



# **JOBS FOR THIS WEEK**

- Plant bulbs for autumn
- Pick broad beans
- Cut back perennials
- Plant out your leeks

# *Amateur* **Gardening**

30 JUNE 2018

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## **Autumn favourites**



**How to manage bamboo**

**Six to plant now for best colour in autumn**



**Weeders: we reveal the best**

**Cistus: 6 best to try**



## **Climber or Rambler?**

**What is the difference and which rose is best?**

**Grow a Chelsea-winning hydrangea!**









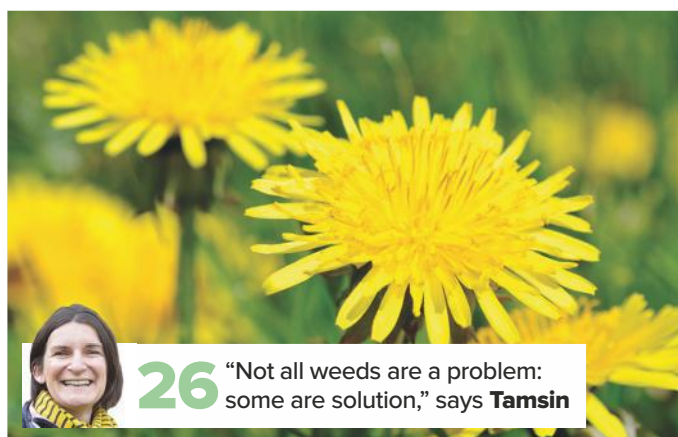
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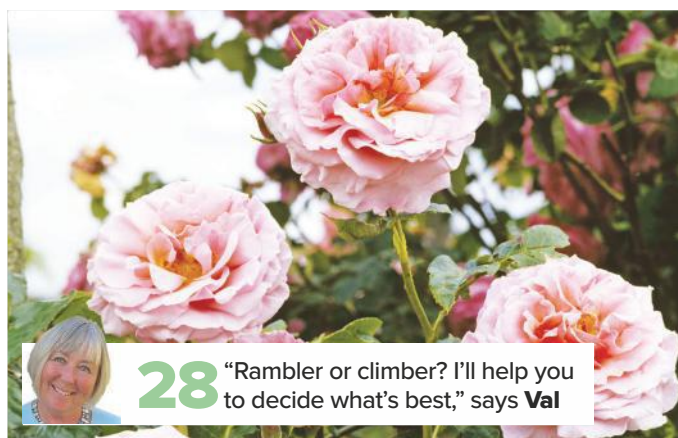
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"This is the time of year when all our hard work is coming to fruition. It is also when unwelcome visitors are at the height of activity and for many, weeds are the bane of summer gardening. However the term weed is a catch-all that includes many lovely flowers that are either too invasive or simply not where you want them to be. Now in my opinion, bindweed is a proper pest and with no redeeming features is the worst weed of the lot. If you could vote for the worst weed of all time, what would you choose?"



**Garry Coward-Williams, Editor**



# Your Gardening Week



with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes



## Top Tip

Most wood will need more than one coat of paint. Give the first coat ample time to dry so the second one will take more readily.

Paint the wood in even strips

The shed was in desperate need to a fresh coat of paint

## Warm-weather work

Use the sun to preserve wood and metalwork, says **Ruth**

**A** REFURBISHMENT of the shed's exterior has been an increasingly pressing priority for the past year or so, but somehow weather or time has always been against us. Last weekend, however, was blessed with two days of unbroken sunshine and a light breeze – perfect painting weather.

Looking after your wood is a key component of garden maintenance. Sheds, fences, trelliswork, outdoor furniture – as well as metalwork – all need care if they are to withstand the wear and tear of outdoor life for more than a couple of years.

Carry out your wood and metal maintenance on a dry, still day when there's no rain forecast for at least 48 hours. Your equipment should include a face mask if there's any sanding down to do, a sander or sandpaper if required, clean brushes of various sizes and well-maintained ladders or platforms.

If you are painting woodwork, remove any moss or algae with a stiff brush and

fill any holes and chips with wood filler. Sand down rusty ironwork and wipe everything over with a damp cloth to remove dust and flakes, and create a smooth surface to work on.

There is a mind-boggling variety of preservatives and treatments available. Protect metalwork with a durable metal paint such as Hammerite and choose from varnishes, clear and coloured paints and stains for wood.

Pay special attention to areas that take the main force of the weather, are in contact with damp soil and collect water when it rains.

You will probably need to apply more than one coat for proper coverage, and leave a couple of hours in between coats. Once this is done, your woodwork should be safe for a couple of years at least.

It took four cans of wood stain and two days to paint our shed. According to the manufacturer, it should now be preserved for the next five years – something my right arm is extremely happy about!

## Step by step

## Blocking weeds

No light keeps them at bay



**1** Start by covering the weeded area with light-suppressing membrane or robust plastic sacks (old animal feed bags are ideal).



**2** Make sure no light can get through to help weeds germinate by anchoring the edges down.



**3** Cover the membrane/sacks with a dense layer of gravel. It took three sacks of 20mm stones to cover this small area.



**4** The area looks much more attractive and will hopefully now be free of weeds – just push any loose stones back into place if they move.



**Food for thought:** Buy next week's AG for everything you have ever wanted to now about fertilisers and how to feed your plants



# Painting a shed in eight easy steps

A couple of fresh coats of paint should protect the wood for several years



**1** Start by clearing around the sides of the shed – ours was surrounded by old and broken pots, sacks of compost and old canes.



**2** Strip ivy and other creeping plants that are making their way up the shed. Ivy is shallow-rooted and pretty easy to remove.



**3** Prevent paint from getting onto the edge of windows using masking tape. Wipe any paint drips off the glass immediately.



**4** When carrying out any maintenance make sure you are standing on a level and stable surface, a platform or secured ladder.



**5** Start painting at the top of the fence or building and work down, coating the edges of the roof and underneath gutters.



**6** Follow the grain of the wood when painting as this makes it easier to apply and gives a thicker and smoother finish.



**7** Don't neglect any supportive wooden struts under the shed. Give them a couple of coats of wood preservative.



**8** Finally, protect any metalwork such as handles and hinges with a durable metal paint such as Hammerite.



## Keeping plants healthy in the heat

**I**F it's hot outside it's going to be scorching in the greenhouse and not all plants welcome excessive temperatures. A combination of heat, humidity, dryness and a still atmosphere can lead to problems with pests and fungal disease, though these are relatively easy to prevent.

Good ventilation is key, so open doors, windows and vents to let air flow through. You can lower the temperature

by wetting the greenhouse floor in the morning – the water cools the air as it evaporates.

Water border plants and pots in the morning or evening when it is cooler. Water around their roots, rather than splashing it on petals and foliage as this can encourage mildew or lead to scorching. Give plants a good soaking a couple of times a week, rather than watering little and often.

## Before and after



**1** The shed looked tired and in need of some TLC before it was painted. The wood and metalwork were also showing signs of neglect.



**2** You certainly can't miss the shed now! Painting has improved the look and will help it withstand whatever weather comes the way of our hilltop plot.





## Exciting new show at Belvoir

The historic property hosts first Flower and Garden Festival

**T**HE stunning setting of Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire will play host to a brand-new horticultural show in July.

The Belvoir Flower and Garden Festival (14-15 July) is a new venture for the historic property and will include show gardens, a floral marquee and a Gardeners' Q&A hosted by Sean Murray, winner of the Great Chelsea Garden Challenge, Nick Hamilton of Barnsdale gardens (son of the late Geoff Hamilton) and local BBC radio personalities.

Exhibitors include Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants, Coopers Nurseries, Barcham Trees and the National Association of Flower Arranging Societies as well as Vitax, Thompson & Morgan and Makita. Proceeds will go to the gardening charity Perennial.

Belvoir Flower and Garden Festival is the brainchild of award-winning garden designer Andy Tudbury, whose business Halcyon Days Garden Design is based near Nottingham.

He explained: "I wanted to put something back into horticulture because it has always been a good trade for me. I have travelled to garden shows in Malvern, Worcestershire and Sandringham in Norfolk, and it got me thinking that we needed something similar in this area, east of the M1 and



Belvoir Castle is launching a new flower festival in July

Show organiser Andy Tudbury

Nick Hamilton will take part in a gardeners' question time

north of the Watford Gap. The area is crying out for something like this and I wanted to try something that would go down really well with local people."

### It's all about drawing in new people

Andy contacted Belvoir Castle, which he describes as 'the most prestigious venue in the East Midlands area' and they were more than happy to work with him.

The show has room to take 5,000 people per day, but Andy reckons that

2-3,000 visitors a day will set them on track for a second show next year.

"It's all about diversity, drawing people in who might not usually attend a garden show," he said. "As well as horticulture there will be live music and fantastic food from local suppliers, so something for everyone. We are going to do our best, put on an amazing event and see where it goes from here."

For details and tickets call ☎ 01476 871 001 or visit 🌐 [belvoircastle.com](http://belvoircastle.com).

## New roses and grow-your-own at Hampton

THREE new roses will be launched at this year's RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in Surrey.

The pure-white climber Starlight Symphony 'Harwisdom' is Rose of the Year 2019. It was bred by Harkness New Roses and has a subtle, spicy scent. You can buy it at the show, or bare-root plants will be available from autumn 2018 or as potted plants at garden centres from spring 2019.

Rose Sarah Elizabeth 'Athygrafos' is a soft pink floribunda, and £1 from every rose sold will go to the Sarah Groves Foundation to help underprivileged children. The third new rose is the white floribunda 'Eirene'. It commemorates 100 years since the end of The Great War and £1 from each sale will go to The Action Reconciliation Service for Peace.



Hampton Court is the world's largest flower show

Rose of the Year 2019

RHS Neil Hepworth

'Sarah Elizabeth' and 'Eirene' will be available later in the year.

This year's show aims to promote home-growing with help from top chef Raymond Blanc, food writer Deliciously Ella and *Masterchef* host Gregg Wallace.

The show is also celebrating the 40th

anniversary of Plant Heritage and the 50th anniversary of Hertfordshire-based Hopley's Plants. There will also be 15 show gardens, trade stands and a cookery theatre.

Call ☎ 0844 995 9664 or visit 🌐 [rhs.org.uk/hamptoncourtpreview](http://rhs.org.uk/hamptoncourtpreview).



**STOP PRESS!** The RHS is experimenting with homespun slug-beaters such as copper tape, eggshells and wool pellets to see if they work. We will keep you posted. In the meantime, what works for you? Let Ruth know at *Amateur Gardening*, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough Hants, GU14 7BF or by emailing [ruth.hayes@ti-media.com](mailto:ruth.hayes@ti-media.com)



## Learn all about bees and how to help them

THE Great British Bee Count ends on 30 June, but the chance to discover more about these fascinating and endangered insects doesn't stop there.

Wild and Wonderful Bees is a family-friendly day designed to tell you more about the 250-plus varieties of bees found in the UK. It takes place at Knoll Gardens near Wimborne in Dorset on 14 July and will include guided walks, talks and the chance to talk to apiologists – bee experts.

During the day you can make bee houses and beeswax candles, join bee walks and meet Daisy Headley of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Jane Adams who founded the national survey Garden Bioblitz, and Rebecca Twigg who won Defra's 'Bees Needs Champions' award.

Rebecca said: "Solitary bees do not get the air time



they deserve for all the pollinating services they provide. We cannot afford to ignore them.

### Getting serious about bees

"We need to really get serious about borrowing some 'honey bee enthusiasm' and applying that to their wild cousins."

Wild and Wonderful Bees

is from 11am-4pm on 14 July at Knoll Gardens, Stapehill Road, Hampreston, Dorset BH21 7ND (© 01202 873931, [knollgardens.co.uk](http://knollgardens.co.uk)).

Admission is £6 adults, £3 children plus family concessions.

To take part in the Great British Bee Count visit [friendsoftheearth.uk/bee-count](http://friendsoftheearth.uk/bee-count).

## World-famous lavender farm comes of age

A TOP Yorkshire tourist attraction, which also provides the UK with much of its homegrown lavender, comes of age this year.

Family-run Yorkshire Lavender in Terrington near Castle Howard turns 21 in 2018. It was founded by Nigel Goodwill after losing his wife Lynne and he now runs it with his children, Sam and Emma Jane.

### Lavender is an ancient cure

Starting with a few rows of lavender, the company now grows hundreds of varieties plus other herbs, which are all available to buy in the farm's nursery.

As well as the lavender gardens, maze and a shop selling lavender products, Yorkshire Lavender also has a tea room, a play area, a herd of deer and a celebration of Yorkshire.



Mr Goodwill said that one of the best things about running Yorkshire Lavender is that it has taught him so much about the herb, including its surrounding folklore and the roots of its name.

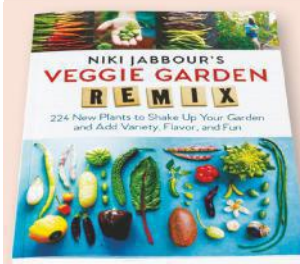
Herbalists have used it steeped in water for centuries and the Romans used it in washing – the Latin

for 'to wash' is 'lavare'.

Mr Goodwill added: "In summer, the lavender with its stunning array of different colours, from white through a complete range of blues, lilacs to magnificent deep purples, along with the range of distinct and heady scents, is a wonderful experience."

For further details visit [yorkshirelavender.com](http://yorkshirelavender.com).

## BOOK REVIEW



Niki Jabbour's

### Veggie Garden Remix

(Storey publishing, £14.99)

IF you want to create your own global vegetable garden, Niki Jabbour has 224 plant suggestions from around the world. For example, if you like tomatoes (strictly speaking, a fruit), she suggests you give ground cherries, Cape gooseberries and tomatillos a go. As Niki is Canadian she mentions different zones across the country, although there are plenty of general details about growing conditions and information about where each veg originates.

There are some great things to try, such as celtuce, which offers a dual harvest of early leaves followed by a crunchy stem in late summer, and papalo, which has a coriander flavour. Some are known in the UK, such as asparagus pea and cucamelons, but others, such as orach and hamburg parsley, are not so common.

If you want to be more adventurous with your veg, this is the ideal book to help you get started.



# Your Gardening Week



with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes

## TopTip

If bulbs planted now don't flower at their best this autumn, don't despair. They will mature and perform much better in future years.

*Gladioli murielae* are autumn stunners

Nerines give a beautiful splash of autumn colour

## Bulbs for autumn colour

Plant now to boost post-summer borders, says **Ruth**

**I**N an ideal world a garden contains something to catch the eye all year round, but sometimes things start to drop off when summer comes to an end. An easy way of creating seamless colour is to plant autumn-flowering bulbs – and this is your last chance to do so this year.

There are bulbs for every situation and soil. Autumn crocuses and *Sternbergia*, plus cheerful yellow winter aconites, look stunning naturalised in lawns and under trees. Borders can easily be brightened by bold dahlias, tall nerines with their clusters of trumpet-shaped blooms in shades of pink and hardy *Cyclamen coum* that take over

flowering in shady areas in late winter.

My favourite autumn flowering bulb is *Gladiolus murielae*, which has white flowers with blotched maroon centres. It grows well in pots as well as borders, though the corms do best if lifted after flowering and stored somewhere frost-free and dry through winter.

Bulbs do best in free-draining soil, so if you garden on clay dig in plenty of well-rotted manure or compost to increase drainage and nutrients.

If you want to plant your bulbs in containers and expect them to be there for a year or more, use loam-based John Innes No3 and be prepared to lift and divide the bulbs after a few years.

## A candidate for dry shade

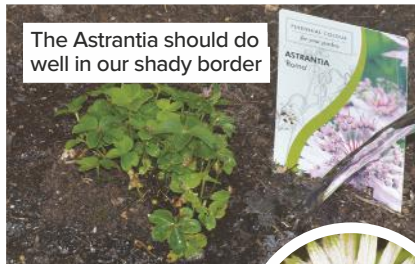
■ While planting for autumn I removed some inherited daffodil bulbs from a shady border against the house.

■ They weren't performing well, so I replaced them with a pink-tinged *Astrantia major* 'Roma' (also known as masterwort).

■ These long-flowering perennials like sun or shade and we already have a white one thriving in a similar dry and shaded border.

■ I mulched the planting hole with well-rotted compost and watered the plant well. It will need frequent watering

The *Astrantia* should do well in our shady border



while it gets established and then hopefully it will romp away.



Beautiful bloom of *Astrantia*

## Step by step

## How to plant bulbs

### The best depths and spacings



**1** Dig over the soil to remove weeds, roots, stones and debris, and fork in lots of well-rotted organic matter.



**2** Plant the bulbs at three times their own depth and one bulb's width apart, with the pointed end facing upwards.



**3** Cover the bulbs with soil and tamp down the surface with the back of a rake and water well. Mark their position.



**4** You can also plant bulbs in pots at the same depth and spacing as before. Use multi-purpose John Innes No2 for one season, or John Innes No3 for longer-term plantings.



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# Your Gardening Week



with Peter Seabrook, AG's classic gardening expert

Listen to Peter's free podcast every Thursday. Search for 'This Week In The Garden with Peter Seabrook' on iTunes

Plants from my stand return home and now require about a fortnight's remedial treatment



Cut tulips are sacrificed to the bins after seven days in the hot Great Pavilion

Peter Seabrook/TT Media

## Peter's tips



■ The best support for foliage and flowers when in transit is other leaves and blooms. When carefully pressed together they are self-supporting.



■ When joining in the rush to buy at flower show sell-offs, herbaceous plants with a good root system are a safe bet. The chances are flowers will be past their best after days in reduced light.



■ Tubes of polythene slipped over plants reduces the space they take up and makes transportation easier. Put the pot in first, then pull up the tube constricting the branches as you go. Remove by continuing to pull up.



■ Plants that have been in reduced light will need several days in light shade to stiffen up and become accustomed to outdoor conditions.

## The aftermath of Chelsea

Plants need special attention after a show, says **Peter**

**T**HE sanitised coverage of national flower shows on television these days tells just a fraction of the story, and viewers could be shown and taught much more with greater background detail. If only the presenters would come down from their isolated eyries with their prepared scripts on Autocue, to research their subject, we could all learn a great deal about handling and growing plants.

Plans for next year's Chelsea Flower Show are already well underway and growers will be rooting lupin and delphinium cuttings, for example, in readiness. It is not just the planning and preparation, though, as there are lessons to be learnt about plant transportation and plant treatment after a show.

When putting a tree, shrub or large leafy plant into a vehicle, it needs to be 'pulled through' to do the least damage. Getting a tree into an estate car, for example, needs two people: one to lift the pot through the hatchback to another at the front passenger door, who will pull the pot into the footwell.

### "There are lessons to be learnt about plant transportation"

Pots and containers sit reasonably securely in this position, and when it comes to extraction the pot is lifted through the front door and then the branches follow. Trying to get a tree out the way it came in will almost certainly do serious branch damage.

It takes me more than a fortnight to handle plants brought back from their 10-day stint at Chelsea. Every tree, shrub and herbaceous plant needs a good soaking with some dilute high-potash plant food, and then damaged stems and foliage removed. In most cases they then need repotting into a container two sizes larger – a treatment many perennials will benefit from at this time of year.



# The Fledglings are Here!

Despite looking so cute and fluffy, the latest research suggests that being a baby bird might be harder than it looks.

Nature can be a cruel mistress at times, and no one learns about that the hard way more than a baby bird. Fledglings are born with no skills and need to learn fast to survive. They can't feed themselves, they can't fly well (or at all) and don't know about the dangers of other wildlife or bigger birds.



Song thrushes for example struggle once they leave the nest, with 2% of fledglings dying each day in the weeks

that follow. As a result birds have evolved to lay more eggs to increase the chances of having offspring that will make it into adulthood.

There are things we can do to help their rates of survival. During the breeding season birds expend vast amounts of energy. After all the first thing a chick has to do is break its way out of a shell, an act which the RSPB describe as "exhausting"! Once hatched fledglings fall into one of two categories; Precocial birds which can leave the nest in a day or two of hatching and Altricial, who are born with their eyes closed often taking several weeks to leave the nest. Therefore the parents of Altricial birds also use up energy flying back and forth to the nest after sourcing food. Blue tits, for example can have as many as 19 eggs at a time. That is a lot of mouths to feed!

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# Your Gardening Week

with ACI's gardening expert Ruth Hayes



Hardy geranium varieties flower at slightly different times, so cut them back when blooms fade

## Top Tip

Foxgloves will be starting to go over now, so deadhead them before they can self-seed prolifically – unless you want a garden full of their seedlings, of course!

## Citrus in summer



Pinch out fast-growing citrus shoots



Lemons flower and fruit simultaneously

■ Citrus plants should be growing well now and need feeding to keep them robust.

■ Throughout summer, feed these plants with a nitrogen-rich fertiliser that will encourage the development of flowers and fruit.

■ Don't let them dry out – use rainwater where possible.

■ They need minimal pruning, but do pinch out the tips of any tall fast-growing shoots that are spoiling the overall shape of the tree.



Feed with a rich summer fertiliser

## The 'Hampton hack-back'

Ruth gives some perennials a mid-summer trim

**T**HE Chelsea chop, which takes place in late spring around the time of the famous London flower show, is a key garden task that keeps bushy, early flowering perennials in good shape.

Catmint benefits from being cut back hard in late May, and should thank you with a secondary flush of flowers later in the summer.

Now is the time for what I call the 'Hampton hack-back', coinciding with next week's Hampton Court Flower Show. It is an early summer trim for some other bushy perennials

that have finished their first flush of flowers. Hardy geraniums are prime candidates for cutting back now. If left unattended, they tend to sprawl and flowering falls off, but if given a brisk trim now they will remain in an attractive mound and hopefully flower again in a few weeks' time.

You should also be lucky enough to get a second flowering from perennials such as lupins and delphiniums that hold their blooms on tall spires. Cut them back as they start to fade, feed and keep well-watered over summer and they will soon start to bud again.



Keep geraniums neat by cutting hard

## Step by step

## Cutting back to keep plants healthy



**1** Cut back flowered pulmonaria by about one-half. This prevents it falling outwards and will encourage fresh foliage to develop.



**2** Feed with a general-purpose fertiliser after pruning. Pulmonaria suffer from mildew if their roots are too dry, so keep them well watered too.



**3** Cut back fading lupin and delphinium spires and you should be rewarded with a second flush of blooms later in the summer.



# Your Gardening Week



with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes

## The mixed colours of vivid verbascum

Classic mixed-border beauties popular with bees and butterflies, says **Ruth**

**L**AST year my verbascum were shredded by mullein moths, so I am hoping that this week's free seeds will provide replacements for next year.

Verbascum are statuesque hardy perennials and these Mr Fothergill's seeds will flower in white and pretty shades of pink and darker carmine. They are classic mixed-border beauties that are popular with bees and butterflies.

You can sow them now, undercover, in trays of dampened seed and cuttings compost. Keep them somewhere light and warm, and germination will take place within a month. Prick them out into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and grow them on.

The seeds are small, and sowing can be made easier by mixing them with a little horticultural sand before sprinkling them over the compost. Harden off the seedlings in late summer and plant them in their final growing positions in autumn. They will flower next summer.

If you have room in a border you can also sow outdoors in a prepared seedbed. Thin the seedlings as they grow, not letting them dry out, and then move them to where you want them to flower next year.



Mix seeds with sand for easier sowing



Mullein moth caterpillars



These mixed verbascum come in white as well as fabulous shades of pink



If you save the seeds and sow indoors next spring, from February to March, the plants should flower next year as well.

If your plants are attacked by yellow-

and-black-banded mullein moths, either pick them off by hand or treat with pyrethrum on still evenings so most pollinators aren't affected.

### What's on

### Things to do near you



RHS Hampton Court flower show runs from 2-8 July

**June 30:** Botanical Perfumery: RHS Hyde Hall, Creephedge Lane, Rettendon, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 8ET. ☎ 0203 176 5830, 📧 rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall

**30-1 July:** Plant fair and Open Gardens: Henbury Hall, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK11 9PJ. ☎ 01625 422101,

📍 planthuntersfair.co.uk

#### July

**1:** Kidderminster Horticultural Society Open Gardens, Worcs. ☎ 01562 631001; 📧 suegardenuk@gmail.com

**1:** Garden iPhoneography: Barnsdale Gardens, The Avenue, Exton, Oakham, Rutland LE15 8AH. ☎ 01572 813200; 📧 barnsdalegardens.co.uk

**1-8:** Sweet pea week: Easton Walled Gardens, Easton, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG33 5AP. ☎ 01476 530063, 📧 visiteaston.co.uk

**2-8:** Hampton Court Flower Show: Hampton Court Palace, Molesey, East Molesey KT8 9AU. ☎ 020 3166 6000, 📧 rhs.org.uk

**3:** Growing Scented Flowers: RHS Harlow Carr, Crag Lane, Harrogate, North Yorks HG3 1QB. ☎ 0203 176 5830, 📧 rhs.org.uk/gardens/harlow-carr

**4:** Love Your Bugs: Barnsdale Gardens

**4:** Beautiful Borders: RHS Hyde Hall

**5:** Behind the Scenes at Hyde Hall: RHS Garden Hyde Hall

**6:** Potager Kitchen Garden and Cookery Demonstration: Middlethorpe Hall, Bishopthorpe Road, York YO23 2GB. ☎ 01904 641241, 📧 middlethorpe.com

**7:** RHS Advice: RHS Harlow Carr

**8:** Hardy Plant Day: Barnsdale Gardens

■ Please send details and images of your events to [ruth.hayes@ti-media.com](mailto:ruth.hayes@ti-media.com) or What's On, *Amateur Gardening*, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Industrial Park, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7BF.

■ Listings need to be with us at least six weeks in advance.

■ All details are subject to change without our knowledge, so please always check that the event is still going ahead before leaving home.



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# Your Gardening Week

with Bob Flowerdew, AG's organic gardening expert



Place any dropped fruit, which may contain disease, in the compost

As well as natural shedding, you can thin by hand to improve the harvest (right)

Alamy

## The June drop

Don't worry if your fruit tree starts shedding its load, says **Bob**, as it's just getting rid of the surplus

**T**HERE are some events in gardening that seem hard to swallow, as at first glance they look like disasters – the June drop of fruit trees being one of the most obvious. Most fruit trees, especially apples and pears, regularly set many more fruitlets than they can comfortably ripen successfully. This means that around the end of this month, they start to drop their surplus.

To the beginner, this looks terrible. One day you see a huge potential crop of little apples on your tree. The next, most seem to be lying underneath, and all appears lost.

Don't worry, though, as the tree has just done the sensible thing. It could never carry all those fruits to harvest – and if it did, they would be small and sour. Instead, the tree chooses how many it could ripen, and this is still likely to be more than is optimum for us.

You see, the fewer fruits left to swell, the bigger each one gets, the sweeter each one becomes and the fewer but larger sweeter fruits we then pick. And

by dropping the surplus, the tree has saved ripening so many seeds that take more resources from the tree than the tasty, pulpy bit we eat.

So don't fret – instead, give the trees a good shake every other day to help them drop even more. Then, a week or so later, thin the remainder by hand.

**“The tree has just done the sensible thing”**

Take off every congested and damaged fruitlet, leaving the perfect and well placed to ripen. Put picked fruitlets with the dropped ones into your compost, or bury them, as these may carry pests or diseases. This improves the quality of your harvest more than almost anything else you can do. Be ruthless, as it's really hard to over-thin. Go on, try it and see.

## Bob's top tips for the week



Alamy

**1** When digging first potato crops, be careful not to damage the plants. Also, leave small tubers attached and heel in again for a bonus crop.



**2** Prune blackcurrants at the same time as picking them. Cut out cropping branches that you can take and pick elsewhere in more comfort.



**3** Dig up your garlic as soon as the leaves yellow. If you wait until the leaves fall off, you won't be able to find the bulbs.



**4** Raise the cut height of your mower to leave taller grass that will stay greener for longer in hot weather.

All photographs: Time Inc. unless otherwise credited



**L**ANDSCAPE GARDENER Stan Hitchen, believes that the properties of FX-Silica gel have made him pain free and independent once again. *GEORGE TAYLOR invests-gates.*

At the age of 63 you'd think that Stan Hitchen would start to think about taking life a little easier. However he's just finished a complete renovation of his new home and not content with that, he's also designed and landscaped his garden to create 'a little piece of heaven'. This is all quite amazing considering Stan has been suffering from crippling arthritis for the last eight years!

"Arthritis runs in the family... we've all suffered with it" Stan tells me as we sit on the decking in his garden. "I knew I'd get it and after forty years of gardening everyday it finally struck!"

### "THE AGONY LED TO DEPRESSION!"

Stan suffered with crippling pain and stiffness in his hands and knees, which meant delegating all of the physical work, which he always relished, to his younger staff. "It was heart-breaking. I felt so useless and started to have bouts of depression. The anti-inflammatories and pain killers from the doctor hardly had any effect and the physio treatments only relaxed the joints for a short while after each session."

### "MY WIFE SAYS I'M A NEW MAN"

Then, two years ago, Stan and his wife, Jeannie, moved into their dream house. The house needed a lot of work and the garden was a 'bomb site' as Stan puts it. However they could see the enormous potential and set about slowly doing up the house.

This is when Stan's arthritic pain became excruciating, to the point that he could

# "Arthritis was crippling me... but FX-Silica has completely given me my life back"

by GEORGE TAYLOR

hardly keep a grip on a hammer! And then, to make things worse, Jeannie fell from a ladder and broke her hip very badly. She spent eight weeks in hospital and all the work on their dream home came to a grinding halt.

It was during a visit to the hospital, whilst sitting in the cafeteria with his brother, that Stan's own medical problems were about to change. His brother Geoff, also suffered with the 'family arthritic curse' but had recently found remarkable pain relief by using a soothing gel called FX-Silica.

Stan had tried just about every pill and cream on the market. But Geoff assured him that FX-Silica was definitely worth a try, after all it had worked for him. It was a 'massive breakthrough' in his battle with arthritic pain.

Stan said he had nothing to lose so he ordered two tubes to give it a go. Two

days after receiving them he ordered another four tubes!

### "WHY WAS HE SO IMPRESSED"

"Within minutes of applying the gel to my hands and knees I could feel such soothing relief. It was like the stiffness and pain was melting away. I was worried the sensation would quickly wear off quickly but for the next couple of hours I finished tiling the bathroom before visiting Jeannie. Even then, the drive to the hospital was the best feeling behind the wheel I'd had in years. No pain at all in my hands, knees and back."

Incredibly after years of pain, Stan is now free from his arthritic nightmare. He also had a derelict house and garden to get on with, and enough FX-Silica to keep him moving without pain. Over the next five weeks he worked all day long, as if he were 21 again!



Stan Hitchen has finally broken the 'family curse' of arthritis.

He finished off the jobs in the house and then completely landscaped the garden. He even found the time to build a den at the end of the garden for when his grandchildren come to visit.

### "LIFE IS JUST SO GREAT AGAIN!"

He had the house and the beautiful new garden all ready for when Jeannie came home from hospital. There's now a photo sitting proudly on the mantelpiece showing Jeannie's wonderful and tearful reaction when she saw all the work Stan had done.

Hearing Stan's story, it's clear that FX-Silica has changed his life. Gone are the bouts of depression and he now looks forward to enjoying his old age in the house of his dreams and tending to the garden that he loves with all his heart!

**FX-Silica is available from Health Broadcast Ltd for £24.95. To order call their freephone 0808 208 0312.** You can try FX-Silica without risk, as they offer a 90-day money-back guarantee policy. If you're not happy at any time within the 90 days you can simply return the tubes, even if empty or used and receive a full refund.

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# Your Gardening Week

with Val Bourne, AG's organic wildlife expert



A red form of *Ocyopus ater* taken on the Norfolk coast showing the typical long-bodied rove-beetle shape

Buglife/Roger Key



The Devil's coach horse beetle is nocturnal

Wikicommons/Quartl

## The other beetle

Less well known than ground beetles, rove beetles have long, slender bodies and tiny wing cases.

**Val** looks at how they help gardeners

**M**OST gardeners recognise ground beetles by their hard wing cases and oval bodies. Many beetles are big and black, although we do love the violet ground beetle (*Carabus violaceus*), which is almost an iridescent purple in sunlight. Most of the time ground beetles are sheltering in the vegetation, and this is why my garden is packed with plants that cover the ground. I want to encourage these excellent predators because the ground beetle is the best

predator of the grey field slug (*Deroceras reticulatum*).

Both the adults and larvae of the beetle eat the slug and its eggs. This slimy, pinkish, plump slug is a real problem because it can overwinter and survive (and feed in) low temperatures. It's the one you find above ground, in or on your lettuces, and the one that ravages oilseed-rape crops.

### “Other rove beetles eat aphids”

However, there's another type of beetle called the rove beetle (or Staphylinidae) and there are 950 British species. Many of them are predators. But they look entirely different from ground beetles because they have long, narrow bodies and tiny wing cases. The most well known of these beetles is the Devil's coach horse (*Ocyopus olens*),

which looks terrifying. Several used to inhabit an outhouse in the winter months when I lived in Northamptonshire in the 1980s. If you got too close they raised their tails rather like a scorpion. I never actually saw them squirt any foul-smelling liquid from their abdomens, although they can. The Latin species name *olens* means smell. These nocturnal beetles feed on fly larvae, insects, spiders and slugs.

Smaller rove beetles tend to feed on the larvae of the cabbage root fly, and in the glorious days of the National Vegetable Research Station at Wellesbourne in Warwickshire, where I worked in the 1970s, nine species were found feeding on the immature larvae. Entomologists there found that rove beetles were twice as common as ground beetles close to brassica crops, although this census was carried out in May 1961 when there was an abundance of insect life.

I can remember walking to school in the late 1950s one late September day and a section of privet hedge was festooned in hundreds of garden spider webs, and each one dripped with dew. That day has stuck in my mind for 60 years, but now I find only the odd one.

Other rove beetles eat aphids, and *Oligota flavicornis* (sorry, there's no common name) eats fruit-tree red spider mite. Going back in time this tiny beetle, measuring 1/25in in old money, was found to be numerous in Essex orchards in 1945. If those orchards are still there, sprays will probably have killed off both predator and prey alike.



The violet ground beetle preys on many 'pest' species, such as slugs

Alamy



Val Bourne

**TOP TIP** Apple trees attract lots of insect life and could in theory attract 93 insects. The blossom is highly attractive to bees, the apples feed you and the windfalls sustain the birds.



# Your Gardening Week



with Lucy Chamberlain, AG's fruit and veg expert

## Top Tip

Leeks aren't keen on competition, so you should aim to keep the bed well weeded throughout the growing season to give them the best chance.

The best cold-season crops such as leeks require a little TLC at this time of year



## Step by step

## Planting out leeks



**1** First, you need to grade your leeks. Water the pot they're in thoroughly and give the moisture time to soak in, then lift the whole lot out of the pot and gently tease them apart. Make one pile of larger seedlings and reserve the smaller leeks as spares.



**2** Leeks like a moisture-retentive soil in good, strong light. They can tolerate shadier spots so long as the air flow is good – otherwise, the fungal disease rust may set in. Dig the area over well and, using a large dibber, make 6in (15cm) deep holes that are 10in (25cm) apart each way.



**3** Don't bother with the old advice of cutting off any excess foliage and roots. Place one leek in each hole and water it in well, and the soil will naturally fall in around it. Cover the bed with cloches of insect-proof mesh to deter leek moth and leaf miner.

## Give leeks a head start

Plant out your leeks now for the best yield, says **Lucy**

**I** KNOW, I know – who on earth wants to be thinking of winter when we're in the midst of gorgeous summer weather? But trust me, you do. Some of the very best cold-season crops need attention now, and the reward in this case will be row upon row of hearty, melt-in-the-mouth leeks. Softened in butter, added to a rich cheese sauce or thrown into a chicken,

ham and mushroom shortcrust pastry pie, you just can't be without them.

Hopefully, you followed my lead and sowed some in pots back in April. You should now be looking at a tussock of promising green seedlings that are just waiting to be planted. To me, these steps (see right) are a summer ritual that will guarantee continued abundance. See? I don't want to face up to winter, either!

## Secrets to best broad bean pickings

**I** ADORE these little emerald pearls and if, like me, you've been bitten by the broad bean bug, you're probably already tucking into them by now. Sowings made in October overwinter to produce an early harvest. You can often pick these in May in milder locations; use really hardy varieties such as 'Witkiem Manita' and 'Super Aquadulce'. Batches sown in March and April, especially early maturing types like 'De Monica', will be catching up with them now, so how do you get the best from the crop?

For me, picking the pods when they are at their absolute peak is a must. Tiny immature beans are a waste of potential, yet so are huge bitter-tasting beans with leathery grey skins. Your objective is to aim somewhere in the middle. The only way to do this is to 'get your eye in' – pick a few pods and peel them open to investigate the progress inside. You'll soon become



To enjoy your broad beans at their peak, it's important to pick over the plants every day or two

an expert. Picking every couple of days is also essential.

I have dabbled with eating the pods whole when they are finger-sized. They taste OK, but it just seems a bit pointless: it's the beans themselves that I want! If you do miss a few pods, only to discover them days (or weeks) later, don't fret. Just lightly boil them and then pop them out of their leathery skins – they're delicious.



**Next Week:** Harvest redcurrants, sow Florence fennel, make homemade feeds for fruit and veg, lift wet garlic or leave for storing, quick catch-up for veg crops if you're falling behind



I'm rewarding my summer strawberries with a post-harvest pamper of a spruce-up and a good meal!

## Give your strawberry patch a boost

THE summer strawberry cycle goes something like this: in May you eagerly devour the first ripening fruits, during June the yield crescendos deliciously, and by the end of the month fruit quality begins to taper off. At this point, I start doing what would be considered sacrilege in May – freezing fruits for jam.

This is also a sign that the plants' energy levels are starting to fall, so reward them with a well-earned,

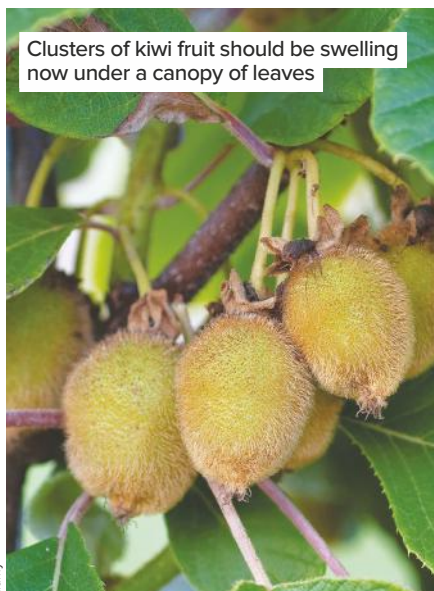
post-harvest pamper. Cut off tired foliage to encourage a new, more vigorous flush of leaves to emerge. Simultaneously, give plants a well-balanced liquid feed (I use liquid Growmore) to pep them up.

Robust plants will be throwing out runners at this time. If you don't need them, just cut them off to focus the strawberry's energy back into a bit of self-healing. It's a bit like sending your plants off to a luxury spa!

## Keep those kiwis under control

A HEALTHY kiwi fruit is likely to become a sizeable mound of flailing stems come the summer months: trust me, this is a good thing! These vigorous vines do demand a lot more space than their smaller cousins, kiwi berries, but who can resist the lure of home-grown Chinese gooseberries?

If you're lucky enough to grow one, here's what you should be doing now. Hopefully, clusters of fruit are swelling nicely under that canopy of leaves and this is what you want to encourage. Any stems not bearing a crop can be cut back to 1-2ft (30-60cm) in length. Prune any that are supporting fruit back to two or three leaves past the fruitlets, as this will encourage them to plump up. Tie in young shoots if you're still trying to build up a framework of stems. Productive, tamed and under control? Job done.



Clusters of kiwi fruit should be swelling now under a canopy of leaves



I'm squeezing in some salad plug plants between my winter brassicas to make the most of space

## Be space-savvy with winter brassicas

IF you're anything like me, you'll find that summer is a juggling act on the veg plot. Trying to squeeze one crop in here and shoehorn another in there feels like a horticultural jigsaw puzzle! So when a crop such as cabbage, cauliflower, purple sprouting or kale requires planting out, it tests my planning skills, because all these winter brassicas demand generous spacings.

If you sow in April and plant out in June or early July, you can't expect a harvest until October at the earliest. Normally, my kale and winter cauliflowers mature first, followed by cabbages, Brussels sprouts and purple sprouting, in that order. The sprouting is a space-hogger: plants should be at least 3ft (90cm) apart! The others need at least 2ft (60cm) spacings each way – squeeze them closer and you compromise yields.

Plant now at these wide spacings, then fill the gaps with quick-maturing veg. Speedy crops such as radish, baby turnips and carrots, salad leaves, annual spinach, rocket, basil and dill can be sown, grown and harvested before winter brassicas have settled in too much. Just keep it all well watered and weed-free. Ideally, sow them at the same time you plant out your winter greens, so there's no root competition.

Don't push your luck with sowings after the end of August, no matter how rapid the gap-filler's growth is, otherwise winter brassicas may produce miserly yields. Until then, fill space as much as you can.





# Pick of the very best

Graham Rice chooses his six top RHS Award of Garden Merit winners



*Did you know?*  
Sold as a supplement, cistus extract is said to boost the immune system. A study published in 2016 found that extract of *Cistus incanus* contains active antiviral ingredients.

With their delicate 'tissue-paper' petals, cistus flowers may lack longevity, but they easily make up for it in looks

## This week it's **Cistus**

A Mediterranean native, the drought-tolerant rock rose offers showy summer flowers and requires little looking after. **Graham Rice** reveals his favourites

**A**s our summers change, it is predicted that dry spells will become more frequent and restrictions on the use of water in the garden are likely to be increasingly stringent. As a result, more and more of us are going to need attractive – and easy-to-grow – drought-tolerant plants. Step forward: cistus.

Almost everyone who has been on a Mediterranean holiday will have seen these plants. Cistus are evergreen shrubs found growing on sunny hillsides, in rocky places or along rural roadsides – usually in full sun and in well-drained situations. Some develop a low and creeping habit; others make taller shrubs up to 6½ft (2m) in height; about 39in (1m)

is more usual, though. As with many shrubs native to the Mediterranean region, they often have foliage that is packed with aromatic or volatile oils.

All cistus feature showy, short-lived flowers in reddish or pink shades, or in white, their petals usually appealingly crinkled like tissue paper. Flowering in June and July, they are somewhat reminiscent of wild roses, and blooms tend to feature a boldly contrasting mark

at the base of each petal. Each flower generally lasts for only a single day, but they are produced with such generosity that you really don't notice.

In their natural habitat many species form symbiotic relationships with soil fungi, including truffles, which not only help them tolerate summer drought but also provide nutrients in poor gravelly soils. In the garden, excessive feeding can disrupt these associations and may

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**The Award of Garden Merit** is a mark of quality awarded since 1922 to garden plants (including trees, vegetables and decorative plants) by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).



***C. x aguilarii* 'Maculatus'**

Narrow, bright green, wavy-edged foliage is the perfect background for the large pure-white flowers, each with a prettily feathered crimson blotch at the base of each petal. Taller than many, it makes a lovely specimen. H: 6½ft (2m).



***C. x purpureus***

A classic cistus; reddish stems carry dark, narrow foliage, against which sit large rosy-red crinkled flowers. Arranged around a mass of golden stamens, the petals feature bold crimson blotches at their bases. H: 39in (1m).



***C. x dansereau* 'Jenkyn Place'**

Unusually prolific, making an attractive, evenly rounded plant that continues to bloom all through the summer. White flowers featuring a bright-red basal blotch are offset beautifully by dark-green leaves. H: 4ft (1.2m).



***C. x pulverulentus* 'Sunset'**

A low and spreading shrub with prettily waved foliage that has a slightly silvered sage-like look. The gently crinkled flowers are rich magenta-pink, darkening towards the base, and are both large and prolific. H: 20in (50cm).



***C. x laxus* 'Snow White'**

One of the most showy varieties, with a mass of large pure-white flowers (no blotches) opening from red buds. Probably the hardiest of all, it will tolerate pruning. Blotched versions are sometimes sold in error. H: 39in (1m).



***C. x dansereau* 'Decumbens'**

Low and spreading, and reaching 4ft (1.2m) or more across. The dark-green, wavy-edged foliage is rather sticky, while the shining white flowers feature small crimson spots at the base of each petal. H: 2ft (60cm).

also lead to softer, less resilient growth that is more likely to suffer in cold, wet winters and in storms.

As a rule, adding generous quantities of organic matter to the planting area is a mistake; ditto throwing handfuls of fertiliser into your planting hole and finishing off with an organic mulch. Prepare cautiously: add grit in heavy soils and either do not mulch at all or stick to gravel.

In the garden, cistus are staples of Mediterranean-style plantings, gravel gardens, terraced slopes, dry banks and sunny raised beds. They thrive between

stones in sunny retaining walls and can even be grown in containers – where, of course, they will tolerate drought far better than most shrubs. They are also good by the sea.

Largely unproblematic, cistus may suffer from wind rock, especially when

planted from large pots. They may also dislike pruning – but given that most only grow to a relatively modest size, cutting back is rarely necessary.

In future, we're all going to need more drought-resistant shrubs in our gardens, and cistus should be top of the list.

## What makes a good cistus?

- Elegant habit
- Dense, evergreen foliage
- Long flowering season
- Prolific flowering
- Tolerance of a variety of different garden conditions



# Tips for cistus success

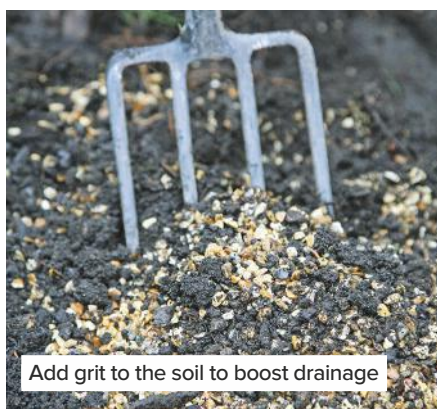
Cistus require dry, well-drained conditions, and do not always respond well to the peat or coir composts growers use for most shrubs. In particular, their roots may not grow out easily from the highly organic rootball into the surrounding soil.

Wind rock, caused by gales catching the evergreen foliage and loosening the roots, can also be a factor until those roots have grown out sufficiently.

Small plants usually establish more quickly and reliably than large ones, but will have less impact initially. A good trick is to set three small plants relatively close together, to give the illusion of a single, more substantial specimen.



Wikicommons/Stridvall



## Planting and care

■ Cistus are best planted around this time of year, in June or July. I know that traditional shrub planting time is the autumn, but it is unwise to plant a drought-loving shrub just before our wettest season!

■ Choose a sunny site, preferably one that is sheltered from icy winter winds, and, unless the soil is already well drained, work grit into the planting area before planting.

■ Cistus rarely need pruning – which is just as well as, like lavender, they do not respond to cutting into older wood.

## A flavour of the Med

Providing structure all year round – plus a profusion of early summer flowers – cistus are invaluable partners in Mediterranean plantings, for dry gardens, and dry, sunny slopes. Other good evergreen associates include rosemary, lavender, helichrysum and euphorbias, which often grow with them in their natural habitats.



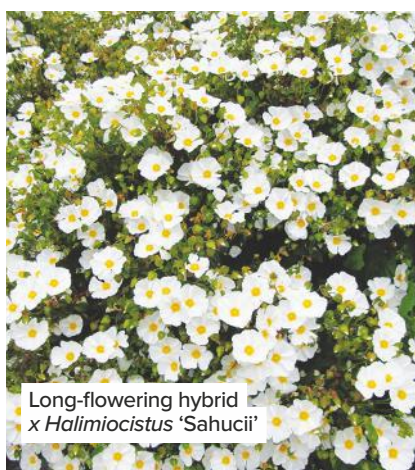
For partners in a different style, try perennials such as *Asphodeline lutea*, erodiums, spiky eryngiums and sedums. Flag irises, especially the shorter types, can be unexpectedly effective, while grasses and grass-like plants (including blue festucas and libertias) offer a striking contrast.

Finish off with annuals and biennials that will provide ever-changing colours through the seasons and can be allowed to self sow among the permanent specimens. Sweet peas, cerinthe, chrysanthemums and annual poppies all fit the bill perfectly.

## Close relations

Cistus not only hybridise freely between themselves, but also with related plants. There are two lovely AGM winners among this latter group, both of which bloom from May to September – an exceptionally long season for this group of plants.

Reaching 20in (50cm) in height and, eventually, 16½ft (5m) wide, x *Halimocistus* 'Ingwersenii' has pure-white flowers and dark, slender leaves. More of a ground hugger, x *H.* 'Sahuicii' spreads less and reaches just 6in (15cm) in height. Both are superb.



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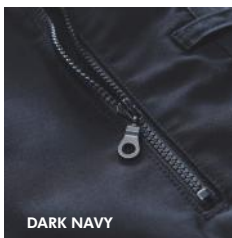
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Our native weeds play an important part in the ecology of the countryside

# The wonder of weeds

**Tamsin Westhorpe** is determined to find the good in some of our common weeds

**H**AVING recently read a book called *Wonderful Weeds* by Madeline Harley, I have a new-found interest in these 'nuisance' plants. The truth is that native weeds bring so much to our plots, and if you investigate them you'll find that even the ones we curse the most offer a few benefits.

The main advantage of weeds is undeniably that they offer wonderfully enchanting flowers that attract beneficial insects to the garden. There are many native wildflowers that are rare and should be welcomed and valued by us all, and there are also many ornamentals that have become weeds that still hold value.

Our native weeds play a vital role in the ecology of our wonderful countryside. Most gardeners are very happy to welcome wildflowers such as the cowslip (*Primula veris*) and I love to see daisies (*Bellis perennis*) in the lawn. Not all these weeds are

a threat to our gardening prowess and some are a real treat.

## **Food for thought**

I'm not for one moment suggesting that you encourage weeds, native or otherwise, but if you're fighting a constant battle you may as well look for the good in your opponent. Living in rural Herefordshire, I'm surrounded by wild plants and they enhance my life in many ways.

As a keeper of chickens, I'm all in favour of the common chickweed (*Stellaria media*). This annual plant seeds readily and my chickens adore a fistful in their run. The plentiful seeds provide a feast for small garden birds as well, and if you have a budgerigar it will thank you for a few sprigs.

Those planning to nurture a clump of nettles to attract butterflies must remain steadfast and keep the clump restricted. Let it run out of control and you'll be in danger of losing your

garden to its greedy grasp. However, it will be a magnet to red admirals and tortoiseshell butterflies.

If you're looking to live off the land, then the culinary benefits of nettles will appeal. This weed is often used to make tea and soup. Many gardeners use nettles to make a plant feed. After cutting up the leaves into small pieces and submerging them under water for four weeks it can be diluted and fed to your plants. But be warned – this mixture can pong a bit!

Looking out of my kitchen window over a bed littered with ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) it's hard to find any good in this invasive plant. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. However, the foliage can be cooked when young and it tastes like a very bitter spinach. It was grown in the Middle Ages as a food crop, but I'd have a job to eat through all mine!

Joking aside, there are many medicinal and edible qualities to weeds.



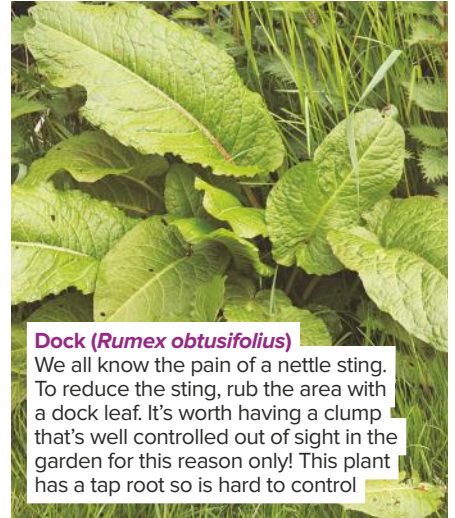
# Six weeds you might want to keep



**Field forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*)**  
This native low-growing annual is welcome in most cottage gardens. Favoured for its blue flowers that can be seen from April through October. Looks great growing under roses and thrives in most soil. Easy to weed out by hand



**Red campion (*Silene dioica*)**  
A stunning biennial (often grows as a perennial) that flowers from May to July. Perfect for dappled shade. It can be dug into the soil as a green manure. Height up to 2ft (60cm). Roots were once used as a 'soap' for washing clothes



**Dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*)**  
We all know the pain of a nettle sting. To reduce the sting, rub the area with a dock leaf. It's worth having a clump that's well controlled out of sight in the garden for this reason only! This plant has a tap root so is hard to control



**Dandelions (*Taraxacum officinale*)**  
This robust and often rampant perennial weed deserves a mention as it offers some of the most nutritious leaves you can eat, and the flowers are used to make dandelion wine. The vitamin-packed leaves are very bitter



**Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)**  
A native perennial that can reach about 3ft (1m) in height. Young leaves are used to make soup, and if chopped and submerged in water the leaves also make a wonderful organic plant feed. Great for attracting butterflies



**Common vetch (*Vicia sativa*)**  
An attractive weed that will scramble through other plants. Ideal as a green manure as the roots are excellent nitrogen fixers. Dig in before it gets a chance to flower and set seed. In the past, farmers would feed it to the horses

However, identification can be tricky, so I would avoid using them for this purpose unless you are with a qualified herbalist or experienced forager.

*Phacelia tanacetifolia*. It's attractive purple flowers will bring in the bees, but if using as a green manure it should be cut back and dug in before flowering.

Let's raise a glass of dandelion wine to the positives that our garden weeds can offer, and promise to try to look at them in a more positive light.

## Soil stabilisers

While few people would welcome couch grass into their plot, weeds with rhizomes can be thanked for stabilising steep banks. In fact, a whole army of weeds can be praised for preventing soil erosion. Pet lovers will be interested to know that it is couch grass that your cat or dog will seek out to chew on when they wish to be sick – and some might see this as a benefit!

As weeds die down they add goodness to the soil and some, such as white clover (*Trifolium repens*), fix nitrogen. Another weed that is used to great effect as a green manure is

## 5 organic ways to stay in control of weeds

- Hoe off annual weeds regularly and preferably before they have a chance to flower. Rake them up and pop them on the compost heap or in the chicken run.
- Remove all the root of perennial weeds such as dandelions. If you leave even the smallest piece of root they will regenerate. Dandelions are easier to lift after rain.
- In autumn, apply a layer of mulch to borders – this will reduce

but not prevent weeds from germinating. Spread mulch on a warm but moist soil.

- If you don't have the time to pull perennial weeds, nip off their flowers before they set seed.
- Learn to identify weed seedlings and remove them in spring before they gain momentum.

**Warning:** Make sure you identify edible plants correctly as some plants are poisonous.





Climbing rose 'Alister Stella Gray' is a repeat flowerer with pretty yellow blooms that have a medium fragrance



For a midsummer hit of full-on flowers, opt for a ramblers

# The great rose debate: ramblers v climbers

Both ramblers and climbers will clothe walls, arches and pergolas in beautiful blooms in summer, but what are the differences between the two – and which will best suit your needs? Rambler fan **Val Bourne** has the answers

**I**T is an indisputable fact: roses are the nation's favourite flower. However, because most gardeners go for repeat-flowering roses – ones that ration out their blooms throughout summer and autumn – their gardens aren't terrifically 'rose-iferous' in early summer. This is all well and good, but I believe every garden needs some roses that flower just the once; after all, these are the ones that drip with blooms, creating midsummer magic.

Rambling roses make June glorious, and I much prefer them to climbing roses. For one thing, ramblers are extremely healthy and easy to grow, even on poorer soil, because most are hybrids with added vigour. They are either derived from the fruity-scented

*Rosa wichuraiana* or they're multiflora hybrids with a musk-rose fragrance. Climbing roses are often leggy hybrid teas, or tall shrubs shifted into climbers. Disease is far more of a problem because repeat-flowering roses often have disease bred into them.

Vigour varies enormously with ramblers: I planted 'Kiftsgate' and it put out 30ft (9m) wands of growth – in a week! – so I immediately dug it up. And in the garden from which it gets its name, 'Kiftsgate' has killed six mature beech trees. Some ramblers are too thorny (I always regret planting 'Wickwar'). Some will scale a tree, or cover an ugly outbuilding; others are more refined. The trick is to pick the right one.

Whichever you plant, deadheading

is unnecessary: nearly all ramblers only flower once – although some do go on to produce a crop of colourful hips. If you want late-summer colour, add a viticella clematis (such as 'Étoile Violette') close by, to scramble through your rose.

Admittedly, ramblers aren't highly fragrant. This is where repeat-flowering climbers score, with many delivering an intense perfume hit at nose level.

However, climbing roses are a very mixed bunch. Too many show 5ft (1.5m) of bare stem, topped by flowers that can only be viewed from an upstairs window. Others die badly – the wonderful golden yellow blooms of 'Alchemist' turn to brown paper as they fade. My advice: only use those that die well, or you may find yourself permanently up a tall ladder!



# 6 ravishing ramblers



## 'Goldfinch'

Almost thornless and easy to train. The shiny mid-green leaves flatter egg-yolk yellow flowers that, as they age, fade to cream. Moderately vigorous, it can be trained around a pole or pergola. H: Up to 15ft (4.5m)



## 'Debutante' (AGM)

A very feminine rambler with dark-green foliage and clear rose-pink, semi-double flowers that fade to a pretty lilac/pink. It has a good scent and stems that are pliable enough to train around an arch. H: Up to 20ft (6m).



## 'Sander's White Rambler' (AGM)

This pure-white option, with shiny green leaves, flowers a couple of weeks later than many ramblers, thereby extending the season. It is luminescent in light shade and is not as vigorous as many. H: Up to 25ft (7.5m).



## 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' (AGM)

The best rose for scaling a mature tree. Once established (give it three to four years) you'll get a waterfall of apple-blossom pink, sweetly scented rosettes, followed by small hips. H: Up to 40ft (12m).



## 'Phyllis Bide' (AGM)

Often incorrectly listed as a climber thanks to its long flowering season (June-Oct). Scented double blooms are pale yellow, flushed in apricot/pink. Good for a wall as it's not too tall, but it is quite thorny. H: Up to 15ft (4.5m).



## 'Adélaïde d'Orléans' (AGM)

Clusters of hanging blush white blooms emerge from rose pink buds – almost like cherry blossom. The thorns are also pink so it never looks glacial. A versatile choice: good for arches, pergolas and gazebos. H: Up to 20ft (6m).

## The best climber or rambler for...

### Scent



## 'Gloire de Dijon'

A buff-apricot, climbing hybrid tea rose with flat-faced, old-fashioned-looking blooms. Glorious and abundant in June, with only a few later flowers. This Victorian favourite has stood the test of time. H: Up to 18ft (5.5m).

### Ease of care



## Malvern Hills (AGM)

Medium-large clusters of small, fully double blooms in soft yellow, on a healthy rambler that always looks summery. Only a light fragrance, but shiny foliage and not too many thorns. H: Up to 15ft (4.5m).



# Top 3 climbers



## 'Scent from Heaven'

Last year's Rose of the Year has extremely fragrant, classically formed hybrid tea flowers that hover between orange and apricot. The light green, shiny foliage is healthy and there are flowers from the ground upwards. H: Up to 10ft (3m).



## 'Madame Alfred Carrière' (AGM)

This warm white noisette rose is hardly ever out of flower in the summer months. The stems are pliable and thornless, the foliage sumptuous. The first rose Vita Sackville-West planted on the north wall at Sissinghurst Castle, it's superb. H: Up to 25ft (7.5m).

# 2 for hips

## The Generous Gardener (AGM)

More large shrub than climber, this light-pink rose lives up to its name and flowers very generously. Hips follow the cup-shaped blooms, but are more brown than red in colour. H: Up to 15ft (4.5m).



## 'Francis E. Lester' (AGM)

A large rambler, excellent for covering a summerhouse or other building. Once the small, single pink flowers have finished, clusters of oval orange-red hips form, making a real winter feature. H: Up to 20ft (6m).



Deadhead repeat-flowerers

## Planting and care

- Ramblers are naturally vigorous and will tolerate poorer growing conditions than climbers, due to the fact that they are less highly bred.
- Bare-root planting, during the winter months, is an excellent idea for both. Roses establish more easily and postage is cheaper.

- Feed your climbers with a slow-release high-potash plant food (I'm a big fan of Vitax Q4). Ramblers can be left to their own devices.
- Deadhead repeat-flowering roses to promote more flower. Once-and-only roses should be left: many will form attractive hips after blooming.





**'Aloha' (AGM)**

Features blowsy, large rose-pink blooms with a mighty scent. An upright habit makes this a perfect pillar rose – use it to hide another climber's bare stems, or grow as a shrub. Just don't let the name deter you! H: Up to 12ft (3.75m).

## Pruning knowhow

### RAMBLERS

- Start by removing the 3Ds: any diseased, dying or damaged wood.
- Remember that rambles produce new growth from the base. You need to take out the older, woodier stems in November, and tie in the glossy new ones.

### CLIMBERS

- These roses vary a great deal, so pruning is complex. However, you still want to aim for strong growth from the base.
- Start by removing the 3Ds: any diseased, dying or damaged wood.
- If you're happy with the shape of your rose, shorten the flowering side shoots by two-thirds.
- Tie in new shoots.
- If your rose is showing lots of bare stem, be brave and cut one half back to the ground, to allow it to reshoot from the base. Do the other half the following year.
- Bend the stems, or level them, to create more flowers.



## Training tips

- Never let any rose go straight up into the air. It will only produce flowers at the top. You can slow the flow of sap by bending the stems between November and February.
- Coil rose stems around upright posts, and loop them along pergolas, like a 'looper' caterpillar. Alternatively, train the stems horizontally, or create circles on a wall.
- Do this before Christmas, when the stems are pliable – removing the leaves if you need to.

## Where to buy

### David Austin

📍 [davaudainroses.co.uk](http://davaudainroses.co.uk)  
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Why succumb to the autumn blues when you can enjoy the spirit-lifting pinks and reds of nerines – just some of the flowering bulbs that will come into their own as summer fades?

# Set the stage for an autumn spectacle

When planning – and planting – for your next season's show, ensure that bulbs, corms and tubers get star billing, says **Hazel Silver**

**A**S gardeners, we all love summer, but it cannot last for ever. When it comes to beating the autumn blues, plants are one of the best antidotes, and bulbs are a real shot in the arm. Corms, bulbs and tubers that bloom as temperatures fall in September can go in the ground now and ensure a brightening display into November.

I would not be without the autumn daffodil (*Sternbergia lutea*) – those sunshine-bright yellow flowers will multiply in the right conditions. It favours very well-drained, light soil, in a sun-drenched, sheltered spot.

The warming pink tones of *Nerine bowdenii* and colchicums are also vital for lifting spirits as we enter the colder months. Nerines such as 'Zeal Giant' produce exotic blooms in the perfect shade of shocking pink, either in the border or containers. They can take a

year to settle but will then delight for years if left undisturbed. Colchicums such as 'Waterlily' can, likewise, be enjoyed in pots or in the ground, in well-drained, sun-baked soil.

Arguably the most impressive autumn-flowering bulb is *Amaryllis belladonna*; but its tender nature means many gardeners cannot grow it. Luckily, an amaryllis has now been crossed with a nerine to create the amarine (x *Amarine tubergenii* Belladiva Series), which is hardy down to -10°C and produces fabulous trumpet flowers in shades of white, blush and magenta. Originally bred for the cut-flower market, these beauties are best homed in a well-drained, sunny bed; the base of a south-facing wall is ideal, and you can boost flowering by planting them in clumps.

Good old dahlias are some of the most floriferous plants during autumn – grown amongst grasses and autumn-

flowering perennials, they will create drama in the border. If you fancy something a bit different, opt for single daisy-like cultivars (such as 'Bishop of Canterbury' and 'Classic Rosamunde'), which lure bees and butterflies. Or succumb to the pillow-like charms of 'Café au Lait' and 'Penhill Dark Monarch', which are great for cutting.

Plant a generous spread of tubers, corms and bulbs now and you won't just be looking ahead to autumn – you'll actually be looking forward to it.

## Where to buy

### Broadleigh Bulbs

📍 [broadleigh-bulbs-spring.co.uk](http://broadleigh-bulbs-spring.co.uk)

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### Sarah Raven

📍 [sarahraven.com](http://sarahraven.com)

☎ 0345 092 0283



# 6 autumn-flowering favourites

## *Sternbergia lutea* AGM

The autumn daffodil can be slow to establish, but it's worth the wait for those sunny yellow goblets that bloom in September and October. Plant in very well-drained soil, in full sun. H: 6in (15cm).



## *Nerine bowdenii* AGM

Thanks to its spidery pink blooms, the Bowden lily injects glamour and colour from September to November. Plant in full sun, in well-drained soil. Performs well in containers, too. H: 1½ft (45cm).



## *Crocus speciosus* AGM

This autumn-flowering lavender crocus looks charming flowering through a carpet of fallen leaves. Grow in well-drained soil, in sun or semi-shade. Over time it will increase to form drifts. H: 4in (10cm).



## *Colchicum speciosum* AGM

Resembling huge pink crocuses, plant *C. speciosum* in generous clumps and they will light up the autumn garden. The impressive flowers are followed by large leaves. Sun or semi-shade. H: 8in (20cm)



## *Cyclamen hederifolium* AGM

The pink flowers of the sowbread are produced in early autumn and are followed by silver-green leaves that persist all winter. Grow in light, humus-rich soil and mulch regularly with leaf mould. H: 4in (10cm).



## *Hesperantha coccinea* 'Major' AGM (syn. *Schizostylis*)

Crimson flag lily's cherry red blooms appear throughout autumn. It needs damp roots in summer, so dig in organic matter to retain water, or plant streamside. H: 2ft (60cm).



## Growing tips

PLANT autumn bulbs now, following the specific instructions provided by the supplier. Every bulb has different requirements. For example, sternbergia may sulk in pots, whereas nerines enjoy the compact conditions provided by container growing.

Amarines like to be planted just

beneath the surface of the soil so they can feel the sun, whereas dahlias ought to be planted 6-12in (15-30cm) deep. Nerines hate disturbance, while you can divide hesperantha every 2-3 years.

By meeting the specific needs of each bulb you'll be able to enjoy them every autumn for years to come.





## ◀ More unusual options



### **Gladiolus papilio**

Grow the butterfly sword lily in fertile, well-drained soil, in sun, and you will be rewarded with exotic bells of bruised purple, cream and green, which seem to nod on arching stems. H: 3ft (90cm).



### **Acis autumnalis AGM**

A charming bulbous perennial, the autumn snowflake produces delicate papery white bells on pink-claret stems in late summer and early autumn. Plant in well-drained soil, in sun. H: 6in (15cm).

## Planting ideas

### **Nerines + stonecrop and grasses**

For a gorgeous autumn border display in sun, combine the shocking pink nerine 'Zeal Giant' with *Hylotelephium* 'Herbstfreude' and the graceful, arching stems of deciduous *Stipa tenuissima*.



GAP

### **Giant meadow saffron + black mondo grass**

The black leaves of evergreen *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' are the ideal foil for *Colchicum speciosum* 'Atrorubens', with its pink goblets. Full sun.



GAP

### **Crimson flag lily + Michaelmas daisies**

The elegant red or pink flowers of *Hesperantha coccinea* look great with *Aster amellus* 'Veilchenkönigin' (violet) and *Aster x frikartii* 'Mönch' (lavender). Plant in well-drained, moisture-retentive soil, in sun.



GAP

### **Dahlias + grasses**

Single-flowered dahlias look great with grasses – in borders or pots. Try yellow 'Moonfire' with the barley-like rose-hued *Hordeum jubatum* and fluffy *Pennisetum villosum* – often grown as an annual, the latter should self seed.







**x *Amarine tubergenii* 'Emanuelle' Belladiva Series**

This pale pink cross between an amaryllis and a nerine is hardier than tender amaryllis, coping with temperatures down to -10°C. Plant just below the soil's surface, in a sheltered, sun-baked spot. H: 20in-1½ft (50-75cm).

---

## 3 dreamy dahlias



**'Café au Lait'**

A gorgeous cream dahlia with pale pink, coffee and apricot tones; makes a fine cut flower. Plant tubers in sunny borders or in containers at least 1ft (30cm) deep. H: 39in (1m).



**'Bishop of Oxford'**

Single tangerine flowers are held above dark foliage on this under-used member of the Bishop collection, which includes the better-known scarlet 'Bishop of Llandaff'. H: 3ft (90cm).



**'Jowey Mirella'**

Go dark and add some smoulder to an autumn border. Looks good with cream and orange dahlias, and with grasses. Can be grown in containers and will last well in the vase. H: 3ft (90cm).



The iconic pictureless **Chiltern Seeds** catalogue has contributed to a successful family business. **Tamsin Westhorpe** talks to the next generation

**H**OW are your typing skills? Bridget Bowden has certainly mastered the art. It was she who typed the first Chiltern Seeds catalogue for her husband Douglas, and the catalogue is why so many of us hold this family company dear. Offering very few images and a distinctive shape, the catalogue entices us to be tempted by its offerings thanks to the wonderful plant descriptions. Douglas would dictate the witty and informative content to his wife and the result was, and still is, a catalogue with personality, charm and substance (see the examples on this page).

It was in 1975 that the late Douglas Bowden set up Chiltern Seeds from his living room as a company born out of frustration. "My father's hobby was growing plants, and when he realised

## **CRESCENTIA – Bignoniaceae**

### **C. cujete. Calabash Tree**

Want to grow your very own calabash so useful as a cooking utensil or as a percussion instrument in your local band? You would perhaps need a rather large conservatory to produce the large yellowish flowers and fruit this large evergreen tree has to offer...

how hard it was to source unusual plants he decided to make a business out of it," explains his daughter, Sally Redhead.

At that time their home was in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, located in the Chilterns – hence the name of the company. Douglas, not having been in the seed industry, wrote to many embassies all over the world to find contacts in the business. In a relatively short time Chiltern Seeds became well known to many gardeners.

In 1976 the couple produced their first catalogue. On the cover was *Ipomoea tuberosa*, which was flagged up as the company's speciality plant. "They moved to a larger house in Cumbria in 1980 and remained there for 32 years," says Sally.



Last year, Chiltern Seeds took on a plot of land as a trial ground

## **Sought-after seed**

"My mother remembers the excitement of getting a supply of seed of *Musa basjoo* for one year only in 1996," Sally continues. "This is the hardiest of the bananas and rarely sets seed. It was so popular they sold out really quickly."

It was additions such as this that encouraged great gardeners, including Christopher Lloyd and Beth Chatto, to buy from Chiltern Seeds. Today, its customers include National Trust properties, prisons, botanic gardens, Highgrove and Buckingham Palace.

"After my father's death in 2010, we made the hard decision to move the company back down south to Wallingford in Oxfordshire, so that my sister Heather Leedham and I could take over from mum," says Sally.

Sally and Heather have grown up being surrounded by seeds and have embraced the business. "We stock over 3,500 different varieties, but all our seeds are still packed by hand," explains Sally.

The catalogue includes herbs, vegetables, flowers, and new and

## **KNAUTIA – Dipsacaceae**

***Knautia macedonica*** (= from Macedonia) (syn. *Scabiosa rumelica* = from Rumilli, once part of the Ottoman Empire). Put all this another way, if Alexander the Great had been a plant hunter, he would have known this plant. He would also have much appreciated it!

## **DRACUNCULUS (= little dragon)**

– **Araceae**

### ***D. vulgaris*. Dragon Arum, Voodoo Lily**

Grow this in your garden and no one will pass it by without pausing to ask, "What on earth is that plant?" If the flowers of this splendid evil-smelling monster had legs instead of a stalk, it is most doubtful if one would stand too long admiring it but rapidly call in the local pest-control officer.

heritage varieties. You'll also find seed of trees, hedging, climbers and wildflowers. Unlike many larger companies, when you call Chiltern Seeds you will speak to the same people each time. Customers build up a relationship with staff and they can exchange growing tips.

## **Searching for the unusual**

"Although we are moving with the times, we are wedded to our father's original ethos – to stock unusual items that are difficult to find elsewhere," says Sally. "Our suppliers are located all over the world and they are still the people that my parents built up the initial relationship with."

Sally goes on to explain that some suppliers are enthusiasts with small gardens and incredible knowledge. They introduce the company to new and interesting plants and can live in such far-flung places as Réunion Island,



An occasional series in which we meet the people who create and develop the gorgeous flowers, shrubs and trees we love to grow



Sisters Heather Leedham (left) and Sally Redhead now run Chiltern Seeds



Grow something new from seed

Spring 2018

Chiltern Seeds has been producing catalogues since 1976

**ChilternSeeds**

www.chilternseeds.co.uk

Dominican Republic, Indonesia and South Africa.

Aside from this, Chiltern Seeds also sells seeds from more popular plants that are sourced from larger suppliers in the UK and Europe.

"We don't develop our own plants, but Heather and I visit many trial grounds to seek out new plants for the catalogue. We both tend to be drawn towards the quirky ones!" says Sally.

"We couldn't possibly fit 3,500 images of plants in our catalogue, so we have a website and additional spring and autumn catalogues that do have images. We have also introduced seed counts online and have germination instructions on seed packets. These changes are making us more accessible to a new generation of enthusiastic gardeners," adds Sally.

■ For more information about Chiltern Seeds visit [chilternseeds.co.uk](http://chilternseeds.co.uk)

## Gardeners' favourites



**Cosmos bipinnatus 'Purity'** – An elegant old variety that never seems to go out of fashion. The single snow-white flowers are perfect as a summer cut flower and bees will come flocking to this annual. Reaches 2ft 11in (90cm).



**Beetroot 'Boltardy'** – The benchmark for all other beetroots. Has an RHS Award of Garden Merit. Resistant to bolting. This is the variety for those wanting to exhibit at their local show.



**Ammi majus** – Another white annual bloomer that is praised as a cut flower. It offers flat heads of lacy flowers. Easy to grow and a perfect filler for a cottage-garden border. Height 2ft 11in (90cm).



**Orlaya grandiflora** – An annual with Mediterranean charm. Pure-white flowers in summer with fern-like foliage. Perfect for an informal planting. Another great insect plant. Height 2ft (60cm).



**Climbing French Bean 'Cobra'** – A tasty bean treat, and this variety offers wonderful purple flowers. This makes it a great bean for growing in a border. Height 5ft 11in (1.8m).



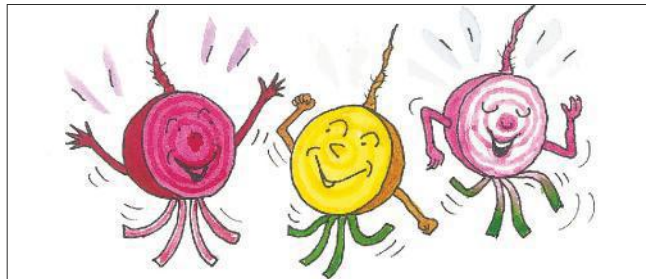
**Tomato 'Gardener's Delight'** – This tomato is a safe bet, with plentiful crops, sweet fruits and it can be grown outside or under glass in an unheated greenhouse. Height 6ft 7in (2m).



## New to Chiltern Seeds for 2018



**Rudbeckia hirta 'Sahara'** – Wonderful semi-double and double velvety blooms in subtle shades of copper, caramel and warm pink average 5in (13cm) across with some up to 7in (18cm). The perfect annual for the front of a sunny border. Flowers from early summer until well into autumn. Height 2ft (60cm).



**Beetroot 'Funky Disco Beet'** – Chiltern Seeds has created a mix of different coloured beetroot. This includes 'Boltardy', 'Albino', 'Burpees Golden' and the stripy 'Chioggia'. It's a great way to get kids to eat more beetroot.



**Papaver somniferum laciniatum 'Black Swan'** – This new variety has dark burgundy red, almost black, petals. The double and semi-double blooms are frilled with numerous finely cut (lacinated) petals giving a lovely frothy effect. Easy to grow – sow direct in spring or autumn. Height 2ft 11in (90cm).



**British basil** – This basil is suitable for growing outside in UK conditions. The robust plants have bright-green leaves that are resistant to our often-colder conditions and yet it still offers that traditional intense basil flavour.



**Salad leaves 'Baby (Leaf) Come Back'** – a mix created by Chiltern Seeds of cut-and-come-again salad leaves. Includes chard 'Rainbow Mixed', land cress, Spinach 'Medania', wild rocket 'Torino', mustard 'Red Frills and pak choi 'Colour Crunch Mix'.



**Cosmos bipinnatus 'Rubenza'** – Flowers from mid-June until early October. Rich ruby-red flowers that fade to an antique-rose. This is an easy- to-grow compact variety that is great for containers and picking. Height 2ft 7in (80cm).

## Future trends

The most recent change for Chiltern Seeds is that last year Sally and Heather took on a plot of land so they now have a trial ground for the first time. "It's a really exciting development and all the staff are mucking in with the sowing and weeding," explains Sally. "The biggest advantage is that the

whole team gets to watch the plants develop and we all have cut flowers to take home in the summer."

Sally predicts the trend this year to be pastel shades for flowers, especially apricot and salmon colours. "Growing cut flowers continues to be popular and Instagram has been, and will be, a great platform for sharing inspirational images," she says.







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## ..... Anne Swithinbank's masterclass on: *overgrown bamboo*



*Fargesia scabrada* can grow to 10ft (3m) high

Plant bamboos like this *Phyllostachys nigra* 'Boryana' where there is space, and control their growth by pruning and neatening clumps annually in spring or summer

### Tips to manage bamboo growth



■ Thin stems of larger bamboos such as *Phyllostachys bambusoides* 'Castillonii' by cutting some to the ground using loppers. This lightens their appearance and creates an artistic arrangement of canes.



■ Using secateurs, remove side stems bearing leaves from the lower end of stems.



■ Where the tightly packed growth and dense, deep roots of an overgrown *Fargesia scabrada* are impossible to dig out by hand, consider hiring a mini digger and driver.



■ Control weed-like, rhizome-forming bamboos such as *Pleioblastus variegatus* with regular cutting and digging.

## How do I keep my bamboo in order?

**Q** I added a couple of bamboos to my garden about 15 years ago, but now I'm finding their growth rate rather threatening. One is a *Phyllostachys* type, and the other has daintier stems and leaves but has still spread into a wide clump. Can I control these or should I get rid of them?

**Philippa Thompson, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland**

**A** Bamboos were the darlings of garden makeover programmes, where planted from large pots they brought height, filled corners and formed screens. They are evergreen, structural, rustle in the breeze and, when well maintained, are generally an asset. *Phyllostachys* are good choices, because their spread is gradual. Your smaller bamboo could be *Fargesia scabrada*, which is a beauty but capable of expanding into a 10ft (3m) high thicket over 15 years, especially in damp soil.

Starting with the *Phyllostachys* tribe, take control by thinning up to half of the tallest, oldest and badly placed canes. Spring is suggested as the best time, but I will do this in summer or any time I need canes for plant supports. Should there be rhizomes heading off, trace them back and cut them from the main plant.

Bamboos making tight but ever-increasing clumps are a devil to dig out, as their roots are deep and thick. My son and I hacked at one with everything we had, including a mattock and a pickaxe! We're now planning to use the smallest of mini diggers.

Near our pond, we inherited the ghastly *Pleioblastus variegatus*, also known as white-striped bamboo, although it always looks half-dead to me. Initially, we cut it back, let it grow in spring and treated it carefully with glyphosate-based weedkiller. This weakened it, and we now cut it back and dig it out to reduce spread.

### Containing the spread

Prevent the spread of new and existing bamboos by installing a physical barrier. A trench at least 24in (60cm) deep is lined with paving slabs, corrugated iron or root barrier fabric suitable for bamboos. Let the barrier sit proud of the ground to stop rhizomes from creeping over. Bamboos grow well in containers so long as they are not allowed to dry out.







# Ask John Negus

John has been answering reader queries for 49 years

John will reply personally to all your gardening questions every week



Unseasonal spring weather may damage peony buds



Sweet rocket is a short-lived perennial; divide it in October

## Bad weather ruined our peonies

**Q** Can you tell me what has happened to my peonies? The buds rot before they flower. The same thing happened last year and we had a late severe frost both years.

**Llinos Morgan, Llandoverly, Carmarthenshire**

**A** I am sorry that your peony buds failed to open and rotted. You are not alone in experiencing such a disappointing result. This year, some of my potentially good flower buds also

failed to open and died on the plant.

I suspect that an abnormal spring – a mix of cold, heavy showers and drought – was responsible.

Help your plants flower better next year by feeding them with 1oz (28g) per sq m of sulphate of potash. Sprinkle it over the root area now and repeat monthly until September. Next year, start in April and continue until September.

Potassium helps to toughen tissues and make them more resistant to adverse weather.

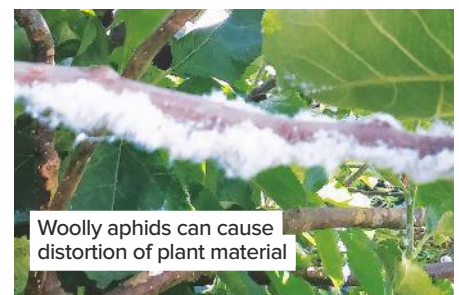
## I'm in the dark about this plant

**Q** Are these phlox and can I cut them back after flowering and move them to make room for other plants?

**Mildred Hughes, via email**

**A** Your 'phlox' is actually dame's violet or sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*). Yours are very special, with splendid blooms.

The best time to propagate this biennial or short-lived border perennial is in October, when the leaves and shoots are dying back. Simply cut stems to within 6in (15cm) of the crown and divide plants into well-rooted sections. Replant them in fertile, free-draining soil in full sun and they should prosper.



Woolly aphids can cause distortion of plant material

## Fears about fluff

**Q** What is wrong with my 'Bramley' apple tree and how should I treat it? It is an old but very productive tree and we haven't had this problem before.

**Gillian Evans, Chester**

**A** The pest infesting your apple tree is woolly aphids. A sap feeder, it causes shoots to distort and develop knobles. The best way to control it is to spray with Bug Clear for Fruit & Veg or Vitax Py Spray Garden Insect Killer.

Additionally, in winter, when the insect is dormant, tackle it with Vitax Winter Tree Wash, which effectively kills eggs.

## Surprised by my massive spuds

**Q** The haulms of the potatoes growing in my greenhouse are massive, while the ones outside are the usual height. Will this affect their productivity?

**Ken Dean, Cambridge**

**A** The reason, I suspect, that your potatoes have grown far more quickly in the greenhouse than in the garden is that they are responding to much higher temperatures.

If they are in a growing bag or pot, move them to a sunny, sheltered spot outdoors where they will develop strongly but won't increase much in height.

Meanwhile, because they are so far advanced but may not have formed sizeable tubers, feed them with Vitax Potato fertiliser, stocked by most garden centres, to encourage



Warm temperatures can create more potato greenery

the tubers to swell. Make sure that the compost is damp before applying it.

If necessary, support the extra-long haulm with canes to avoid it collapsing and rotting.





Wait until autumn to pot up hardwood cuttings

## Can I pot up my rose cuttings now?

**Q** I took cuttings of some shrub roses last autumn, but I didn't pot them up individually in the spring as we had very late frosts. Can I do it now?

**Kay Allsop, via email**

**A** I am delighted that you have rooted some rose cuttings. Provided each young plant is no less than 5in (13cm) apart, it is wise to wait until November before tapping them gently from their pot and transplanting them.

If, at the moment, your charges appear drawn and straggly, remove 2in (5cm) of shoot tip to encourage them to bush out.

Ideally, when planting your roses in the garden, work Rootgrow – beneficial mycorrhiza – into the planting hole to encourage a robust root system.

In future, when taking rose cuttings, pinch out shoot tips when the cuttings have taken and developed 4-5in (12-15cm) of new growth.



Poor fertilisation causes poor crop development

## What's happened to my courgettes?

**Q** Something strange is happening to my courgettes. They start to grow and then the end rots away – why is this?

**Bill Norris, via email**

**A** The fact that the courgette pictured is rotting at one end indicates that it has been imperfectly fertilised.

Often, when embryo courgette fruits are flowering and are not visited by bees, they rarely develop normally.

Yours is an example of this. Overcome it by dabbing pollen from a male flower on to the female's stigma.

Ideally, plant marigolds around your courgettes to attract bees, which should then pollinate them too.

## Quick Questions & Answers

**Q** Could you tell what plant this is?

**Nick Steans, via email**



**A** The plant you have asked us to identify is a clematis and I'm reasonably certain it is a variety called 'Multi Blue'.

This has two flowering seasons, one in May/June on wood produced last year, and again in August/September on wood produced this year.

It is a gorgeous variety and will be a treat to have flowering twice!

**Q** This is in my garden – what is it please?

**Tracey Kedge, via email**



**A** The plant you have asked us to identify is clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*).

It is a hardy biennial or short-lived perennial native to the northern Mediterranean region but naturalised all over Europe.

It is a lovely garden plant, pretty much taking care of itself. It is also the source of an essential oil that has been in use for centuries.

**Q** A friend gave me this plant, but I can't remember the name. Can you help?

**Pat Williams, via email**



**A** Your house plant is a form of elephant's ear (Philodendron), probably *P. hastatum*, an appealing climber.

When repotting is necessary, plant it into loam-based ericaceous compost mixed with coarse grit. If feasible, train your plant over trellis to create an appealing feature.



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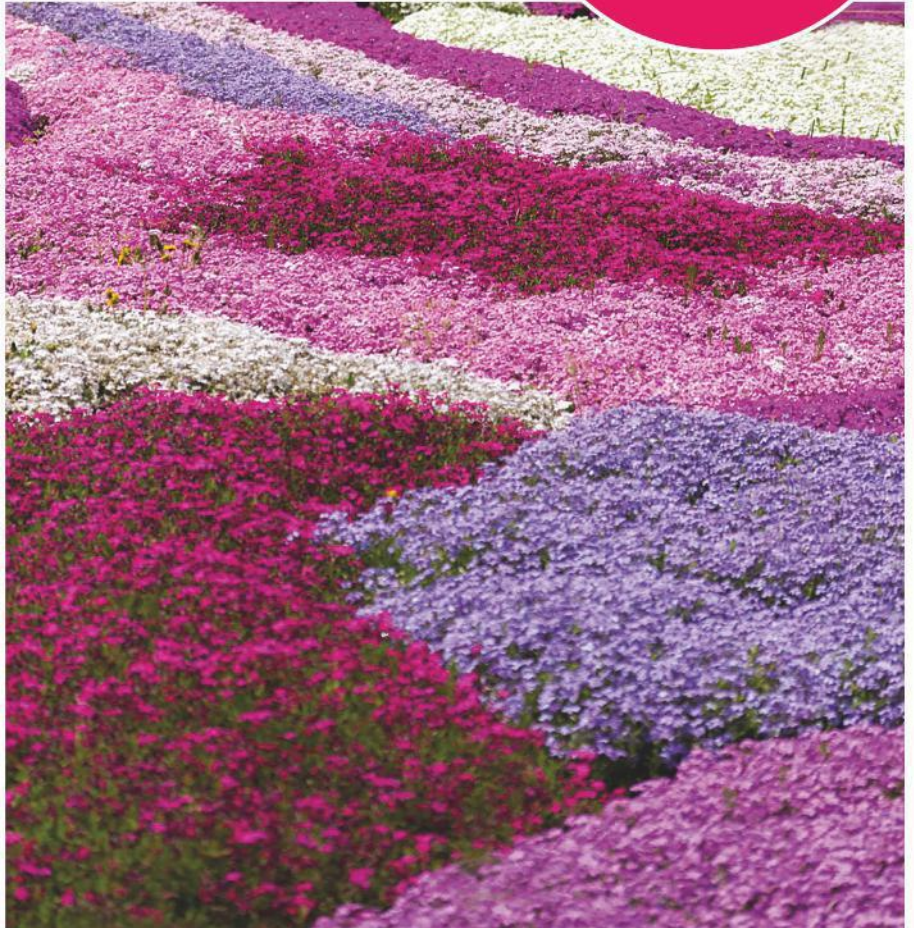
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GROUNDCOVER needn't be dull! Carpet your garden in rich colour and keep the weeds at bay with our perennial creeping phlox collection. This hardy rockery plant has many uses – underplant trees, shrubs and tall perennials soften path edging or cover awkward slopes and banks. This collection comes into its own in March to May, bridging the colour gap between winter and summer bedding.

Height: 15cm (6in). Spread: 50cm (20in).

Supplied as postplug plants.

\*just pay £5.65 postage.



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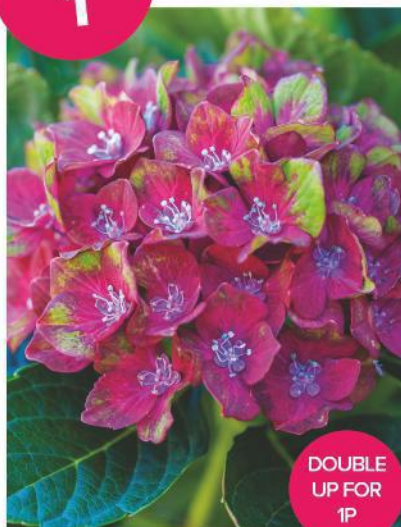
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- Reduces plant stress during transit
• Greater tolerance of frost
• Helps to stimulate strong root development

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HYDRANGEA GLAM ROCK 'HORWACK'



DOUBLE UP FOR 1P

The rounded flower heads are formed by dozens of red florets with blue centres, each petal tipped with an extraordinary shade of lime green. Makes a superb addition to borders or patio containers.

Height and spread: 1.2m (4ft).

Supplied as a 9cm potted plant.

- Buy 1 for £9.99
■ Double up for 1p & buy 2 for £10

OFFER 2

DAPHNE 'ETERNAL FRAGRANCE'



SWEET FRAGRANCE

Non-stop blooms from April to October make Daphne 'Eternal Fragrance' unbeatable for flowers and fragrance. This unusual semi-evergreen daphne flowers on new growth, so they just keep coming!

Height and spread: 90cm (36in).

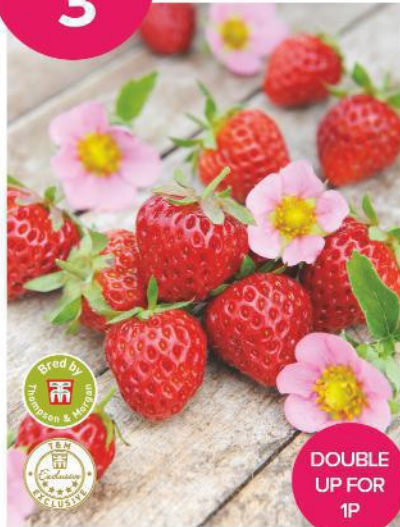
Supplied as a 9cm potted plant.

- Buy 1 for £15.99
■ Buy 2 for £26.99 – Saving £4.99\*



**OFFER**  
**3**

**STRAWBERRY  
JUST ADD CREAM**



A compact plant producing masses of pretty pink flowers and few runners in favour of more fruit - up to 1kg per plant. Looks stunning cascading from hanging baskets and patio pots.

Height: 30cm (12in).  
Spread: 50cm (20in).  
Supplied as jumbo plug plants.

- Buy 5 for £8.99
- Double up for 1p & buy 10 for £9

**DOUBLE UP FOR 1P**

**OFFER**  
**4**

**LAVATERA  
'BARNESLEY BABY'**



A dwarf version of a cottage garden favourite! Perfect for patio containers and small gardens. Once established this tough little mallow needs little maintenance and will even tolerate short periods of drought.

Height: 75cm (30in).  
Spread: 60cm (24in).  
Supplied as a 7cm potted plant.

- Buy 3 for £7.49 (RRP £35.97)

**SAVE £28.48\***

**OFFER**  
**5**

**CLEMATIS  
'NEW LOVE'**



The star-shaped, indigo blooms have slender, reflexed petals and a lovely sweet fragrance. Makes a superb gap filler for cottage garden planting schemes.

Height: 90cm (35in).  
Spread: 50cm (20in).  
Pruning group: 3.  
Supplied as a 9cm potted plant.

- Buy 1 for £9.99
- Buy 2 for £14.99 – Saving £4.99\*

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**Cardholders call direct on 0844 573 2021**

quoting TM\_AG73 or TM\_AG74 if you're a subscriber. Calls cost 7p per minute plus your telephone provider's access charge. Lines are open 9am-8pm (weekdays) and 9am-6pm (weekends). Minimum order £10. Alternatively post the coupon with payment included to the address below (please do not send stamps or cash). Only one application per reader. Please make cheques or postal orders payable to T&M and write your name and address on the back. Free Phlox will be despatched from July 2018 onwards.

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Code	Product	Price	Subs Price	QTY	Total
TCC10121B	Hydrangea 'Glam Rock' x 1	£9.99	£8.99		£
TCC10122B	Hydrangea 'Glam Rock' x 2	£10	£9		£
T40503	Daphne 'Eternal Fragrance' x 1	£15.99	£14.39		£
T10489P	Daphne 'Eternal Fragrance' x 2	£26.99	£24.29		£
TCB77973PA	Strawberry 'Just Add Cream' x 5	£8.99	£7.99		£
TCB77974PA	Strawberry 'Just Add Cream' x 10	£9	£8		£
T57556	Lavatera 'Barnesley Baby' x 3	£7.49	£6.74		£
T55647	Clematis 'New Love' x 1	£9.99	£8.99		£
T55648	Clematis 'New Love' x 2	£14.99	£13.49		£
TKA2524	Maxicrop plant treatment. One treatment covers your whole order.	£1	£1	Tick [ ]	£
<b>TCK70634</b>	<b>10 *FREE Fragrant Phlox (Worth £19.98) (Only 1 Application per order)</b>	<b>FREE</b>	<b>FREE</b>		£

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Postage **\*£5.65 postage**

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**Total** £.....

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Expires end

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30 June 2018/TM\_AG73/TM\_AG74





# Tried & tested by Tim Rumball

Tim tests six products every week to determine the best for you

## Weeding tools

You don't have to get on your knees to remove big weeds in lawns and garden beds – there are tools designed to tackle them while standing. **Tim Rumball** tried six

**W**EEDING the garden is a never-ending task, and as we get older and less flexible, kneeling to remove the invaders can be difficult. There's a range of tools designed to

tackle bigger weeds in lawns and flowerbeds from a standing position. These include 'pullers' (based on a Victorian design), weedkiller applicators and flame guns. The pullers lift out the root and weed, and are the greenest of

the designs we tested. Their main drawback is that when used on lawns they leave a hole that has to be filled with soil or compost. We've tested six types to find which is the most cost-efficient and environmentally friendly.

### Wolf Garten IWA Garden Weeder **£64.99** rrp

☎ **01869 363674** for stockists or visit 🌐 [worldofwolf.co.uk](http://worldofwolf.co.uk)

#### Features

★★★★★  
Steel shaft, plastic 'D' handle with soft grip zone, foldable foot pedal, two stainless-steel active front jaws and fixed rear 'spade' blade, ejection system for weed release. Length 43in (110cm). Weight 3lb 12oz (1.7kg)



Score  
**13**  
/15

#### Performance

★★★★★  
Place jaws over weed crown, step on pedal to push jaws into soil, pull back on the handle to grasp weeds and lever them out. On firm soil and lawns it needs a good push to get jaws deep. Worked well on lawn but left a slightly bigger scar than other pullers. Deep taproots occasionally snapped in firm soil but the weeder worked perfectly in light soil, lifting dandelion roots out cleanly. Sliding the ejection mechanism dropped weed immediately. Works on big and smaller weeds.

#### Value ★★★★★

An effective, environmentally friendly tool that works very well on deep-rooted weeds of all sizes in lawns, flower and veg beds, but the price is steep.

### Burgon & Ball Wonder Weed Puller **£19.99**

☎ **0114 233 8262**  
🌐 [burgonandball.com](http://burgonandball.com)

#### Features

★★★★★  
Designed for extracting lawn weeds. Polypropylene handlebar, aluminium shaft, three fixed stainless-steel prongs on plastic ferrule at the business end. Weed-ejection button on handlebar. Length 43in (110cm). Weight 15oz (436g).



Score  
**12**  
/15

#### Performance

★★★★★  
Light to handle. Place the prongs at base of shaft around weed crown. Thrust down on handles to push prongs into soil, turn handles in a full circle, then lift to extract weed. Worked best if you turn handles slowly. It worked nicely on lawn and firm soils leaving just a small scar. Sometimes left a bit of deep taproot behind. It doesn't work well in light soils in flower beds as there is no 'grasp' mechanism. Ejection button dropped weeds immediately.

#### Value ★★★★★

Good for pulling rosette-forming weeds out of lawns. Environmentally friendly and well priced, but limited to lawns.

### Grampa's Weeder **£24.99** Amazon

🌐 [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)

#### Features

★★★★★  
Traditional design. Environmentally friendly bamboo handle, powder-coated metal head with four pronged claws (two active claws) and pivoted foot pedal. Weight 34oz (930g). Length 43in (110cm).



Score  
**13**  
/15

#### Performance

★★★★★  
Old-fashioned looks, light to handle. Position jaws over the crown of a weed, press down on the foot pedal to sink claws into soil, then pull back on handle to lever weed out.

Did a neat job on lawn weeds like dandelions and plantain, leaving just a small hole.

On firm ground some long roots tended to snap. Worked on friable soil in flower and veg beds, but couldn't grasp small weeds. No ejection mechanism, but weeds dropped out fairly easily.

#### Value ★★★★★

A versatile environmentally friendly weed puller for lawns and garden beds at a reasonable price.





## BEST BUY...

### Fiskars Xact Weed Puller **£41.99**

☎ **01782 204141** for stockists or visit 🌐 [fiskars.co.uk](http://fiskars.co.uk)

Amateur Gardening Best buy

**14**

/15



#### Features ★★★★★

Futuristic design. Steel shaft and composite fibre with moulded grip on handle. Four active stainless-steel claws, fixed foot lever, sliding weed-ejection mechanism. Hole in handle for hanging strap. Length 40in (99cm), weight 32oz (917g).

#### Performance ★★★★★

Light and easy to handle. Claws drive into even compacted soil with little effort. Pulling back on the lever reliably lifted pretty much any large rosette-forming weeds. One or two deep roots snapped on heavy soil.

Only a small scar left on lawns. Claw grasped weeds firmly until ejection mechanism was activated. Worked well on light, friable soils in the veg bed, but occasionally failed to lift very deep-rooted weeds. Foot pedal is fixed, but this didn't cause serious storage issues.

#### Value ★★★★★

The cleanest and neatest weed puller on test, ace on lawns, handy around the flower and veg beds, and environmentally friendly. But it's not a cheap option.

### Roundup Gel Wand

**£23** for wand and cartridge

☎ **01276 401390** for stockists or visit 🌐 [roundup-garden.com](http://roundup-garden.com)

#### Features

★★★★★

Plastic dispenser of glyphosate-based systemic weedkiller in gel form (150ml), attached to extending (up to 2ft 10in/86cm) aluminium shaft with plastic handle and trigger mechanism.

#### Performance

★★★★★

Simple to set up and use.

Extend handle, remove cap and foil on cartridge, prime by clicking button, then start spot-treating weeds. Just smear a little gel onto leaves. Three clicks on the trigger brings more gel.

You'll see first effects in 5-10 days, with root kill in 7-28 days. Weeds can be targeted precisely, but there's a risk of smearing onto surrounding plants. Results are certain but slow. Works on larger weeds in all situations.

#### Value ★★★★★

The wand makes spot-treating easy while standing. Weeds remain for several days. Care must be taken to avoid nearby plants or grass in lawns, the cartridge needs replacing (around £8) and it's less environmentally friendly than a puller.



Score

**10**

/15

### Parasene Weed Wand

**£17.50** (not inc canister)

☎ **08000 329329** for nearest store or visit 🌐 [Wilko.com](http://Wilko.com)

#### Features

★★★★★

Gas blowtorch measuring 2ft 6in (77cm) with nozzle for treating weeds on paths/patios. Walking-stick-shaped steel tube with plastic grip, brass gas canister attachment with on/off knob (canister not supplied), auto-ignition button.

#### Performance ★★★★★

Easy to set up. Screw on the gas can, turn the on/off knob and click auto ignition. Lit first click. Powerful jet of flame – point it at the crown of the weed for a few seconds. Foliage quickly withers and annuals die in three days.

Works well on weeds between paving. I also tried it on weeds in grass paths and in flower beds – it works so long as you take care to avoid other plants, which can be tricky.

#### Value ★★★★★

Fun to use on paving and gravel, but it may not kill deep-rooted perennial weeds. Weeds remain for several days. Gas can needs replacing. Not very environmentally friendly.



Score

**10**

/15





Runaway Bride Snow White: RHS Chelsea Flower Show's Plant of the Year 2018

I'm moving our potted hydrangea to a cool north-facing position. While it is possible to grow hydrangeas in the sun, they thrive best and are easier to manage in light shade

### Top Tip

On good soils, mulching keeps hydrangeas healthy. For any plants positioned on poorer soils, an annual spring dressing of slow-release fertiliser will help to bring out the best in your shrubs.

## How to grow...

# hydrangeas

With a mixed palette that's dramatically affected by soil pH, there's plenty to delight the senses among these shade-loving stalwarts, says **Anne Swithinbank**

**T**HE common mophead or lace-cap hydrangea (*H. macrophylla*) is firmly back in fashion and a hot topic, especially since *H. Runaway Bride Snow White* was awarded the RHS Chelsea Flower Show's Plant of the Year 2018. This new hybrid of slightly weeping habit produces white lace-cap flowerheads all over and is said to bloom from spring to autumn. Winning the same honour in 2014, *H. m. 'Miss Saori'* wowed judges with double pink and white blooms, produced in two flushes.

The appearance of new, different hydrangeas seems to have fuelled a renewed enthusiasm and I've noticed

gardeners planting a wide range of these deciduous shrubs for a mid to late summer show. Flowerheads of both tiny fertile clusters and showy sterile ones vary in colour according to soil type. Acidity favours blue flowers, while alkalinity pink, though white tends to stay the same. I love their habit of fading gracefully, ageing to muted, jewel-like colours and parchment skeletons.

One of the best places to view hydrangeas is at Trebah Garden near Falmouth in Cornwall. Here, in a moist, sheltered valley, you'll find two acres of *H. macrophylla* varieties originally planted in the 1950s to produce cut flowers. An acidic soil maintains

strong blue shades, but there are pink-tinged and white flowers, too, all creating a rich tapestry. Further afield in the mid-Atlantic, visitors are delighted by the flowering of naturalised varieties in the Azores, particularly on São Miguel Island and Faial, which is known as the 'Blue island' on account of its many distinctive hydrangeas. These were introduced in the 17th century and settled happily.

Originating in Japan, *H. macrophylla* suits our climate very well indeed. These versatile blooms look great in containers, mixed borders, shrubberies, as lawn specimens, hedges and naturalised in woodland.









# A Gardener's Miscellany

Gardening's king of trivia and brain-teasers, Graham Clarke

**THIS WEEK IN**

## Gardening history 26 June-2 July

### 26 June 1793

Rev Gilbert White, naturalist and cleric, died. Regarded by many as England's first ecologist, he said of earthworms: "...though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of nature yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm".



Getty Images

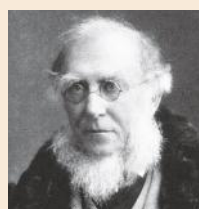
### 1 July 1808

English butterfly and moth expert Henry Doubleday was born. His moth collection is still intact, and resides at the Natural History Museum. He died in 1875.



### 27 June 1839

Botanist and explorer Allan Cunningham died. Born in 1791, he worked at Kew Gardens and was later appointed 'government botanist' in Sydney, Australia. He resigned a year later, after finding he had to grow potatoes for government officials!



### 30 June 1817

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, surgeon and botanist, was born. He was Charles Darwin's best friend, and for 20 years was director of Kew Gardens. He died in 1911.

### 2 July 1857

Augustine Henry, Irish plantsman and expert on Chinese plants, was born. He sent more than 15,000 dry plant specimens and seeds to Kew Gardens, from China.



Alamy

## The war on pests rages on!

Early summer is when garden plants are most at risk from pests. Plants are young, tender, lush and full of moisture, making them at their most appealing to pests – both insectivorous and of the four and two-legged kinds. Let's look at some of the interesting facts about the plant munchers!

Here's one example of how we are 'up against it' when it comes to the war on pests: female aphids (greenfly and blackfly) are capable of virgin births – no males required. Also, females can carry developing young, which are themselves already



One aphid could produce 600 billion descendants in just one season

carrying developing young! This increases population numbers rapidly: one estimate is that one aphid could generate 600 billion descendants – in one season (yikes!)

## Run rabbit, run!

Rabbits are formidable pests in rural gardens, but these cute-looking creatures are not actually native to Britain. We have to thank the Normans for introducing them; they came across on ships in the 11th century, and were farmed for their meat. The rabbits were allowed to run free and breed in fenced-off areas, called warrenes (if your name is Warren, Warrener, Warrender or something similar, your ancestors probably dealt in rabbit meat). The trade collapsed when the rabbits escaped and became easy to catch.



Rabbits were introduced to Britain by the Normans in the 11th century

## 5 decorative plants with a garden pest in the variety name



Narcissus 'Mite'



Calluna vulgaris 'White Mite'



Dahlia 'Dr Caroline Rabbit'



Iris 'Rabbit's Foot'



Galanthus 'Wasp'

All live photographs: Alamy





RHS/Carol Sheppard

## The RHS pest top 10

Each year the RHS assesses the feedback it has from members, and the public, about the most common pests and diseases to affect garden plants. The 10 most troublesome pests of 2017, and so the ones to watch out for this year, are (in order of importance):

- 1. Box tree caterpillar (see image above)
- 2. Fuchsia gall mite
- 3. Vine weevil
- 4. Slugs and snails
- 5. Alder leaf beetle
- 6. Viburnum beetle
- 7. Tortrix moth
- 8. Glasshouse mealybug
- 9. Pear blister mite
- 10. Woolly aphid

## Latex protection

Latex is a system of substances in the saps of certain plants – notably the euphorbia and fig families – that protects them against pests (and diseases) and seals their injuries.

The substance contains suspended particles of rubber, which make it sticky and opaque, and it usually has an anti-bacterial agent in it, sometimes making it capable of killing fungi. It also helps the plant fight off animal pests by tasting bad, being irritating to the skin and by causing

temporary blindness if it gets into the eyes of animals – or gardeners, for that matter!



## Snail coils

Nearly all garden snails have their shell 'coils' turning right, or spiralling in a clockwise direction (see image below). Very rarely you may come across a garden snail with an anticlockwise shell – a 'lefty'. Sadly, though, such snails can only mate with others with the same condition, because their genitals are in the wrong place!



Alamy

## Prize draw

Westland Big Tom Super Food is enriched with the essential nutrients for a tastier and bigger yield of tomatoes, plus improved root growth for plant stability. The feed is seaweed enriched with N-P-K levels of 6-3-9.5 to give your tomatoes the boost they need during growth. The 1.25-litre bottle makes up to 62 feeds, and can be used on beds, paths and patios. Follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding usage. We have three 1.25-litre bottles to give away, each worth around £5. See below for details of how to enter the prize draw.



### How to enter

Send your name and address on the back of a postcard to Big Tom Super Food Draw (30 June), Amateur Gardening, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 7BF. Or you can email your details to [ag\\_giveaway@ti-media.com](mailto:ag_giveaway@ti-media.com), heading the email Big Tom Super Food Draw (30 June). The closing date is 6 July 2018.

WIN  
£30

## Word search

No:  
422

This word search comprises the names of garden pests. They are listed below; in the grid they may be read across, backwards, up, down or diagonally. Letters may be shared between words. Erroneous or duplicate words may appear in the grid, but there is only one correct solution. After the listed words are found there are 11 letters remaining; arrange these to make this week's KEYWORD.



ANT  
APHID  
BUG  
CAPSID  
CHAFER  
CUTWORM  
DEER  
EARWIG  
FLY  
FROGHOPPER  
MILLEPEDE  
RABBIT  
SLUG  
SNAIL  
WASP  
WEEVIL  
WIREWORM

**HOW TO ENTER:** Enter this week's keyword on the entry form, and send it to AG Word Search No 422, Amateur Gardening, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF, to arrive by Wednesday 11 July, 2018. The first correct entry chosen at random will win our £30 cash prize.

This week's keyword is .....

Name .....

Address .....

Postcode .....

Email .....

Tel no .....

TI Media Ltd, publisher of *Amateur Gardening* will collect your personal information solely to process your competition entry.



# A Gardener's Miscellany

## Earwigs in ears?

Will an earwig really get into your ear, or is it just a myth? There are no proven records that this has happened, although the belief is ancient and held in every continent, except South America, so it probably has occurred from time to time. Don't let your blanket dangle in the dirt!



Earwigs attack young leaves and buds of plants, which make them a pest. But they also eat aphids, so arguably this cancels the problem out. They are related to cockroaches and, like them, need to hide during the day. They usually find holes in the ground, or in fruit, and you will find them in the hollow stems of plants such as dahlias.

## Wow! I didn't know that...

■ The fuchsia gall mite, which is ranked second most troublesome UK garden pest by the RHS, was first discovered in the UK in 2007 in southern England. Reported for the first time in South Wales and Cheshire in 2017, the microscopic mites cause the shoots and flowers of fuchsias to distort.

■ In Victorian times, gardeners would keep a toad (see image below) in the greenhouse to deal with pests. Toads eat insects, grubs, slugs and even earwigs. They need dense, moist places under benches, but they must have access to ponds for breeding.

■ There is no such thing as a male vine weevil. One adult weevil can lay many hundreds of eggs between April and September, so by year five could produce more than six million eggs!

■ To sleep, wasps bite into the stem of a plant, lock their jaw into it, and then rest.



## Quotes about insects

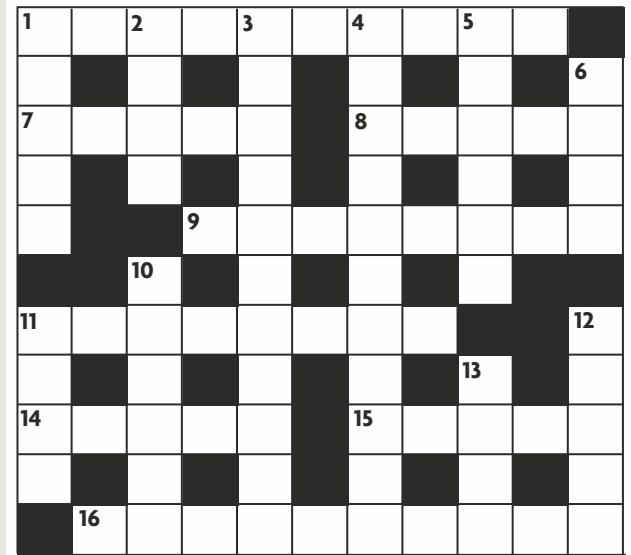
■ "It makes all the difference, whether you hear an insect in the bedroom or the garden." **Robert Lynd (Irish writer, 1879-1949).**

■ "It's only when you look at an ant through a magnifying glass on a sunny day, that you realise how often they burst into flames!" **Harry Hill (comedian).**

■ "Insects are part of the ecosystem and help in pollination. I don't see any problem in having fruits and vegetables for them, as opposed to the perfect-shaped tomato that only you can eat and which, by the way, could also be cancerous." **R. Madhavan (Indian actor).**



# Crossword ...just for fun!



### ACROSS

**1** *Lilloceris lillii* – a red insect that is a major pest of lilliums and fritillaries (4,6)

**7** Hard work propagating trees and shrubs by transplanting buds! (5)

**8** The beech tree genus (5)

**9** A darker aphid is referred to as this (8)

**11** Fruiting bodies of a subterranean fungus, predominantly one of the many species of the genus tuber (8)

**14** Discharge slowly and steadily, as in a sticky sap from a damaged tree (5)

**15** An insect pest that can ruin flowers and leaves of many plants (5)

**16** Common name for *Kalmia buxifolia*, a flowering shrub species of the heather family (4,6)

as in the variety of grass: *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning \_\_\_\_\_' (5)

**2** The main (flattened) organ of photosynthesis and transpiration in green plants (4)

**3** In the war against pests, your garden could be said to be this! (11)

**4** Fence it! I fly in a way that achieves maximum productivity! (11) (anag)

**5** Go through the procedures to conclude use of a computer, which is like falling from a fallen piece of tree! (3-3)

**6** Of a pale greyish colour, rather like a fraxinus tree! (4)

**10** The Japanese or spotted laurel genus (6)

**11** Devices for attaching trunks of young trees to supporting stakes (4)

**12** Acer syrup! (5)

**13** Collection of hard small materials, such as coarse dirt or ground rock (4)

### DOWN

**1** Natural agent that stimulates sight and makes things visible,

ANSWERS  
ACROSS 1 Lilly beetle 7 Craft 8 Fagus 9 Blackfly 11 Truffles 14 Exude 15 Thrip 16 Sand myrtle  
DOWN 1 Light 2 Leaf 3 Battelfield 4 Efficiently 5 Log-off 6 Ashy 10 Aucuba 11 Ties 12 Maple 13 Grit

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# Your letters



with Wendy Humphries

**Write to us:** Letters, Amateur Gardening magazine, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 7BF.

**Email us:** [amateurgardening@ti-media.com](mailto:amateurgardening@ti-media.com)

star letter



## My 'star' plant

For the first time I've grown Star of Persia alliums and was delighted at the size and beauty of this plant.

I usually do container plants mostly but I have extended the small flower border this year and wanted to try something different.

**Brenda Riddle,**  
*Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire*

**Wendy says:** Lovely! *Allium cristophii* is really long-lived and seeds itself if you leave the decorative heads in place

## 'Plantaholic ruined my view'

**M**Y wife is thrilled to call herself a 'plantaholic,' but I am not so happy.

When we moved into this property I had a wonderful view of the Cotswold escarpment 1½ miles away, rising to a height of 800ft above the village, but she has reduced my horizon from 1½ miles to about 20ft with bushes that grow to a height of over 10ft.

I don't have my view any more, just a wall of green and brown foliage that cuts me off from the rest of the garden and the world outside, although the garden itself is so full of

plants squeezed in that it is not very 'people-friendly'.

With a bit of thought on her part she could have all her plants, but arranged so that I can have my view as well. Isn't it possible for a plantaholic to plan a garden that could give joy instead of taking joy and spoiling pleasure.

Apparently not, with the result that every time I look out of the window I am confronted with this barrier in front of my wonderful view.

No, I am not at all happy.  
**Name and address supplied**

## Reader's Quick Tip



HAND FORKS and trowels have a nasty habit of disappearing when I'm weeding. One of these tools spent over 18 months hiding in the border before I spotted it, having just bought a replacement.

I've sorted the problem now by painting the handles so their normally soil-coloured handles are painted white and spotted bright red!

**Loris Goring,**  
*Brixham, Devon*

## Busy bees when the sun shines

HERE'S a lovely pic of a bee on one of my first *Knautia macedonica* flowers of the year. Then a few minutes later it buzzed off to my amazing honeysuckle...

**Jane Stredder, Harlington, Beds**







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The 'Best in Show' garden this year contained trees and acid-loving woodland plants



RHS Neil Hepworth Morgan Stanley

## A concrete block too far...

I TOTALLY agree with the wonderful Peter Seabrook in his column "Has Chelsea gone too far?" [AG, 19 May]. No, I would not like to draw my curtains and see a garden of plastic balls or cubes of stone reminiscent of a municipal memorial.

Chelsea is as they all know the world over to be the very best flower show, so come on, no more of these stupid ideas, instead let's see more unusual plants and trees. There are so many out there, the snowdrop tree, the handkerchief tree, *Echium candicans*, myrtle, acacia (mimosa) and salpiglossis to name a few. I love to watch Chelsea as do so many others, but please not another repeat of last year's Best in Show!

**Barbara Lawrence,**  
*Chalgrove, Oxon*

**Wendy says** Happily, judges awarded NSPCC's garden the top accolade at Chelsea this year; a lovely woodland garden with an interesting range of trees, shrubs and plants

Photo of the week



"My sons are keen gardeners who love to grow their own. Here is Finley, watering his plants"

## Happy days growing their own

MY sons and I moved house and have gone from a lovely big garden to a small courtyard. At just 6 and 7, my sons are keen gardeners who love to grow their own fruit and vegetables but were missing their big greenhouse and veggie patch.

I decided to invest in a small greenhouse and as many big pots as

I could find for them to get back into growing their own. We have decided to subscribe to AG magazine too in the hope that we can learn lots of tips and tricks to help us get the best from our little courtyard. Here is a picture of Finley watering his plants.

**Kerri-Ann Briggs**  
*Seaton, Devon*

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# Toby Buckland



Nurseryman and former Gardeners' World host



Big dahlias, such as the giant decorative type 'Hamari Gold', are back in fashion

Pinch out any side buds for bigger beauties

## Big is beautiful

Bright, blousy and flamboyant, super-sized dahlias seem to be firmly back in favour, says **Toby**

**A**CCORDING to my older siblings, living with me was like sharing a nest with a cuckoo. No sweet, cake, chocolate or Easter egg was safe, as I'd scoff the lot and help myself to more. On occasion, I was cruelly called fat, although I like to think I was merely 'big shadowed'.

Unlike greedy children, flowers don't grow large on extra helpings but on an absence of close company. With fewer

either side. If I pinch out these side buds and any that grow from lower down on the stem, already big dahlias will almost double in size!

Once considered gauche, big dahlias are back in fashion – and I can see why. They're so opulent in citrine-orange, ruby-reds and amethysts, and their shapes are as flamboyant as they are extraordinary.

Whatever the variety, all dahlias are fast-doers so they thrive on plenty of high-potash fuel (liquid tomato fertiliser), although just as important is regular watering. Plants are up 95% water, and because dahlias have large leaves, on

### Toby's top tips



**1** Always put 'toppers' on bamboo canes to protect your eyes. Plastic is the most economical, although I prefer small terracotta pots.



**2** For the biggest flowers, choose large 'decorative' or 'dinner-plate' dahlia varieties.

Harrod Horticultural

Alamy

## “Whatever the variety, all dahlias are fast-doers”

brother and sister blooms, the plant's energy concentrates into a single stem making for super-sized flowers that look amazing in vases or could potentially win prizes at the local show.

The dahlias in my garden, for example, are just coming into bloom and, if left to their own devices, each stem would naturally end in a flower with two smaller buds 'wing-walking' on

hot days they're not very efficient at hanging on to it.

When small, the plants are quite drought tolerant, but if they dry out when running up to flower not only will their size be affected but the flowers will also become distorted. The best time to water during hot spells is in the evening, so the roots have time to soak up what they need before the drink evaporates.

One thing you can't do when you plus-size a dahlia is increase the strength of the stem, so support the flowers by tying to bamboo canes with loops of soft twine. Looking up into the sun, they really are food for the eye.

## Removing earwigs

Petal-nibbling earwigs love feeding in dahlias during the day, but prefer holing up in straw or newspaper at night. By packing straw or newspaper into pot cane-toppers, the insects are easy to collect. Some gardeners kill them, but as earwigs eat other insect eggs, fleas and aphids, it makes sense to put them elsewhere.

Before bringing cut flowers into the house, leave for 24 hours in a bucket of water in a dark shed. Any insects will head for the light that spills in through knots in the woodwork or the gap under the door.



Use newspaper or straw to catch earwigs



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Offer subject to availability. We reserve the right to substitute varieties if necessary \*Please note that savings are based on the equivalent of multiples of the cheapest pack size. Images for illustration purposes only. © 2018 Thompson & Morgan. † For full T & C's, please visit [www.thompson-morgan.com](http://www.thompson-morgan.com). Regrettably we are unable to ship live plants to the following areas: HS, IV41-IV56, KW15-KW17, PA34, PA41-48, PA60-PA78, PA80, PH40-PH44, TR21-TR25, ZE1-ZE3.

Product Code	Item Description	Price	Qty	Total
TJ10023	Bluebell Creeper, 1 x 7cm potted plant	£9.99		
TJ59295	Bluebell Creeper, 2 x 7cm potted plants	<del>£19.98</del> £17.98		
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TJ47569PA	Tower Pot Kit - Large Pot (39cm) + Saucer + Frames x 1 Pack	£19.99		
TJ47570PA	Tower Pot Kit - Large Pot (39cm) + Saucer + Frames x 2 Pack	£29.99		
TKA2524	Maxicrop Plant Treatment	£1.00		
TJ47552A	incredibloom® fertiliser - 750g Pack	£12.99		
TJ59296	Trachelospermum Jasminoides 7cm Pot x 2	<del>£19.98</del> £10.00		

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