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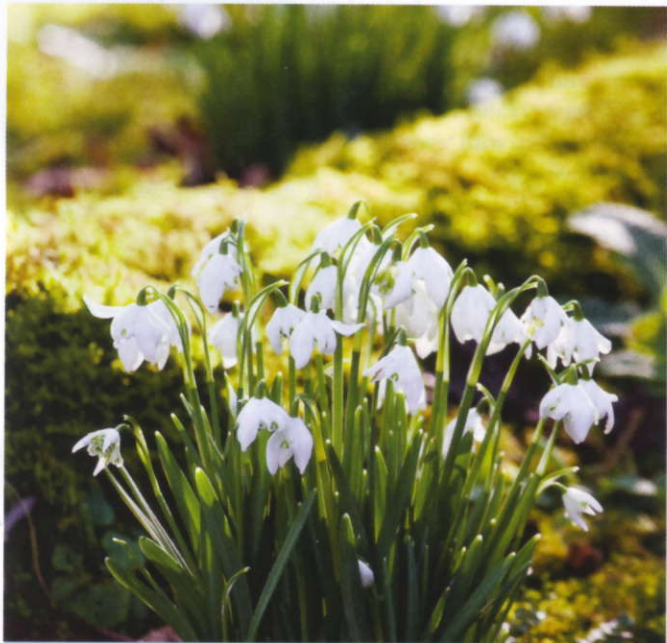
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In the GARDEN

Our monthly guide to organic gardening *By Stephanie Donaldson*



Visit a snowdrop garden

The delicate charm of the snowdrop will be luring thousands of gardeners out of winter hibernation to visit local displays later this month. The one-acre garden at Gable House near Beccles in Suffolk will be open for the NGS from 11am-4pm on 20 February; £3.50 (01502 575298;

www.ngs.org.uk). Further north, the Finlaystone Country Estate at Langbank, Renfrewshire has a Lantern Lit Snowdrop Trail at 7pm on 19 February. Children aged 5-10 can join rangers at 2pm on the 14, 15 or 16 February to make their own lanterns (01475 540505; www.finlaystone.co.uk).

Growing belief

Ed Ikin is head gardener at the National Trust's Nymans garden in West Sussex and a knowledgeable environmentalist. In *Thoughtful Gardening* (National Trust, £14.99), he reveals the secrets of gardening in harmony with nature, whether you have a vegetable patch or a windowbox. The volume has the appearance of a well-used

notebook, complete with weathered-looking pages as if it has been kept in the greenhouse or shed, which should encourage you to do the same so that it is near at hand when you need Ed's expertise.

www.allaboutyou.com/countryliving

Pick of the vegetables

THIS MONTH

Bright Lights Swiss Chard

WHY? This most colourful of winter vegetables is easy to grow from seed and a real stalwart that will keep on cropping right through to spring. The leaves can be harvested young and used in salads or left to grow for longer and cooked.

WHERE? Plant in an open site on enriched moisture-retentive soil or in a large container. Cover some of the plants with a cloche to keep on picking during the worst of the winter weather.

BWARE: Slugs and snails are partial to chard too and, if unchecked, can reduce leaves to lacework.

WHAT'S IN A NAME

Cyclamen originate from the Mediterranean region. The name is of Greek derivation and is presumed to come from *kylos* meaning circle, which refers to the round shape of the tubers.



Sharp practices

The AnySharp Edge, £16.99 (0844 557 8050; www.diy-spares.com), is an easy-to-use tool sharpener. The hand-held gadget can be used on most blades, including lawnmowers, loppers and shears. ▷

