little to be read about snowdrops apart from the very occasional article. By the mid-1990s he began a fledgling project that morphed, through various stages, into *Snowdrops: A Monograph of Cultivated Galanthus*. Matt wrote this with both Aaron Davis (whose doctoral thesis, *The Genus Galanthus*, had recently been published) and John Grimshaw. Today, it seems incredible that the book covered only 500 cultivars, considering the thousands that have been selected and named since.

By 2009, Matt's career changed direction. He was working as Head Gardener at The Garden House, Buckland Monachorum, when things took an unexpected turn. Matt was diagnosed with an eye disease, *Choroideramia*, a progressive condition leading to complete blindness. A tricky period of adjustment followed and in 2012 Matt left paid employment and started to sell snowdrops beginning with just 15 cultivars. Fortunately for Matt, Professor Robert MacLaren and his team at the John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford, came up with a new treatment involving gene therapy to save Matt's eyesight, and that changed his life yet again.

Each year the chipping season has lengthened and, more recently, there has been an annual crop of new offerings; the product of years invested in propagation of cultivars and unnamed selections of promise, shared through an endless exchange with other enthusiasts. This, along with his own namings, form the basis of what he sell's today.