



above left  
1 Peach



below left  
2 Strawberry  
in pot



right  
3 Delphinium  
seedlings



above right  
4 Peony seeds



below right  
5 Lilium  
pardalinum

far right  
6 Eucryphia  
lucida, pink form





E.T.

'25.



E.T.

'24

left 7 Lilac

above 8 Grapes



E.T.

'24



Emma Tennant  
2025

above left

9 Crocus speciosus

above right

10 Lapageria rosea

left

11 Cyclamen coum

right

12 Auricula



E.T.

'25.

# EMMA TENNANT

## *The Twelve Days of Christmas*



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# EMMA TENNANT

## *The Twelve Days of Christmas*

### 1 · Peach

This peach, which I grew in my cold greenhouse, is the variety 'Peregrine'. It was raised by the famous firm, Rivers of Sawbridgeworth, in 1906. The peach, *Prunus persica*, was named by Linnaeus [see no.7], who thought that it originated in Persia. The specific epithet is a misnomer, as it grows wild further east, in northern China and Korea. Persia was just one stop on its westward journey along the Silk Road.

### 2 · Strawberry in pot

This strawberry is a mystery. It was a present from my daughter Isabel. She bought it under the name *Fragaria virginiana*, a native of the east coast of America. However, the plant may not be true to name, as it does not produce the runners which are a distinguishing feature of that species. Isabel was particularly keen to obtain *F. virginiana* as it is grown by the firm Wilkins of Tiptree to make their famous strawberry jam, Little Scarlet Preserve.

### 3 · Delphinium seedlings

Like most keen gardeners, I enjoy raising my own plants. Growing them from seed is a good way of obtaining unusual species which are not often stocked by nurseries. *Delphinium grandiflora*, a native of Siberia, is an example. This batch of seedlings included some interesting colour variations.

### 4 · Peony seeds

*Paeonia mlokosewitschii*, famous for its superb yellow flowers, is named after Ludwig Franzewich Mlokosewitsch (1831–1909), a soldier and explorer who became Inspector of Forests in the Caucasus, where it grows wild. In the hot summer of 2025 the seeds ripened in my garden for the first time.

### 5 · Liliium pardalinum

*Lilium pardalinum* grows wild in the coastal ranges of California. The specific epithet comes from the Latin name for a panther or leopard, and describes the spotted flowers.

### 6 · Eucryphia lucida, pink form

There are only five species in the genus *Eucryphia*, which have an interesting distribution. They grow wild in Chile, Tasmania and Australia. *Eucryphia lucida*, named for its shiny leaves, comes from the forests of Tasmania, where this unusual pink form was discovered by loggers and propagated, fairly recently, by the New Zealand nurseryman Ken Gillanders.

### 7 · Lilac

Lilac grows wild in south east Europe, so was an early introduction to this country. According to the RHS dictionary, 'a vast number of cultivars have been developed since antiquity', but I prefer the original species, with its single mauve flowers emerging from darker buds, and, of course, the superb scent. Lilac is bone hardy – there are famous specimens in Russia – and very long-lived. Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), the Swedish botanist famous for his binominal method of scientific nomenclature, called the genus *syringa*, from the Greek *syrinx*, a reed, in reference to the hollow stems. The English name comes from the Persian *lilak*, meaning blue, or blueish.

### 8 · Grapes

In the 19th century British head gardeners achieved great skill in growing tender, even tropical, fruit under glass. The pineapple was regarded as the King of Fruit, and the grape, the Queen. I do not know the name of these seedless grapes, which were growing in the greenhouse at Philiphaugh, near Selkirk.

### 9 · Crocus speciosus

As the RHS dictionary says, 'few genera of this size include so many exquisitely beautiful species, varieties and cultivars'. *Crocus speciosus* is one of the best. It comes from Turkey, Iran and southern Russia, flowers in October, and is easy to grow in grass. I painted these beauties on gold-flecked Japanese paper.

### 10 · Lapageria rosea

*Lapageria rosea* is the national flower of Chile, where I have seen it growing wild in the temperate rain forest. The red bells were hanging from the branches high above our heads – a thrilling sight. *Lapageria* was named after Napoleon's first wife, the Empress Josephine, née de la Pagerie, and introduced to Kew in 1847. My plant came from Chatsworth, as a seedling, and is thriving in my cool greenhouse. I painted it on gold-flecked Japanese paper.

### 11 · Cyclamen coum

*Cyclamen coum* is an early spring favourite. The specific epithet refers to the island of Kos in the Aegean, where it grows wild, though it is also native to Bulgaria, Turkey, the Caucasus, Lebanon and Israel. It has rounded heart-shaped leaves.

### 12 · Auricula

Auriculas are hybrids between two primulas from the European Alps: *P. hirsuta* and *P. auricula*. They have been popular in British gardens since they were introduced in the 16th century. This unnamed seedling was a present from a friend. I used gold-flecked Japanese paper for it.

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