

‘SNOWDROPS IN THE GARDEN’ – TALK BY AUTHOR AND BROADCASTER NAOMI SLADE AT SHEPTON MALLET SNOWDROP FESTIVAL

The Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival has announced details of a talk by gardening author and broadcaster Naomi Slade on Sunday 18 February.

Dominic Weston, for the Festival, said: “This will be one of the highlights of the Festival weekend. We are delighted to welcome Naomi to Shepton Mallet to discuss the delights of winter gardening with a special focus on snowdrops, and we look forward to an engrossing talk from her.”

Naomi Slade lives in Bristol and has had a lifelong passion for snowdrops. She is an author, designer and broadcaster and recently presented a feature on snowdrops for BBC Gardener’s World. She says: “Snowdrops may be small, but they are the sweetest sight of early spring and are very much loved.”

In her book *“The Plant Lover’s Guide to Snowdrops”* Naomi examines the many different varieties of snowdrop and offers design ideas on how they can be shown off to their best. “When I wrote the book I wanted it to be interesting and accessible, to really reflect the fascination and passions of the ‘plant lover’ in the title, so I went on a journey and every time I discovered a cool fact or awesome story I wrote it down.”

Her illustrated talk at the Festival will also give insights into the history of the plant and the mania that has affected *‘galanthophiles’* (snowdrop fanatics) since Victorian times.

James Allen, the Victorian amateur horticulturalist whom the Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival celebrates, had the largest collection of the plants in the country at the time and was the first person to hybridise new varieties from the wild plants. Very few of his introductions still exist, but two – *‘Magnet’* and *‘Merlin’* – have both been given the RHS Award of Garden Merit.

Naomi Slade says: “James Allen was a luminary, a man ahead of his time, and it is of great frustration that so many of his snowdrops were lost – it would have been fantastic to see them! But of those that remain I think that *‘Magnet’* must be my favourite, it is such a beautiful, airy flower and so elegant. And, of course, it is an excellent example of the staying power of an outstanding plant. I am sure James Allen would be proud.”

Naomi will also bring us right up to date with modern snowdrop issues: “*Galanthus* [the snowdrop] is the most heavily collected bulb in the world, and is now protected by CITES [the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora] due to environmental concerns. It is also the source of a drug used to treat Alzheimer’s disease.”

Dominic Weston commented: ““*The Plant Lover’s Guide to Snowdrops*” certainly shows us how to succeed with this iconic flower and presents many interesting and distinctive

varieties. We learn about their history and origins, myths and legends and find out how snowdrops can be used in a garden of any size, planted in swathes or combined with other plants for interest and impact. It is also an engaging read and full of tales to be enjoyed in the garden or in the armchair.”

“We feel sure that Naomi’s talk will make for a special occasion for Shepton. The community has really taken the snowdrop to its heart and this will be a great opportunity to learn more about it from an expert.”

The venue for Naomi Slade’s talk “Snowdrops in the Garden” will be St Paul’s School, Paul St, Shepton Mallet at 11.00 on Sunday 18 February. She will also be signing copies of her book “*The Plant Lover’s Guide to Snowdrops*”. Tickets are £10 including refreshments. To book please see the website: www.sheptonssnowdropfestival.org.uk.