

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

& The Alpine Garden Society

Forrest Medal - Newcastle [Ponteland] 2017

Crocus banaticus 'Snowdrift'

Shown by Alan Furness



Alan Furness wowed the judges with three huge pans of Crocus. The exceptionally beautiful Crocus banaticus 'Snowdrift', a pure white flowered selection of this wonderful autumn flowering crocus, was judged to be the best of all and was awarded the George Forrest Memorial Medal. Well done Alan!

Once it was known as Crocus iridiflorus .



Crocus banaticus is the plant which shows just how closely the genus *Crocus* is related to the genus *Iris*. The selection 'Snowdrift' is regarded as the one of the most beautiful of all *Crocuses*.

More commonly grown in gardens are lilac purple forms. These are a good garden plants, with the lilac in lighter and darker shades of purple. Some growers find it does much better in a raised bed in the garden where if you are lucky it will seed about. Indeed it is often spoken about as being 'miffy' in a pot.

There was nothing 'miffy' about Alan's 'Snowdrift'. There must have been at least 50 flowers each in perfect condition in his 36cm pan and probably just about as many corms. These corms are quite small compared to other crocuses but each can produce a succession of flowers. *C. banaticus* flowers are unique amongst *Crocuses* as the three inner perianth segments are smaller than the outer three which is why it resembles an *Iris*. The attractive style branches are very prominent and much divided. In the lilac forms the styles are a shades of purple as well, so it is no surprise that 'Snowdrift' has pure white stigmas. Native to woodlands and damp meadows in Romania, Hungary, Turkey and around the Black sea in Ukraine this wee dazzler is just as at home in Northumberland, where of course the climate is quite often cool and damp. The corms must not be dried out. Its name [*banaticus*] is derived from the province of Banat in Romania.

Corms of 'Snowdrift' are available in the retail trade from specialist nurseries. Perhaps it would be advisable to start with one or two as it is becoming quite costly. I

have seen it listed from £12.50 to £24 per corm. Janis Rucksans lists a white *Crocus banaticus* called 'First Snow'. As white forms are frequently sold out, my advice is to order it early.



Alan must have grown 'Snowdrift' for many years and must be congratulated on cultivating such a wonderful panful. In my mind I always associate Alan with *Celmisias* and other New Zealand plants but as he proved at Ponteland and on many other occasions, he is an expert grower of many different plants. You can be sure that if he has a plant in a class the he will probably get a red sticker!

Congratulations Alan and thank you for bringing three superb pans of *Crocuses*. To cap the Forrest medal, The RHS Joint rock Garden Committee recommended a First Class Certificate be awarded to Alan's 'Snowdrift'.