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3 EASY WAYS









re are the best plants to create a fragrant summer garden," says Hazel

Cover: Pelargonium 'Prince of Orange' (pic: Alamy)

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### Garden news

6 Rest new plants to grow from seed

"At the time of writing this column the war in Likraine is still ongoing and I can only hope that when you come to read these words those poor, innocent people may be closer to a peaceful resolution. I mention this because I wanted to direct you to Toby Buckland's column on page 58. in which he explains how sunflowers and the Ukraine are inextricably linked and indeed why the sunflower is the national symbol of that great and sadly beleaguered country and also their national sign of peace. Toby asks us to plant sunflowers this year to show our solidarity with the Ukrainian people



and I am joining him in that request. Let us all pray for peaceful resolution in the hope that Ukrainians will be free again." Garry Coward-Williams

Editor

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# Planting bulbs for summer

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The variety is huge and colour is guaranteed, says Ruth

M like a child in a sweet shop at this time of year, when garden centres fill up with all the promise and colours of summer plants. Bulbs are one of the easiest ways of

bringing colour into the garden between late spring and autumn and they are some of the brightest and best plants available for us to grow.

Alstroemeria, agapanthus, begonias, ranunculus, dahlias, echinaceas, gladioli and lilies - so many Feeding returning wonderful plants in every colour imaginable.

We already have lots of alliums, crocosmia and gladioli in our borders as well as several begonias dahlias and a canna lily potted up in the preenhouse and on windowsills, already starting to shoot with this year's growth.

Some of these are new tubers, others salvaged from last year and I only had one fatality. I'd kept a dahlia in its container through winter but when I went to re-pot it into fresh compost I found that the whole tuber had vanished and the compost was home to several vine weevil grubs.

These insidious pests damage plants at all stage of their life and are a common menace in containers. The adults chew

notches in leaves and the grubs eat roots, which is what does for your plants. They can be treated with a nematode (microscopic parasite) in summer and a chemical when the weather is cooler.

Alternatively, stand containers in travs of water with no overhanging plants - the adults can't swim or fly so they can't reach your plants!

So this year I've branched out and bought some alstroemerias

gorgeously scented freesias and an unusual echinacea called 'Green Twister' that has pale pink petals which

merge into green. I have planted some of the richly scented freesias in a bowl that I am keeping in the greenhouse until late April or early May

when they will be moved to a seating area for when they flower. After planting I went around the

garden and fed returning bulb shoots with a multipurpose granular fertiliser, forking it in and watering afterwards. Although most packets of summer bulbs recommend planting from March or April, we always advise that if you live in the north of England or Scotland, or your garden is high up or exposed, wait until the weather is consistently warmer before planting summer bulbs.







Start filling your pot with compost and add in some blood, fish and bone



Place the freesia bulbs 3in (9cm) deep and roughly 1in (2cm) apart, noses facing upwards.



Cover with more compost leaving room for watering at top, and firm it down



Label and water and keep in a frost-free spot until the weather gets reliably warmer.



# Some bulbs need extra care

Start undercover or make sure soil drains very well



ITHOUGH most summer bulbs can be planted out now. there are some that don't like the slow, cold start to our summers and these should be potted up in fresh compost instead.

Dahlia, begonia and canna tubers are the main ones that need a warmer start, so after you have potted them up keep them in a frost-free greenhouse, in a porch or on a sunny light indoors.

Keep their compost damp, not too wet, and they should soon start to shoot Once they are large enough you can gradually acclimatise them to outside temperatures before planting them out in borders or tubs

Tubers and bulbs dislike wet, heavy

clay as it holds water which increases the likelihood of rotting (see panel, right, on how to avoid this)

Echinaceas are another summer favourite that need a little forethought before committing them to the soil.

These 'prairie garden' stalwarts are one of my

favourites as they are evecatching plants, bloom late when other plants are starting to flag and attract a wide range of pollinating insects to the garden.

However, they aren't always happy in our cold.

wet winter soil, so it's always a relief to see new shoots appearing from our plants in early spring

If you want to grow them but worry about the wetness of your soil, an option is to make a low mound of soil, orit and

# Problems





Bulbs will rot in heavy. waterlooped soil so before planting dig in well-rotted manure and compost with added grit. If your soil is very heavy, grow in containers instead for the best results



2 Scarlet lily beetles will decimate plants given a chance so watch for them. Pesticides will work but I prefer to use a deterrent made by Grazers (\*) grazers.co.uk. © 01768 800555) which stops adults laving eggs on your plants. Re-apply every 10 days or so.

compost and plant the echinacea bulbs on it so they are raised slightly off the surrounding ground

#### Step Planting echinacea in free-draining soil by step



Healthy echinacea bulbs have lots of hairy roots sprouting from underneath a curled. pinkish tip.



to sprout

They like a free-draining site so dia in lots of wellrotted organic matter and add fertiliser such as blood. fish and bone or Growmore.



Carefully spread out the roots and then nestle the bulb among the compost and fertiliser so its pointed snout is at soil level.



Infill with soil and firm it down lightly, label the site then water well. Keep checking the shoots haven't been pulled up by birds.

Gardening News

# Best new flowers Helianthus 'Soluna Lemon' to try for 2022

Marc Rosenberg offer his choice of latest flower varieties you can grow from seed

from seed is one of the greatest joys of gardening, While we all love the reassurance of tried-and-tested varieties. experimenting with the latest novelties ensures that the nation's favourite pastime is always a voyage of discovery.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, breeders have been hard at work creating new flowers that have been tailored to make gardening easier and more enjoyable There are new blooms for 2022 that shrun off the extremes of heat and drought - wishful thinking for a great British summer, perhaps, but a scenario that's predicted to

ROWING new flowers become commonplace with climate change. Breeders have even unveiled new varieties that won't succumb to pesky diseases such as busy Lizzie downy mildew.

This season hasn't played host to the volume of 'new and exclusive' launches that were commonplace in the pre-Covid era. That's not surprising as UK seed houses worked flat-out to despatch unprecedented levels of orders to gardeners during lockdowns. But even in these times there are always new nems waiting in the wings to be discovered - here's AG's pick of the best 2022 flower seed launches for you to try out this spring.



WHEN it comes to sunflowers, small really is beautiful. After years of racing to bring out the showlest most enormous blooms, breeders have focused their attention on the delights. of petite sunflowers

Helianthus "Soluna Lemon" can still climb to 4ft (120cm) but its cheerful softwellow flowers span just 3in (8cm) However, blooms are borne in profusion on well-branched plants, so clusters of dainty flowers, which each sport dark centres, still create an incredible display.

From: 10 kingsseeds.com @ 01376 570 000. Echinacea 'Paradiso Super-Duper'

# Sanvitalia 'Yellow and Black Eve



TAKING the trend for tiny sunflowers to the extreme, here's a brand new mini-sunflower that's been bred to delight in hanging baskets, window boxes and containers.

Growing to just 10in (25cm) tall, sunshine-vellow flowers boast eve-catching dark centres.

For a real wow-factor display, plants can be grown solo in hanging baskets to create a ball of golden blooms - or blend with other basket and container favourites such as busy Lizzies and trailing petunias for a riot of colour

From: 1 thompson-morgan.com @ 0844 573 1818.



Echinacea 'Paradiso Super Duper' brings a new dimension to informal, prairie-style borders. This hardy perennial bursts into bloom in its first year (great news for impatient gardeners) bearing flambovant pink, multi-petalled, double flowers on tall stems of up to 80cm high.

The strength of its stems is a key benefit, helping plants to thrive in exposed sites, while its claimed to perform well in dry soils. These long-lived plants flower from June to September. From: Johnsons Seeds is in-store only - find your local stockist at: 10 johnsons-seeds.com

# Zinnia 'Jazzy Red'



ZINNIAS turn up the heat in summer displays and the riaspberry and cream 'tones of new 'Jazzy Red' will set pots and borders ablaze from July unit the first trosts. Plants are bushy and boast incredible flower power, with the first blooms bursting open within three months of sowing.

With climate scientists warning that summer heatwaves will increase in frequency due to global warning, this novely zinnia is well placed to shrug off weather extremes, because it's both heat and drought-tolerant. From: "<sup>1</sup>0 kingsseeds.com 0 01376 570 000.

# Larkspur 'Fancy Belladonna'



THE tall, upright spires of new Larkspur 'Fancy Belladonna' hark back to the cottage gardens of yesteryear. Creating a charming, nostalgic atmosphere, spikes of stylish Illac blooms come thick and fast between June and September.

Larkspur is the annual cousin of delphinium – another cottage garden favourite – so its similarity isn't coincidental. As a newcomer, it boasts the vigour that's a modern take on an old favourite, helping plants to grow rapidly in a sunny spot, without any need for pampering. From: Johnsons Seeds is instore only. Find local stockist at -<sup>th</sup> Johnsons-seeds.com.

### Sweet pea 'Primrose'



This gives weather-resistance and easy cutting for the vase. It is the flowers' pale-yellow tones, however, that make this novelty stand out, with suppliers saying its lemony shade is "something that breeders have been trying to achieve for a while". From: "om-rothergills.co.uk" @ 0333.77 3933.

# Impatiens (busy Lizzie) 'Imara Mixed'



BUSY Lizzie downy mildew has been the bane of gardeners' lives in recent years. To combat the problem, which is most destructive in damp summers, breeders conjured-up Impatiens 'Imara Mixed' – a new mildew-resistant busy Lizzie.

Sold as young plants before, now you can get hold of seed to raise your own plants at home. A pack of 30 'Imare Mixed' seeds has a price tag of £2.99 - Imars just 100 pance per plant; a fraction of the cost of buying pot-grown busy Lizzies at garden centres. It will bring down the cost of hanging baskets and pots. From "0 workdobies.cuk. V. 0844 7364209.

# Colourful Giant Mophead Hydrangeas Great Quality Plants at amazing prices!

gardening express

# Giant Pink Hydrangea XXXL Plants

Wow! These plants are monsters, and can throw up maybe 30 strong flower heads this year. A wonderful variety with huge flowers, often found

A wonderful vanety with huge tlowers, often found in high class florist bouquets. Supplied as powerful well established plants in approx 10 litre containers, these are larger plants, and this offer is great value for a specimen of this size and age.



## Hydrangea Magical ) Pearl XXXL Plants

Our special Hydrangeas are guaranteed chunky healthy plants, that will flower well all summer and in to early Autumn. This large flowered mop head variety has huge blooms, up to the size of a football when fully established and these iterally cover the plant all summer. Supplied as well established plants in approx 7-10 litre containers.



# Hydrangea My Beautiful – Indigo XXXL Plants

These plants can be expected to throw up maybe 30 strong flower heads in their first flowering sesson in your garden. Hydrangeas put on good amounts of healthy growth each year and quickly establish, and produce massive, bright flower clusters even when planted in a duil, shady sport. Supplied as powerful well established plants in approx 10 lithe containers.

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# **Ready to rockery!**

Mulch with gravel to improve drainage

# Give your alpine treasures some spring love, says Ruth

INTER is a tough time for rockeries, rock gardens and alpines planted up in containers and elsewhere in the garden.

Although they are generally tough little plants they often tend not to fare so well in our mild, wet winders.

They are often low-growing, which makes them vulnerable to rotting, especially among their lower leaves and roots if they are left to sit on continually wet soil or planted in areas where there is poor drainage.

Their diminutive stature also means it is easy for them to become smothered by fallen leaves and debris, and overgrown by weeds.

With spring well under way now, take time to check your alpines and rockeries to make sure plants survived the winter and give them some TLC.

Keep rockery plants free from weeds and debris that will quickly smother them. Give them a gravel mulch so the lower leaves are raised off the soil.

Deadhead when blooms fade to encourage more buds and feed them with a high-potassium fertiliser to stimulate flowering.

Don't overfeed as this can cause plants to outgrow their space and become spindly, and don't overwater as saturated soil can cause rotting.

# Growing in a rockery or trough



A wide range of plants will thrive in a rockery. Try herbs, pasque flowers, Semperivum, rock roses and dwarf bulbs. Spreading plants such as Vinca minor, aubrieta and hardy geraniums will help block weeds.



2 If you don't have a rockery, create sink or trough. Use John Innes No 3 as the growing medium with plenty of added grit, and mulch the plants with gravel for an attractive finish.



25-27 March: Spring Plant Fair and Orchid Show, PHS Wisley, Wolkey, Woking GU23 GOB. Meet the growers and purchase quality plants from 30 specialist nurseriles. Browse the orchid show for dazzling displays and plant sales. Normal garden admission: Adult E14-95, Child 52-45. Open 10am-4pm. (© 0H83 224224; \* 0 ths.org.uk/ gardens/wisley

1-2 April: Jekka's Open Day: lekka's Shellards Lane Alveston

BS35 3SY. Visit Jekka's Herbetum and buy herbs. Entry via bookable coupons. 10am-4pm. @ 01454 418878; <sup>-0</sup> jekkas.com

2-3 April: Plant heritage Spring Fair, RHS Garden Bridgewate, Occupation Road, Worsley, Manchester, M28 2LJ, Adult 512. Free to RHS and Plant Heritage members. Open 10am-5pm; & 0161 503 6100, \*\* plantheritage.org.uk 9 April: Plant hunters' feir:

Bodenham Arboretum, Wolverley, Kidderminster DY11 5TB. 10am-4pm; \*0 planthuntersfairs.co. uk; \*0 bodenham-arboretum.co.uk

10 April-9 May: Bluebell Spectacular, Hole Park Gardens, Rolvenden, Kent TN17 4JA, £10 for adults and £2.50 for children (5 to 16). The gardens are open from flam to 6pm. (2 01580 241344 or Email: info@holepark.com.

14-20 April: Dazzling Daffodils, Hever Castle, Edenbridge, Hever TN8 7NG. 60,000 daffodil bulbs are blooming across the gardens. Free guided tours by experts are available, 1130am and 2pm. © 01732 855224; "<sup>1</sup>0 hevercastle, Couk

As the UK reopens after Covid we would like to hear about any events you are holding this year. Please email the details, with photos if possible, to

truth.hayes@futurenet.com



# with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes



# Be prepared for storms

# Ruth suggests ways of protecting gardens from damage

AM writing this a few days after Storm Eunice bounced her way across the UK, leaving many people clearing up the damage left in her wake.

Violent storms such as the one in late February, as well as Arwen and Barra in November and December 2021, are becoming more commonplace so it makes sense to be extra vigilant and aware of potential problems in the garden when they are forecast.

Strengthening winds can cause immense damage so make sure railings and fences are stable, their panels properly secured and reinforced if necessary. Young and newly planted trees need staking and older ones should be checked reoularly to make sure branches aren't becoming weak and dangerous.

Wind isn't the only problem. Heavier rainfails lead to flooding and waterlogging, and this excess water destabilises trees and structures and forces oxygen out of the soil, causing plants to 'drown'.

Never walk on waterlogged soil as you will compact it and damage its structure. If you absolutely must go on your soil to dig in compost or manure, stand on a plank as this distributes weight evenly.

You can't completely protect your garden from storm damage, but by following some of the tips here you may be able to minimise the impact and give a better chance of recovery.

# Safeguard trees and structures



Hurdles are ideal for filtering wind, rather than blocking it completely which can cause destructive eddies and surges elsewhere in the garden.



2 Remove dead and spindly branches that can break in high winds and cause damage. Make sure young trees are securely staked and tread down surrounding soil if it lifts.

# Plan ahead to help protect



Compacted soil, especially clay, is less absorbent and more likely to flood, so dig in lots of manure and composit to open it up and help it soak up heavy rain.



2 Move pots off their feet, especially those containing large plants that are more likely to be blown over. Store hanging baskets somewhere sheltered until calmer conditions return.



3 Don't walk on flooded lawns, but once the water has drained away, tread carefully and aerate the sodden area with a garden fork.



4 Make sure vines, climbers and climbing and rambling roses are tied in securely to stop them whipping about, damaging themselves and potentially injuring passers-by.

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We love some easy gar

Hardy annuals are simple to sow and grow, says Ruth

NE of the most exciting things about this time of year is that the soil is generally warm enough to sow hardy annual seeds directly

Half hardy seeds still need starting off undercover, but their hardier cousins will do very well scattered thinly into a prepared seedbed outside now

This week's free seeds are 'Quick and Easy' mixed annuals and contain several varieties including poppies, corn cockles, stocks and calendulas.

Sown now, they will thrive in a sunny patch of well-prepared soil. I have sown ours in a corner of the garden that gets a lot of afternoon sun. I have already planted several wildlife-friendly perennials there and will add a stand of

sweet neas in a few weeks' time The Cosmos seeds I sowed in three types of seed compost - peat-free. homemade and compost containing peat - have germinated and developed their first sets of 'proper' leaves.

The seedlings growing in peat are still doing the best. The ones in homemade compost have had to fight against weed seeds (mainly garlic mustard) and fewer of the peat-free seeds have germinated than in the peat compost and they have slimmer stems than the others

The seedlings are now ready to pot on and I have moved them into pots of peatfree, a homemade blend made with equal parts of sieved soil. leaf mould and homemade compost and, finally, John Innes No1 compost, which contains peat. fortunes change.

# Sowing direct



Choose a sunny spot and remove stones and weeds. then rake the soil until it is fine and crumbly. Water well.



Scatter the seeds as thinly as 2 possible (seedlings can be thinned if necessary when they appear) then cover with a little soil and firm it down gently. Label, and use pepper dust to protect the seeds from birds and cats

Weeds are bound to develop in the homemade compost as I haven't sterilised it in the oven (which would have sparked a revolution) but they will be easy to remove. There were a couple of peat and peat-free seedlings left over so I potted the peat-free seedlings into John Innes No 1 and the peat-grown seedlings into peat-free multipurpose to see if their

# AG seed compost trials: 8 weeks after sowing HOMEMADE COMPOST







# 123 Football Club Jigsaw Puzzles



# All puzzles are updated for 2022!

# Each one is available as a 400 piece puzzle.

There are an amazing 123 clubs to collect. Each different jigsaw features a stanning/litustated cartono image of a football club, with club hanours, fabulous facts and so much more. All 92 clubs in the top four divisions in England are available, as well as various non-league clubs and 18 teams from Scotland.

The finished puzzles have been updated for 2022 and are an impressive 47cm x 32cm when built and all are available as a 400 piece puzzle (ages 7 to adult).



## Is your team available? Choose from any of these!

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# Gardening Week with Bob Flowerdew, AG's organic gardening expert

ter' has been bred to suit the UK te, but as a rule butternuts pret nore continental climates, so make sure e soil has been pre-warmed before

oving the first fruits. makes the plant grow oper and means it will arry a larger crop later

Leave the fruits to mature as long as they are safe from frosts then cut with a good length of stem attached \*

# Better butternuts

They may be different to other squash, but with a bit of care your butternuts will be better than ever, says Bob

NCREASINGLY popular, butternuts are a series of squashes cropping from mid-late summer and they are wonderful stored for winter use. They're of a different species to our

marrows, courgettes and pumpkins, which were long ago derived mostly from Cucurbitg pepo, whereas butternuts are more recent and developed from C. moschata This makes them more nutritious, with more vitamin A - indeed, 30% more than 'Hubbard' and 80% more than 'Acorn' squashes. And all parts of the plant are edible, even the leaves.

Unfortunately, their different ancestry also makes them a tad trickier. Originally from Central America, butternuts are much happier with hotter, more

# "All parts of the plant are edible, even the leaves"

continental climates and they sulk in our cooler springs and summers, which would be just OK for other squashes. This means it is best to pre-warm their site with cloches or black plastic ground coverings and to plant out only

when the weather has warmed up the soil a bit more than for say courgettes.

One other difference from most squash family members is that their long trailing stems root easily, so it's advantageous to help

Mounding over bare sections of stems " this by mounding over bare increases the feeding sections of stems thereby = capacity =

increasing the feeding capacity and so getting bigger crops. However, be careful not to be too greedy and over-crop, as you may then get too many small fruits, which are wasteful with less flesh in proportion to seeds and skin.

It is also prudent to remove the first fruits to set; this makes the plants grow stronger and carry a larger crop later. Furthermore, when autumn comes, leave the fruits to mature as long as they are safe from frosts, and then cut with a good length of stem so they store well. Store in a warm dry place and rest them on something airy - a net is ideal.

# Bob's top tips for the week



BST starts this weekend, so use that extra hour for gardening. The sun will be brighter, so watch out for greenhouse ventilation.



Deadhead earlier flowering bulbs and shrubs to improve flowering next year by not wasting resources on ripening seeds.



apples, spuds, onions and roots - use or process any that look dubious before they're gone over



Sow first batches of peas parsnips and carrots, with the latter two kept under fleece protection to keep the cursed fly from their roots.

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EACH GREAT SAVING

# Gärdening Week 🖉 with Val Bourne, AG's organic wildlife expert

A floral display in the Grand Pavi Chokea 2021 SEED DUST

# Alive and digging Seed to Dust

# The British garden is definitely alive and well, says Val

FEW weeks ago, a national newspaper asked me to write a column about the apparent demise of the British garden. based on two previous articles by nongardeners. One featured the widespread use of plastic grass in North Kensington. London, which I pointed out was hardly appropriate to the rest of us. I can understand why those with shady courtvards in urban environments might resort to this though. After all, it graces the parterre at the National Trust's Cliveden in Buckinghamshire, Real grass dies under constant footfall and creates a slip hazard

The other article reported that the Royal Horticultural Society was going back to plants at this year's Chelsea Flower Show, by making every garden devote 75% of its space to plants. This was an inaccurate statement. It only referred to four new gardens in the Great

# "Gardening connects and protects you"

Paulion entitled All about Plants Four new designers will promote a different UK charity, tackling subjects like fast fashion, mental health in motherhood and the wonders of the natural world. It's a great opportunity for four rookie designers to go on to greater things.

I have to say, as someone who's been tropping down to RHS Wisley to trial plants for the past 16 years, the RHS has always been about plants and it still is However, the times they are a-changin' to quote that well-known Bob Dylan song. It's especially noticeable in the Great Pavilion at Chelsea. Twenty-five years ago, there was a huge canvas tent. damp underfoot and constantly rippling in the slightest breeze. Nurseries yied to get in there and there had to be a oneway system because it was the most visited area of all

That's all changed. These days fewer and fewer nurserymen sign up for Chelsea, because it's mega-expensive and there's no space to sell a range of plants to defray the costs, as you can at other shows. In recent times Avon Bulbs and Hardy's Cottage Garden Plants, both gold-medal-winning stalwarts, have stepped away from the show having done 38 years and 30 years respectively. We must thank our lucky stars that Bob

and Rosy Hardy, and Alan Street of Avon Bulbs, have given us some borticultural gold dust to go with their many medals of the same colour

Horticulture has channed. You cannot blame the PHS for Brevit or plant passports which make for extra paperwork, or for website sales that arrive daily and need packaging up. Better coverage on BBC television. which is biased towards the show pardens, and less paperwork for health and safety would help enormously

To cut a long story short, though, the British garden is definitely alive and well. and I'm sure you'll agree with that sentiment. It's backed up by evidence. Think back to lockdown, when we had to scramble for seeds and plants via the internet, because we couldn't get to the garden centre. Lots of people who'd never gardened before took up the trowel - and I hope they're still using it

Lam very pleased to get out and about again. I found great delight in being able to go get my seed potatoes one Saturday morning back in January I had to gueue and some varieties had already sold out. There were plenty of young gardeners, with children in tow, buying vegetable seeds, potatoes, onions and shallots. I went to snowdrop sales, too, and they always remind me of the jumble sales I used to attend as a young mum - elbows everywhere to get to the front.

We love our gardens: they sustain us. and I have been reading a new garden book called Seed to Dust, by Marc Hamer, about a 12-acre garden in Wales. It was like following a love affair and Marc is a brilliant observer, philosopher and nature watcher. He found pleasure in small things and that's what gardening does. It connects and protects you, like a safety harness



Paving is the least wildlife friendly thing of all and it adds to the flooding risk. Use gravel and grass as well.

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Light, sandy, stone-free soils will help the taproots of carrots to develop freely

Chantenay carrots are an excellent choice for stonier plots if you want to sow in March



# Focus on... Growing carrots

Carrots have a reputation for being tricky to grow, but they're easier than you think, says **Lucy Chamberlain**, as she reveals the secrets to growing these crunchy roots

ARROTS are among the UK's most popular vegetables, and yet growing them at home can be tricky. Here's how to leapfrog over any hurdles from spring through to winter, so you can make sure that this is your best-ever year for carrots.

Light, stone-free soils are a carrotgrower's dream. So if yours is heavy, compacted or clay, consider adding lots of well-rotted garden compost, sowing into raised beds, or container growing. If the taproot is impeded, the resulting crop quality will be poor.

Carrots can be notoriously slow to germinate (they often take two-three weeks to emerge), hardly germinating at all when the soil is less than 7.5°C (46°F). Due to the individual seeds within the

"Keep the soil warm and moist" carrot flower maturing at different times, you can reduce the problem by keeping the soil warm and moist using cloches, and choosing F1 hybrid varieties.

The increased vigour of hybrids overrides slow emergence and you'll get more evenly sized roots, as the seedlings compete equally with each other. Commercial growers also use 'primed' seeds (seeds that have been



brought to the point of germination), which give even better results. Some seed companies offer this innovation (such as Mr Fothergill's Optigrow range, although this isn't currently available).

#### Getting started

Being relatively upright, seedlings aren't good at smothering out weeds as be wightant with your hoe in the initial weeks after germination. Due to sluggish germination, the tendency is to sow thickly, then thin later. If you're growing baby carrots thinning isn't necessary, but for medium roots thin to Tin (2.5cm) part, while for large carrots, thin to 2/in (Scn). Do this when seedlings are 3-in (8-100m) tall.

Provided moisture is sufficient, and depending on the variety, you'll be pulling roots 8-14 weeks atter sowing. If growing overwintering types, cut the leafy tops in late October and cover the drills with an insulating layer of straw, or lift roots (tops removed) and store in boxes of dams sand in a garage or shed.

# Gardening Week with Lucy Chamberlain, AG's fruit and veq expert

# Lucy's tips

### When to sow for roots all year

Feb: If you managed to sow guick-tomature 'Amsterdam Forcing' varieties in an 8in/20cm-deep box of multi-purpose compost during February (I line wooden boxes with polythene), you'll be pulling roots by late April and well into June. Mar/April: This is the ideal time to get your outdoor sowings of carrots

in for summer and autumn roots. If you have a story plot then you should look for globe ('Rondo') or Chantenay ('Cascade') carrot varieties – otherwise, Nantes Redicum or Imperator types are excellent choices.

Iul/early Aury Classic 'Autumn King' is the mainstay of late-summer sowings: just make sure the drill is thoroughly soaked beforehand, as the soil is often dry. Roots sown at this time will provide pullings from October until March (cover with straw in winter).



# 3 of the best carrots to try this year



'Gold Nugget': A late maincrop F1 hybrid that stores well into the winter from an August sowing. Deepvellow roots with a sweet flavour; even the core is vellow. Excellent in casseroles and soups. Sow: April-May.



'Purple Haze': This Nantes F1 A hybrid has a deep-purple skin, orange core and flesh somewhere in between! Delicious raw, and best steamed rather than boiled. Sow:



"White Satin: The best white carrot to try, this F1 hybrid has none of the hairiness or bitterness associated with other white varieties. Smooth, sweet and melting when cooled. Sow April-June.

# 5 quick jobs

- As soil temperatures warm and spring growth emerges, be ready with slug controls. Stock up on organic pellets and carry out patrols under pots and tubs
- If you've sown seeds too thick and are seeing a thick rash of seedlings, water the tray or pot from below, not above, to deter damping off.
- 3 If you're keen to sow peas or broad beans outdoors but soil conditions are still claggy, don't risk it. Sow in large modules instead as these crops hate waterlogging
- Don't be complacent about spring warmth - cold snaps are still likely. Keep frost-tender plants under cover or wrap in fleece and bubblewrap.
- 5 Tip out the contents of your compost bin. Either mix well and return it, or add well-rotted material to your yeg beds.



our climate; you can also try 'Rouge de Bordeaux' and stripy 'Panache

WHILE it's popular to grow fruit in pots, there aren't many that actually benefit from it. Figs are an exception. By confining these normally vigorous trees in a container you're effectively 'bonsal-ing' them. This keeps them compact (and therefore far more manageable), and encourages them to bear fruit earlier in their life (a heavier crop is encouraged, too) And now is an ideal time to plant a tree. Choose a non-porous container that's at least 18in (46cm) wide, deep and tall (this prevents roots from drying out)

Ensure drainage holes are adequate, then pot your tree up (a John Innes No3 compost is ideal) and site it in full sun. There are plenty of varieties available - all are self-fertile so only one tree is needed, 'Brown Turkey' is very reliable in our climate, but also look for tastier "Rouge de Bordeaux" and stripy 'Panache'.

Next week: Focus on asparagus, thin out direct-sown veg, plant maincrop potatoes, harvest forced rhubarb and sow sweetcorn.

# Sow and harvest sprouting broccoli

SPROUTING broccol – whether you grow the purple or white form – is a crop that requires patience and space. It takes nearly a year to mature and plants can grow quite large, so it's often the preserve of those who have large rolots.

I grow this crop in the Hall's kitchen garden (It's two thirds of an acre), but not at home. However, every March I really wish I did have my own plants because It's delicious. So, motivated by thoughts of tasty spears smothered in Hollandaise sauce, I'm sowing some now.

White sprouting broccoli is frequently sold under just that name, though "Bubank" is a new British-bred P1 hybrid that definitely looks worth a punt. There's more choice when it comes to purple sprouting: laivays grow 'Caret' as my benchmark, which matures during March and April, through you can also buy summer-maturing types like "santee" that don't require exposure to cold in order to crop.

Sow in modules under cover now, transplant out in mid-June 3R (Im) apart each way, then harvest once the spears emerge. The key is generous nitrogen and water, so mix ample organic matter and slow-release feed into the



planting site, irrigate well in dry spells, and cloak in butterfly netting in order to protect from pigeons and cabbage white butterflies.



# **Pricking out essentials**

It's propagation time! Keep your seedlings in tip-top health with my pointers on how to transfer them safely from the seed tray to the pot:



A woving delicate seedings from the warmth of their propagator into cold compost can cause shock and subsequent rotting, so move your bags of compost into the warmth of your greenhouse or spare room a day or so before pricking out.



2 Irrigating with cold your freshly pricked out seedings a nasty shock, so be sure to fill your watering can the day before, then move this into your propagation area or somewhere similar to raise its content to room temperature.



Pricking out involves clump of seedings apart in order to move them to individual pots/modules. Ensuring your pot of seedings is well watered beforehand makes teasing out the roots easier, and deters brenkanges.

like 'Green Globe'

revel in fun sun

# Consider crop positions

I'M increasingly observing that where we place our crops in our gardens has a huge impact on how successfully they grow. Hostas prefer moisture, camellias grow well in shade, cistus enjoy full sun, succulents need free drainage – the concept is just as it is for ornamental plants.

April is often the month when we transplant crops outside, so take note of what conditions each crop enjoys and try to emulate it. Celeriac and celery like continual moisture, so choose a shadier spot and work lots of organic matter into the bed. Globe artichokes revel in full sun, so allocate these to a south or west-feating aspect. Quick-tomature crops like baby turnips and annual spinach will grow rapidly under clocker

under clockes in shelter and sun. Aspanagus detests waterlogging, whereas landcress will toilerate it. Summer cabbages and cauliflowers need generous nitrogen, so work fertiliser or well rotted manure into the soil. By carefully sitting our edibles, rather than just bunging them in', we'll literally read the rewards.



# Siberian purslane

FOR those of you who have grown and loved winter purslane (also called miner's lettuce or *Claytonia perfoliata*) why not look to a longerlived species as a more colourful addition to your garden?

While miner's lettuce is an annual with pure-white flowers, C. sibly/co is a short-lived perennial that bears pretty mid-pink blooms in summer. Both species are hardy, and Siberian purslane (also called pink purslane) self-seeds freely but gently, so once sown you'll not be without it.

The succulent leaves have a pleasant crunch and mild beetroot flavour – they are available yearround and make a great salad leaf. Either sow now in modules under cover, or direct in June. It handly will tolerate damp and shade, though prefers a free-draining site rather than a claggy one. I have writer uparts and think that prink purslane alongside it would look opreeous.

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# The Scented garden

To celebrate National Fragrance Week, **Hazel Sillver** looks at some of the best fragrant plants to incorporate into your garden for a scintillating scented summer

### Plants in perfumes

This year's National Fragrance Week (21-27 March) is a celebration of scent by the perfume industry, and it's remarkable to discover how many ingredients in perfumery hail from garden plants. Roses and Jasmine are grown for oil, of course, but if a size extracted from hyacinths, narcissus, bay, angelica, rosemary and many more plants.

At Keyneston Mill Scented Gardens in Dorset, home to Parterre Fragrances, the bulk of the borders are composed of fragrant plants, many of which are used to produce the company's perfumes.

Head gardener Rebecca Williams says: "My favourite scents are the citrusy



The leaves of Pelorgonium 'Prince of Orange' have a lovely citrus scent

scented-leaf pelargoniums, in particular P. 'Graveolens' and 'Prince of Orange'. I'm also besotted with the smell of the chamomiles Chamoemelum noble and Matricaria recutita. None of these plants is difficult to grow and working among them brings great pleasure."

Keymeston is a great example of a scented garden because it is designed to shield the plants from the wind, which would otherwise carry their arome away. "We have a lot of horrbeam hedging, which croates a walled-garden effect that helps to capture the scent, and one part of the garden is sunken, with high slopes, again to contain the fragrance," says Rebecca.

There are aromatic plants to enjoy in every season, including viburnum and witch hazel in winter, but the vast majority bloom in summer, and now is a great time to get them in the ground. In a few months' time, the garden will be filled with reviving scent.

# 9 scented sensations for the border



Philadelphus 'Belle Étoile' AGM A cloud of richly scented single white blooms in early summer. Copes with poor soil, pollution and coastal sites. Mulch (for example, with composit) in March. Prune immediately after flowering, H: 4-6ft (1.2-1.8m).



### Euphorbia mellifera AGM

The Canary spurge is an evergreen shrub with honey-scented bronze flowers in late spring. Grow in welldrained soil in sun or semi-shade. Wear glowes to prune as the sap is a skin and eve irritant H- 6ft (18m).



#### Cistus ladanifer

When the leaves of this shrub release their scent, you realise why it's used in perfume (it's called labdanum). It also has white summer blooms. Plant in welldrained, sun-baked soil in a sheltered area. Copes with poor soil. IH: 5tt (L5m).



### Rosa 'Madame Boll'

The buxom lilac-pink blooms of this healthy repeat-flowering Portland rose, which dates back to 1865, fill the summer air with beautiful scent. Prune and mulch in late winter or early spring. H 3tt (90cm).



#### Nepeta 'Six Hills Giant'

A mass of lilac-blue flowers hums with happy bees for weeks in summer. The grey-green foliage fills the air with a caramel scent. It likes well-drained soil in sun or semi-shade. Provide support for it to grow through. H: 3tt (90cm).



#### Rosa Munstead Wood AGM

Flowers smelling strongly of blackberry and damson are produced by this repeat-flowering shrub rose throughout summer. Roses like fertile humus-rich well-drained, retentive soil in sun. H:3.5ft fl.m).



Lavandula x Intermedia 'Sussex' AGM A great choice for creating a lavender hedge for legs to brush past, releasing the scent of the silver-green foliage. This bee-friendly lavender likes weil-drained neutral to alkaline soil in full sun and tolerates poor soil. H: 2.5 ft (75cm).



#### Helichrysum italicum

You can smell the spicy scent of the curry plant on hot, sunny days. Yellow flowers appear from midsummer to early autumn. Likes well-drained, light, neutral to alkalme soil in sheltered sun. Tolerates poor soil. Trim in spring. H: 2tt (60cm).



Dianthus 'Devon Wizard' AGM This exudes a delicious spicy clove scent produced above blue-green foliage, from June to September. Pinks like very welldrained neutral to alkaline soil in sun. Deadhead to prolong flowering. Make new plants via cuttings. H: t0in (25cm).

# **3 fragrant plants for pots**



## Lilium 'Casa Blanca' AGM

Giant flowers atop tall stems release a strong, heady, vanilla scent at dusk and at night. Can be grown in big, well-drained containers, in a mix of compost and grit, allowing 2in (5cm) between bulbs and planting 8in (20cm) deep. H: 3.2ft (1m).

# 4 scented climbers



### Clematis x triternata 'Rubromarginata'

This vigorous clematis produces a mass of starry white and redpurple flowers that fill the air with a wonderful almond scent, from July to September. Cut back hard to 6in (15cm) in February or March. H: 15ft (4,5m).







### Rosa 'De Resht' AGM syn. Rosa 'De Rescht')

The small pom-pom flowers of this repeatflowering rose have a lovely perfume and brighten up the patio. Plant in a generous, well-drained pot of John Innes No3 compost, with a dash of well-otted manure or regular compost added. H: 3tt (90cm).

#### Trachelospermum jasminoides AGM

The star jasmine releases a tea perfume onto the air, while glossy green leaves often take on red winter tints. In cold areas, grow this up a sheltered, sunny south orwest-facing wall. Prune in spring, only if necessary. H: 30tl (9m).

### Clematis 'Mayleen' AGM

The best mountain clematis for perfume and a must-have cottage-garden plant. Bronze follage and plant. Bronze follage and plant blooms fill the air with vanilla-clove scent in May. Let this deciduous climber romp over a shed or along a fence. Prune after flowering. H: 20-407 (6-12m).







### Pelargonium 'Royal Oak' AGM

The leaves of this pelargonium release a balsam smell reminiscent of a Moroccan souk. In cold climates, scented pelargoniums are fantastic in well-drained pots on a sunny patio in summer, and overwintered in a frost-free greenhouse. H: Sin (40cm).



Position scented plants next to a patio or path where their fragrance can be enjoyed

# How do you make a scented garden?

Shelter: Wind carries scent away, so it's important to give fragrant plants containment via shrubs, trees, hedging or trellis that divides the garden into 'rooms'.

Sun: Nany plants release their perfume at best in the warmth of sunshine, so place them in full sun or on south or west-facing walls. Site: Grow fregrant plants in places you regularly pass (such as the front door) or sit (such as a patio). They can also be grown near windows, so the fragrance floats into the house.

# What are the best roses for scent?

OF the older roses, the Damasks (such as 'Jacques Carler' and Gallicas (such as 'Charles de Mills') usually have delicious perfames. Modern breeders offen fous on health at the expense of scent, so it's important to research (or even better, smill the perfume power of roses before buying. Some power of roses before buying. Some (including Gertrude Jekyl) have beautiful frequence.



# How can I make my garden smell nice?

THE best fragrances can be boosted by planting them en mase, such as a border of scented roses (mixed with perennials to ensure health) or an informal low hedge of lavender. In sufficient number, the gorgeous scents of these plants will hang on the air throughout summer.



growing fragrant plants on masse

Pinks are one of the most charming of garden plants, and for a massed effect of old-fashioned, very fragrant blooms you can't on wrong with "Starburst"

# **Pretty pinks**

Pinks add an attractive edging to Anne's kitchen garden borders

Pinks have withstood the test of time and are gracing our gardens with fragrant blooms just as they did back in Tudor and Elizabethan times, says **Anne Swithinbank** 

LTHOUGH modest and penpaseven slightly oldfashioned, there is a lot to low about pinks. Whether heritage, long flowering, alpine or laced, here will be several to suity our garden, and young plants take well from a pring loting. Give them the sum, wellplanting. Sive them the sum, wellduring dry spells and these hardy perential plants. Will make well-behaved mounds of grey-green leaves and bloom year after year.

#### Alternative names

Pinks belong to the genus Dianthus that includes caranizations and sweet Williams. Although their flowers are often pink, the name cores from the 'pinking' or includes caranizations of the pinking' or older name is gillyflower. Though this can apply to a whole range of old stationed scented plants such as wallfowers and tocks. Another name 'sogn in wine' came about because the deliciously tock-scented flowers were a cheap of theore south off only were wine and the decorating salavia and cakes.

### Long-flowering garden pinks

There are 300 species of Dianthus from Europe and Asia. Whereas carnations descend from D. carvophyllus, the older pinks with strong scent and only one period of flowering have D. plumarius in their parentage. Carnations may have been introduced to Britain as early as the Norman Conquest, and pinks were fashionable in Tudor and Elizabethan pardens. Laced pinks were especially popular among the Paisley weavers of Renfrewshire during the 18th and 19th centuries, but these plants crave clean air and industrial pollution made their cultivation difficult. The cultivar 'Paisley. Gem' dates from this period.

Long-flowering garden pinks were bred by crossing old-fashioned sorts

# Where to buy

with perpetual flowering carnations to create plants that reliably repeat flower from summer to autumn when deadheaded and well tended. Not all have rich perfume, so double-check to avoid disappointment,

### Versatile plants

In my garden, pinks are planted along the kitchen garden pathways, mingling with a variety of thymes, sages, hyssop and other herbs. Here they have plenty of sun and moderately good, welldraining soil. Use these versatile plants for border fronts, nisked beds, containers and in the cutting garden. There is a range of low-growing species and cuttivars perfect for Mediterranean-style and rock gardens, and alpine sinks.

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# 9 gorgeous pinks



### Coconut Sundae AGM

Popular pink for its double, spicily fragrant blooms whose white petals deeply marked at the base with maroon blotches. Growth is compact and perfect for adoming containers, the edges of raised beds and alongside pathways. HXS: 10x18in (25x45cm).



#### 'Devon Cream

A Whetman garden pink, the double blooms are dreamy confections of clotted cream with hints of pale lemon, palest peach and light rose. Plants are compact, there is good fragrance and a summer to autumn season of carnation-like blooms excellent for cutting. H&S: Hain (35cm).



### Tequila Sunrise

Dainty upright plants produce single blooms of fluttering pale peachy-pink with an unusual warm apricot eye picked out with deep coral-pink. The scented flowers open from early summer to auturn and look great in borders, containers or displayed in a vase. H&S: IBin (45cm).



### 'Bailey's Celebration'

This is a good upright variety with a flowering season from spring through summer, and the long-stemmed fragrant blooms are great for cutting. They are glorious but benefit from regular deadheading. HbS: 14x18in (35x45cm).



#### 'Diane' AGM

This is a sport of the pink-flowered 'Doris'. Double blooms of rich, dark salmon emit a good clove scent and petals are well 'pinked' at the outer edges. Summer flowers are long-stemmed and good for cutting. Hos: 'tak18in Close45cm).



#### 'Red Carpet

This cultivar delivers bright-red semidouble blooms with clove-like scent from early summer into autumn. Held on long stems over compact grey-green foilage the blooms have been bred for cutting. HsS: 12x16in (30x40cm).



#### 'Gran's Favourite' AGM

Bred in 1966, this laced double pink is easy to grow and flowers from June to September. The Victorians were great fans of laced pinks, whose blooms have a contrasting centre and edge to the petals. Hx5: 10x18in (25x45cm).



#### Memories

This fragrant double has white flowers with a hint of green at the base from late spring through summer. This has been suggested as a replacement for 'Mrs Sinkins' whose blooms are often bliothed by rain. H&S: 12in (30in).



#### 'Widecombe Fair' AGM

One of Cecil Wyatt's famous Devon-bred pinks from his edge of Dartmorn nussery, hits double-flowered cultivor dates back to 1971. A good choice for the front of a mixed border in sunny, well-drained soil. H&S: 12in (30cm).

# 4 alpine pinks



### 'La Bourboule' AGM

This mound-forming plant is perfect for raised beds, containers and rock gardens. A profusion of clove-scented single pink flowers with prettily fringed petals open against a mat of grey-green foliage. A good but well-drained soil is important. HxS: 4x12in (f0x30cm).



## Pop Star

This compact, mound-forming pink is a little brash, but a good choice for summer containers. A mass of narrow grey-green leaves is joined in summer by stems of fragrant double but flattish open-centred lavender pink blooms. HxS: 8x12in (20x30cm).



### 'Tatra Ghost'

For those who love the rare and extraordinary, this pink bred in 2005 from parent plants collected in the Tatra Mountains along the Slovakian-Polish border is generally described as alpine. The wan, fragrant blooms are like scraps of old silk fraying with age. HAS: 10x16in (25x40cm).



drained, gritty compost and mulch with a layer of

to protect from winter wet. HxS: 3x6in (8x15cm

# **3 old-fashioned pinks**



### Dianthus carthusianorum

This Carthusian pink is believed to have been introduced to the UK by Carthusian Monks during Mediaeval times. Its tall stems are topped by clusters of magenta flowers emerging from dark-marcon buds. It flowers from June to September. HxS:18x8in (45x20cm).



How can I make sure my pinks have a long life and produce plenty of flowers?

Although an open position of sun and well-drained neutral or alkaline soil is a standard, pinks will tolerate a little shade and improved clay soils, though long woody stems and a shorter lifespan can result.

Unpack plants arriving as plugs promptly and let them fill 3.5in (9cm) pots with roots and growth before planting out. In groups, set them 14in (35cm) apart.

Cultivars bred to repeat-bloom will require deadheading and watering during prolonged dry spells. A trim after flowering or in autumn helps keep plants compact.



### 'Rose de Mai'

This heritage cultivar dates back to the 1820s. Neat, compact plants begin blooming from late spring into summer, opening candy-floss-pink dainty but double blooms full of petals darker at the base and deeply crimped at the edges, H&S: t2in (30cm).

### How do I take cuttings of pinks?

Even under ideal conditions and trimmed annually, pinks eventually grow leggy with age. Fortunately, cuttings of non-flowering shoots taken in late spring and summer root easily to create replacements.

They are often referred to as 'pipings' which are shoot tips pulled from the plant, but conventional cuttings made by trimming under a node and removing lower leaves do just as well. Insert into pots of 50:50 grit and compost, water in and keep out of harsh sun.



### 'Queen of Sheba'

Dating back to the 17th century, this strong-growing and prettily patterned heritage pink bears single, clovescented blooms from late spring to midsummer. The flowers emit a sweet clove perfume. Grow it along path edges. H&S: 8-10in (20-25cm).



I've heard of the Cheddar pink. Is this a British native and can I grow it? The dainty Cheddar pink (Dionthus grationopolitanus), also known as firewitch, has its stronghold in the limestone Mendips, particularly Cheddar Gorge where it was discovered around 300 years ago.

Over-collection in the past has driven this pretty wildflower to inaccessible ledges and it is now protected. Plants make a summer show of fringed, pale-pink flowers with strong clove scent. Nursery-raised plants are available.



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# This week... Antirrhinums Snapdragons come in a range of colours and have a multitude of uses



NTIRRHINUMS are short-lived perennial plants, usually grown each year from seed. They are also called snapdragons, or sometimes dragon flowers, because as you gently squeeze the sides of the two-lipped flowers, the face opens like a dragon opening its

mouth. They are also called 'bunny rabbit plants' because the flower is said to look like a rabbit's head The large and colourful two-lipped

flowers open in late spring and summer, and are carried on plants that vary from small, twiggy and bushy edging plants to tall and upright cut flowers. A few varieties have open, trumpet-shaped flowers, an increasing number are well scented, some have partially double flowers (with extra petals) and a few

varieties also have crimson or variegated leaves.

Snapdragons come in a wide variety of colours, though not including blue, and are used in the garden in rock gardens and raised beds, hanging baskets and other containers, and as edging or the main display in flower beds. Snapdragons are also grown

as cut flowers either outside in the garden or, in the case of commercial cut-flower producers, in greenhouses, When the flowers are over, rounded

# How to buy

MOST snapdragons are raised from seeds that are available via mail order or from gardening outlets. Mail order suppliers have by far the widest range of varieties in many colours and heights from 6in (15cm) to 4ft (12m) but the seeds need starting off in cosy indoor conditions to provi well

Snapdragons are also sold as plants. Some plants are grown on by nurseries from seed, but far fewer different types are sold as seed-raised plants compared with buying the seed and arowina them yourself Some are special



Growing from seed 4 offers a good choice of varieties

varieties, usually for containers, that are raised from cuttings and these can often be the most prolific and have the best scent.

seed pods develop that eventually shed

tiny seeds. These often spring up around

the parent snapdragons and then

develop into new plants.

# Where to buy

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# Three uses of snapdragons

## Flower borders and bedding

SNAPDRAGONS are often grown for summer colour in groups between shrubs and perennials. They are also grown as the main feature in summer bedding displays. Medium-height varieties are set in groups in the middle of the border, dwarf bushy varieties are used as edging.

Varieties in single colours, rather than mixed colours, are usually the most effective.

Antirrhinums are grouped according to height behind an edging of shortergrowing petunias and impatients



### Containers

MEDIUM-SIZED varieties are used in the centre of tubs and larger planters. Their striking upright growth makes a bold impact and varieties in single colours are usually the most effective. Plants in bright or pastel shades can be chosen according to the colour theme of the planting.

Dwarf and trailing varieties are set around the edges of large containers or in window boxes.



### Cut flowers

SNAPDRAGONS are popular cut flowers, especially in pastel shades, and grow well in rows. This is a case where planting tall varieties in mixed colours works well, providing a range of colours for different arrangements.

However, these tall growing varieties need support to prevent wind damage, with pea-and-bean netting stretched horizontally usually working better than canes.



#### Varieties for window boxes, baskets and container edging

FOR snapdragons that tend to trail over the edge of containers or fill out window boxes. Twinny' provides a prolific, long season of flared flowers. If dwarf varieties with traditional snapdragon flowers are preferred, look for Magic Lantems' Chinese Lantems' and in particular 'Candelabra' that is specially developed for hanging baskets





Varieties for container focal points VARIETIES for borders such as "Liberty," Sonnet" and "Madame Butterfty" also do well as container centerprieces. A new variety, Xntrinca", is a little shorter at Vini (35cm) and has strong upright growth. The flared open-throated flowers come in delightful bicolours.

### Varieties for cut flowers

WHILE varieties suited to borders are good for cutting, there are special cutflower types. Names to look for include 'Opus', 'Potomac' and 'Rocket' with traditional flowers, plus 'Chantily' with flared flowers and 'Madame Butterfly' with semi-double flowers.



#### How to grow from seed

SNAPDRAGON seeds are about the size of poppy seeds, and need light and warmth to germinate. Always check the guidance on the seed packet as some individual varieties may have their own requirements.

Sow the seeds in cell packs, three or four seeds in each cell, using clean trays and moist, fresh, seed-sowing compost. Cover with just a little soil as the seeds need light to germinate. Set them in good light and a temperature of about 60°F (15°C). A windowsill propagator is a good spot. Keep the seedings in

good light as they develop,

Raise snapdragon seeds in a covered



or otherwise they will become spindly and collapse. Snip off the weaker seedlings in each cell, leaving one strong one. A lan to plant them out soon after the last frost, but move them to a cooler situation before planting so they are acclimatised to the outside.

### When and where to plant

SNAPDRAGONS are best planted in spring, after the last frost. Before planting them, be sure to acclimatise your developing home-grown seedlings to the cool outdoor conditions.

Plenty of sunshine is important to ensure snapdragons thrive. They will often grow well when shaded from the side, such as in front of a fence, but shade from overhead trees causes weak and spindly growth.

Snapdragons appreciate good soil that is neither parched nor waterlogged. but are not usually fussy. Their planting site often benefits from additional organic matter being worked into the soil

Plant dwarf and bushy varieties as edoing to flower beds and along paths.



with dwarf types also being ideal in window boxes and around the rim of larger containers. Smaller, bushier varieties can be planted closer together than taller ones - check the advice on the seed packet.

### How to plant

FIRST check over the planting area. Remove any weeds and large stones, fork over the area carefully and add some soil improver if the area has been neglected or looks sticky or story

Your seed packet, or the tag that came with the plants, will usually provide guidance on planting distance, depending on the height and spread of the different varieties

Water the plants in their pots or plug travs, then remove the seedlings and space them out over the area soil improver if = to be planted. If you're planting in more than one row, or in necessary clumps, set the plants out so that they're staggered. Plant with a trowel, water them in with a weak liquid feed and watch them grow.

## Frequently asked questions

Are snapdragons annuals that I have to start afresh each year. or are they perennials that last for years?

SNAPDRAGONS are both. Naturally, snapdragons are dwarf shrubs and can thrive for a number of years in the right situation. However, most of those we grow today have been developed to he grown from seed (or cuttings) in the spring, flower prolifically all summer

and then be discarded at the end of the season. The problem is that they may not survive the winter, and if they do they tend to develop floppy growth in the second year and fail to flower prolifically. Overwintered plants also carry rust disease into the new season

#### I cut some snapdragons, but the stems are crooked. How can I straighten them?

ONCE bent, you cannot straighten the stems! Bent stems occur when you cut snapdragons from your garden and then lay them down flat while you cut some more. The tips of the flower spikes quickly turn upwards towards the light, creating a bend in the stems.

The answer is to stand your snapdragon stems upright in a bucket of water as soon as you've cut them. The stems will them stay straight.



he stems into a bucket as you pick then



# Ton care tins

Check that your newly planted snapdragons do not dry out soon after planting, watering if necessary, Most modern varieties of snapdragons are naturally bushy and do not need pinching back after planting.

Tall varieties will need support. so use netting or canes and string to prevent them falling over. Get the support in place before the plants have collapsed.

Look out for rust disease and nip off any infected leaves and shoot tips when the symptoms first appear. As a last resort, use fungicide

Deadhead by snipping off the spikes of faded flowers when the last flowers on the spike are dving. Be on the lookout for aphids (blackfly, greenfly) and squash them or spray with an organic insecticide





Can I collect the seeds and grow more? YES you can ship off

the seedheads at the end of summer and shake the seeds into a large envelope to collect them. They can then be sown in the same way as of the resulting plants.

Wait for seertheark to dry before collecting seed

bought seeds. The results. however, can be unpredictable in terms of the height and flower colour



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## **Could I grow Epimediums in containers?**

Is it possible to grow Epimediums in a container and if so what compost should I use and are some varieties better important to keep the pots watered, than others?

Helen O'Brien Cumbrin

I've never tried to grow Epimedium A Ive never tried to grow approximately in containers, but Hardy's Plants lists the following as suitable

Those listed are Epimedium arandiflorum, Epimedium x vounaianum 'Roseum', Epimedium x peralchium 'Frohnleiten' and Epimedium x worlevense 'Orangekonigin'. Other varieties of these hybrids will probably also be suitable.

Epimedium like humus-rich garden soil and in most cases like plenty of moisture around the roots. I would be inclined to use loam-based John Innes no 2 with added leaf mould or garden compost, or added multi-purpose compost.

Even types that tolerate dry shade will do better with more moisture, so it is particularly during the growing season. Pots dry out a lot more quickly than the garden so even if it has rained a lot it is worth checking the compost is moist.

It is worth noting that Epimediums are vulnerable to vine weevil so it will be well worth treating the compost to ensure you don't lose them to this troublesome nest

Epimediums can be roughly divided into two groups. Those from Europe are the most tolerant of dry shade. These include Epimedium alpinum, rubrum, pinnatum & pubiperum but also the hybrids such as Epimedium x versicolor and x youngianum.

Japanese species of Epimedium such as grandiflorum, are easy to grow but maybe not for the driest spots.

## Are these friends or foes?

While preparing to lay a new lawn I came across about 70 of these grubs. Could you please advise me as to what they are and what to do about them?

Michael Ward (via email)

pose no threat to The grub in guestion appears to be the larva of a the cardeo

Cockchafer (Melolontha melolontha). Metamorphosing into a large beetle to fin (30mm) long, with

feathery clubbed antennae, it often swarms on apple, oak and other trees. It flies on warm nights in May and June and often bumps into windows. If the

window is open, it may venture indoors.

Pleasingly, this wonderful beetle is not a pest and, sadly, is declining. I am delighted that you discovered lots of the larvae when laving a lawn. Hopefully, you left them to develop into adults.



### Amazing arum!

What is this astounding plant in a friend's garden, please? Daphne Hughes (via email)

The plant in question appears to be A a tropical arum (amorphallus). Of the 100 or so species most are indigenous to tropical Asia and Africa

I am sure you will agree that its leaves have sculptural charm and when it flowers its vase-shaped bloom with protructing "poker" (spartix) is dramatic



## Leeks attacked

Could you please tell me what attacked my 'Musselburgh' and 'Warwick F1' leeks and how can I stop it happening again? Once I have stripped away all the eaten layers, the remaining leeks have been perfectly edible. Derek Fraser (via email)

Your leeks have been attacked by A leaf miner, a pest whose larvae bore into and spoil the white, fleshy shank. Sadly, there are no chemical controls for this fly.

The best way to tackle it is to cover the crop, from start to finish, with horticultural fleece, which excludes the tiny flies. The following year, grow leeks on a fresh patch of ground that has not been planted with this crop for about three years.

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Contact John Negus by email address below Email: amateurgardening@futurenet.com



## When and how do I prune my Korean fir?

Q I need to cut 12-18in (30-46cm) off a lower branch of a Korean fir. The tree is about 20 years old and stands about 8-9ft (24-27m) high. When should I do this? Also, are the cones supposed to open, as mine newer have? Johnny Woll (via email)

A There is no good time or bad time, to prune Korean fir (Abies Koreana). Like most conflers they don't respond to pruning by producing new growth so the point at which you cut the stem will remain as a cut end for ever.

The most important thing is to position and angle the cut so that it shows as little as possible, and to make the cut as neat and as small as possible.

If there was to be a best time to do the pruning it would probably be between

November and February, when the sap isn't flowing. There is always a danger with sappy plants that they 'bleed' from a pruning cut and this can be damaging to young plants. I don't think it is something you need be too concerned about, but it is worth mentioning.

The cones of Korean fit don't open; they disintegrate on the tree and only then are the seeds dispersed. I guess this is an adaptation to ensure that the seeds are fully mature before leaving the plant. It does limit the distance the seeds fail, though perhaps they are light enough to be carried by the wind.

The sticky sap forms blobs of resin and the tree naturally produces them. It is one of its many natural characteristics and not a sign that there is anything to worry about.

## What do I do with my spring bulbs?

Q I have *Iris reticulata* 'Harmony' growing in pots with 'Queen of the Night' tulips. After the blooms are over should I treat them as annuals and repot new ones in winter, or leave them all to come again next spring? *Andrew Graham, Leeds* 



is a dark purple tulip

A I am delighted that your potted Iris reticulata and tulip 'Queen of the Night' plants are emerging well.

When blooms fade, carefully remove plants from their pots and transplant them in a sunny free-draining part of the garden.

They will recover well if you water them in and liquid-feed them with a high-potash tomato fertiliser when their leaves are green.

Watch out for slugs, which often feast on tulip leaves. If the foliage is being eaten and you find slimy trails, control the 'night brigade' with a proprietary slug killer.

### Quick questions & answers

Can you identify these that have appeared on my apple tree? Darren Cox (via email)



A laupect they are burr knots, curious outgrowths that occasionally appear on apple varieties grafted onto dwarfing root stocks. Apart from disfigurity of the branches and the trunk, they seldom affect the tree's health, and affected varieties usually continue to grow and crop well.

Q Is it too late to prune my gooseberries? Sarah Kay (via email)

A Tacke gooseberries by shortening gat year's growth on leading shoots by a half. Also, cu back dead and diseased stems to healthy word and thin out crowded centres. Then, in late June, reduce side shoots to four or the leaves.

How can I get rid of greenhouse mealybugs and whitefly (pictured)? Sue Dawson (via email)

Try BugClear Fruit & Veg, a contact insecticide used either as a gun or a diluted

concentrate. Based on rape-seed oil, it clogs the creatures' breathing pores and death quickly ensues.





## Advice for preparing ground for turfing

I have recently cleared a border with the intention of turfing it. Can you tell me
 how I should prepare the area? Secondly, when is the best time to buy turf?
 Would using a roller to level the surface make it too compact?
 Carol Smallwood /via email)

A If you have cleared a border you may not need to dig the area again, as lifting plants and forking out weeds may have been sufficient.

Îf, în doing the other stages of preparation, you come across a patch that is quite compacted then you can just tackle that bit. Adding organic matter is ideal but not vital on most ordinary garden soils. Boost the soil fertility by forking in a granular fertiliser.

Using a roller would certainly help to provide the necessary compaction to the soil surface but you would need to be certain of having the level right and of using the roller on evenly structured soil. If some areas are softer, the roller will sink more than in firmer places and you could end up with an uneven surface.

The best time to lay turf is before this time of year but turf is available for sale now. It is fine to lay it this late as long as you have the means to irrigate the lawn while it establishes.

If we have a wet spring and summer it won't need much, but during dry weather it will need a lot of water in its first year.

### Will my salvias have survived?

My 'Amistad', 'Amazing Blue' and 'Jezebel' salvias looked dead, but when I dug them up I found long fibrous roots with green shoots so I hastly replanted them. Will they be OK and does this normally happen?

Barry Lea, Boston, Lincs

Amazing Blue' and 'Jezebel' salvias succumbed to low winter temperatures and died back.

Provided the site drains freely and your charges were not waterlogged over winter, they are probably still alive.

It's good to hear that when you dug up a plant, new shoots were growing from underground stems.

For the moment, shorten plants to within 9in (23cm) of the base and wait for new shoots to emerge from subterranean buds. When that happens,

shorten dead top growth to live tissue and mulch plants with a generous layer of composted manure mixed a fertiliser.

Next autumn, either leave them in the ground and mulch well with straw and well-rotted manure or, if your soil is heavy and prone to waterlogging, pot them up and overwinter them in a frost-free greenhouse.



Dog lichen is common on shaded lawns

## Lawn woes

What is this growing in our lawn? Ted Mear (via email)

A It is dog lichen (Peltigera canina), which colonises shaded, hungry lawns where drainage is poor.

It is easy to eradicate if you sprinkle it with lawn sand and spike the turf with a garden fork. Additionally, apply a highnitrogen lawn fertiliser and a light sprinkling of garden lime. Finally, crumble the soil and sow Johnsons Lawn Thickener grass seed to carpet the bare patch. It will soon improve.



## White beauty

Q Please could you identify the attached picture of a white orchid? Edward Isaacs (via email)

A Your orchid is a dendrobium. It normally develops upright shoots thickly sleeved with blossom.

Position it in very light shade and water it every two weeks or so when the compost feels dry, and liquid-feed it monthly with an orchid fertiliser, and it should flourish. If mealy bugs attack it, control them by painting colonies with a systemic insecticide.











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#### Our horticulturist's happy and accidental discovery

While working with a graft (one of the varieties is Fragaria ananassa), our horticulturalist



realised that one of the plants grew uncommonly high, almost without a tellis, a bit like a 'strauberry tree'. It climbed so much that he had to install a stake. The climbing strauberry plants us shown. But the surprises didn't stop there! These plants quickly grew to over 1 metre tall, with enormous red juicy fruits and, since the variety grew back, harvesting continued until Svetember

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#### Natalie, Leeds

«I waited for a year to write to you, because I wanted to see what happened to my strawberries over a year I was already picking strawberries in june and September, and I'm expecting another harvest in the springitum, these climbing strawberries have been a great joy to me and my kids 3 times a year! » These strawberry plants climb towards the sky to become veritable STRAWBERRY TREES...

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# All our vesterdays

## **Stand and deliver**

Alan Bloom reveals a selection of hardy tall plants, in a variety of stunning colours, that stand erect in garden borders without the need for sticks or stakes

Kaking is one of the most tresome of garden chores. It does not come so hard for gardeners who specialise in tall plants such as delphiniums that invariably need supporting, but for those who grow a variety of perenniais in a boxef it is different. Quie often the job is postponed until it is to late, either because the ground is hard or because sticks are hard to come by or simply because it is a tiresome job.

It is true that over-tail plants are often seen in too-narrow borders, or that the talk kinds used are naturally weak in growth. Some undoubtedly are, but the fact must not be overlooked that the encourages stem weakness because of the drawing effect of the backing, be it a well, hedge or fence.

For those who like tall plants at the rear, but yet who dislike either the task of sticking or the ugliness of the supports used, there are a number of subjects over 3ft (90cm) high that, in my experience, invariably stand unaided.

Aconitum comichoell' Arendsi' and Is parent A, Richerl JA, comichoell show their relationship to delphiniums with fine spikes of amethys-blue in late summer and autumn. Of the two, the 4H (2m) A.c. Yarendsi' is taller, a little earlier and more adaptable, for A. *Richeri* prefers a little schede and soil not day. But both are easy plants with stems almost

#### Delightful perfume

Artemisia lactiflora also flowers in late summer, with fine plumes of creamy-white that give off a delightful meadowsweet perfume. In good soil, the 4ft (1.2m) stems are well clothed with jagged dark-green leaves and its only fault is that leaves may shrivel prematurely if growing in poor, dry conditions. Apart from this, it is a plant of very easy culture, in both open or partly shady positions. The same conditions will grow a somewhat similar plant that flowers in June. This is Aruncus svivestris (A. dioicus), with larger plumes of a creamy shade to 6ft (1.8m) or even more where moist. The taller astilbes will also grow and stay erect, but for these some moisture is essential.

Some of the taller campanulas are



The massive perennial sunflower Helionthus 'Capenoch Stal is reliably self-supporting, despite its 5ft (1.5m) height



Inclined to foll, but not so with C. betfolio. This flowers in June and July, forming a stout 4ft (1.2m) bush of strong stems from which hang clusters of violet-blue bells, and this too is happy in either sun or some shade. All the cinicifyage grow with winy, erect stems and dainty spikes some shade. All the cinicifyage grow with winy, erect stems and dainty spikes of white flowers in auturn. They are long-lived and reasonably adaptable, agart from dry sunny baces.

Centaureo macrocephala, however, does not mind being dry. Its roots go deeply and its growth is massive. From a wealth of greenery come 4-5ft (1.2-1.5m) stems crowned with large yellow heads of comflower form in June and July.

#### The colour purple

A curious fact with the pumple-headed Exploration pumplem is that one can never be sure when it will flower or how high a will grow. Its wraitbons are, of course, due to differences in weather flowering in July 4 ftl, 2m) or opening in September at a good 6ft (18m) high, it knowning in July 4 ftl, 2m) or opening indexity at https://www.how stiff and straight with 1s flower heads atmost fast. Similar i form, but invariably vernonia control fU cokensuo/with heads of a deeper pumple.

M photographic Man

Galtonia candicans is much like a



Goltonia condicans has stiff stems about 3ft (1m) high, carrying large white bells. It is sometimes called summer hyacinth



giant white hyacinth, but with more widely spaced bells. It is a hardy bulb, easy to grow, and adds much grace to a mixed border in summer.

It cannot be said that any of the tailer heleniums will stand unaided except in island beds sited well in the open. Their relatives, the yellow heliopsis, are rather more reliable but still not invariably erect *Heinahtris*: Ucdon Gold', "Tiomphe de Gand' and 'Capenoch Star' make hefty 51(1.5m) butses set with yellow sunflowers of double or single form, but other types should be avoided.

Ligulor/a przewotski makes a picture of statucsuje proportions in anything but dry solis. It has deeply jagged leaves, along much of its 6ft (Bm) spikes in July. Its a plant that should be more widely grown. Other ligularias, including L. Gregorung Gold and L. dentater Othello', also grow erect, but they demand space and respond to molisture.

#### Slender spikes

The taller lupins, philox and hemerocallis can usually be relied upon to obviate the need for staking, but not many can be classed as tail subjects. They are less tail than the very good *Polygonum amplexicaule* [*Persicania amplexicaulis*] This makes for a bush of considerable spread and density, and for weeks on end it has counties slender spikes of deep roxy-red. Its demands concern little else but space, for it is long-lived.

Peonles are lovely plants, but the double-flowered varieties do not support themselves. However, the charming single ones do. These



macrocephalo has leafy stems some 4ft (1.2m) tall and its large flower heads last a long time



include the species, such as Paeonia peregnina and P. obovata in shades of pink, and the lovely P. mlokosewitschii in pale vellow.

Salvla x superbo is accepted as being one of the most valuable border subjects, with violet-purple spikes to 3%ft (m) for several weeks, but few of the tall rudbeckias will stand unaided. One that will do so, largely because it is not so tall, is *R. locinicatr* 'Soldquelle' with fully double flowers in autumn.

#### Perfection in form

Most of the tailer golderrods (solidago) become top-heavy at flowering time and there is a strong case for omitting these from a border collection in favour of lower stature. Sidalcess, for all the charm of their spikes of pink and rosyred, again cannot be relied upon where hemmed in. This unfortunately also applies to verbascums, except perhaps for the fine yellow species V. thapsiforme [V. densiflorum].

One veronica must be mentioned in this context and that is V vignica var. oldo (Veronicostrum vignicum Valbum). It has perfection in form and the 4ft (12m) spikes come in July and August. V vignica light-blue flowered is a type not often seen, and though the habit is identical It makes a briefer display than the white variation.

Here, then, is a selection that would undoubtedly lessen the staking chore for those who decide to make some changes. But this would not be the only gain, for there can be no doubt that however carefully placed, sticks and stakes are never unobtrusive and inwalably detruitly placed, sticks and stakes are never unobtrusive and inwalably detruct in some measure from the beauty of the plants they are used to support.

The views, information and optitions expressed during this series of extracts from past issues of AG are solely those of the individuals involved, at the time they were written, and are not necessarily relevant or even legal inday. Please treat these pages as a look back at how things were done in the past and not necessarily how they are done to sits. All concepts on responsibility if relevant looks advice given in these attricts from past issues.



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## DESPATCHING NOW

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

## This weel

## **Daffodils in all their glory**

#### We take a close look at these spring-flowering bulbs

WE are in daffordil season, and I for one could not be happier. These 'largeflowered trumpet narcissus' (to give them their official title) are a real loy, and for many gardeners they represent the first real patches of colour in the year.

Over the next few weeks try to visit places like Wisley, or Edinburgh Botanics, or 101 other spring gardens where daffodils abound in large drifts. And become inspired Also look out for the names of the varieties that catch your eve I et's take a look at some of the many fascinating stories about dafforfile

Quote of the Week: 'A house with daffodils in it is a house lit up, whether or not the sun is shining outside.' A.A. Milne (from his collection of essays entitled Not That It Matters, 1919).



## Dutch bulbs? Nah., daffodils are from Cornwall

WITH so much spoken about the Netherlands being the home of spring bulbs you'd be forgiven for thinking that they were the leading producers of daffodils (as well as tulins). But no!

Cornwall is the world's largest daffodil producer, growing more than 15,000 tonnes of bulbs each year. Eight out of every 10 daffodils planted in British gardens come from Cornwall. The county's daffodil farms are some of the largest and most efficient anywhere, and they export across the world. But these farmers and growers have been through a hard time - and many are thinking of getting out of the 'daffodil game', which

could put that industry (which is worth £110 million to the economy) at risk

Cornish daffodil prowers supply both the 'bulb' and 'cut-flower' trades. Cutflower daffs for the floristry trade reached a neak between the two World Wars But in 1942 in the midst of World War II the Transportation of Flowers Act was introduced. It banned the exportation of all flowers, so Cornish daffs were not worth growing. However, growers from the Scilly Isles, who especially relied on daffodil cultivation to survive, were not going to give in without a fight. They sent some fragrant narcissi to Prime Minister Winston Churchill

along with an appeal to be able to continue to trade. Winston later announced: "These people must be enabled to grow their flowers and send them to London - they cheer us up so much in these dark days"



### Daffodils and vicars!

The Rev George Herbert Engleheart (1851-1936) from Wiltshire. bred 'Will Scarlet' in 1898, which was the first red colour



Bonnet'

breakthrough. It has a bright orange, bowl-shaped\_ribbed\_centre (or 'corona') with creamy-white petals (or 'perianth segments'). In 1899, three hulbs sold for £100 (around £7,900 at today's rate) Canon Horace Rollo Meyer (1868-1953) from Hertfordshire, raised a series of distinguished daffodils. One of his best cultivars was 'Easter Bonnet' (registered in 1956, three years after he died). A large-cupped daffodil, the white perianths surround a cup ranging in colour from warm peach to pink.

The Rev Joseph Jacob (1859-1926), in Shropshire, was an expert in all bulbs. In 1910 he published Daffodils, the leading reference book of the time.

## daffodils with 'red' (actually pink or orange) colourings



A Gardener's Niscellany Gardenind's king of trivia and brain-teasers, Graham Clarke

# AG's Garden Wall

DIGGING A	Avens	Corona	W
PERIANTH	Button	Eater	Trumpet
EDGE	Planting	Cup	Airy

It's time for our just-for fun puzzle – AG's Garden Wall. This wall comprises 12 bricks in three courses. Each brick has a different word, or phrase on it. The first brick in each course, with BLOCK capitals, is comended in place and cannot be moved. Just rearrange all the other bricks, so that the four words in each course of bricks are liked. There are three different

#### connections to look for, one for each course. You may find that some words have more than one connection to other courses, but there is just one correct answer. You'll either find this puzzle fiendishly difficult, or incredially easy. Answers below, Hint In one of the courses, the bricks are all words connected to the flower of the daffold!

DIGGING A	 	
PERIANTH		
EDGE	 	

Meeting (and the second states) in the second se



there is only one correct solution. After the listed wor are found there are nine lett remaining; arrange these to make this week's KEYWOR

HOWT

BLOOMS

CORNWALL

CORONA

BULBS

CUP

FLOR

GREEN

PERIA

PINK

POISC

SPRIN

words	s	s	Ν	R	Ν	0	1	κ	Ν	R
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send it to AG Word Search No 613, Amateur Gardening, Future Publishing Limited, Unit 415, Winnersh Trilangle, Eskdale Road, Winnersh, RG41 5TP, to arrive by Wednesday 6 April 2022. The first correct entry chosen at random will win our 530 cash prize.

This week's keyword is
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## Dangerous daffs

DAFFODIL bulbs are poisonous. They may not kill, unless you have underlying health issues, but they will cause really nasty stomach upsets if eaten. They are often mistaken for



onions. There are two standard ways to avoid confusing daffodil bulbs with onions: i) always keep stored daffodil bulbs in labelled bags, and ii) don't plant daffodils in the kitchen garden!

Daffodils (and all narcissus) are in the Amarylidaceae plant family, so are related to amarylis, agapanthus, snowdrops, sternbergia and nerines (outdoors), and hippeastrums, clivia and blood illies (indoors). Oh, and onions!

#### Historical gardening event of the week: 26 March 1484

WE use the term 'sour grapes' when someone makes something out to be unimportant



'The Fox and Grapes' from Caxton's Aesop's Fables

solely because it is unattainable to them; or when someone puts something down in a negative way. Often it indicates resentment. But where did the term come from?

The phrase originates from Ascaps's Fobies, in a story called "The Fox and the Grapes'. A fox sees a bunch of grapes hanging from a vine, and yearns to get to them. After several failed attempts, the fox realises he'll never get them, and walks away, in a attempt to save his reputation – and appease his smarting ego – the fox declares that the grapes were sour, so he never realiv wanted them in the first doccl

So, what is the significance of 26 March 14847 This was the day William Caxton printed the first English translation of Aesop's Fobbes. It was printed on England's first press, in the aimony' of Westminster Abbey. "An almony has nothing to do with almonds! Its the place in church buildings where alms were distributed to the poor. The person designated to oversee this distributed to warse.

## Daffodil divisions

Al L daffodils are parcissi - but not all parcissi are daffordils! Daffordils with their larger 'trumpet' shaped flowers, are in the narcissus genus, but so are many smaller more delicate-looking species that could never be described as daffodils.

There are tens of thousands of daffodil and narcissus species and cultivars. In 1950, to make identification easier, botanists classified them all

- into distinct divisions:
- 1 = trumpet daffodils
- 2 = large cupped daffodils 3 = small cupped daffodils
- A double daffedile
- E triandrus forms
- 6 = cyclamineus forms
- 7 = ionguilla forms
- 8 = tazetta forms
- 9 = noeticus forms
- Monrissue 'Edichase' in a double daffodil
- 10 = bulbocodium forms 11 = split corona daffodils
- 12 = other cultivars not fitting in the above
- 13 = species and wild hybrids/variants

The Greek legend of Narcissus tells of a handsome young man who fell in love with his own reflection in a fountain. He pined away, and was changed into the narcissus flower. The story also gives us the word 'narcissistic' (someone inclined to admire themselves rather too much). While the exact origin of the word 'narcissus' is unknown, it is frequently linked to its fragrance, which was thought to be 'narcotic'.



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

Planting daffodils in autumn is more precise than you'd think! Most varieties should clump up from being planted about 4in (10cm) apart: a little further than this and the planting would look 'casual', but much more than this and it would look sparse.

Established daffodils (and many other flowering bulbs) can easily push their shoots through recently laid asphalt. The daffodil and the leek are both emblems of Wales because they are similar in the Welsh language: Cenhinen is leek: Cenhinen Pedr is daffodil.

## Crossword ...just for fun!



1 The subjects of this week's Miscellany! (9)

7 Group of some of the oldest garden roses, flowering once yearly in early summer, with scented blossoms of white or nale nink (4)

Within a subject of this week's Miscolinny harkwards is the Anglo-Saxon king of Mercia from 757 until 796AD (4)

9 Value added tax in a cultivator/ (1.1.1)

44 Motor vehicle in a

12 Digital number in an

13 Sovereign ruler of an empire. as in the cultivar of a trumpet 1 across, and the tulips 'Exotic \_: 'Red \_\_\_\_

'Golden '(7)

14 International code for extreme distress, found in

15 Done in the past, as in Lillum condidum (and Monardo didumell (3)

16 The Royal Horticultural

Society (1,1,1) 18 The gorse genus (4)

landscape beyond - ofter grand old house estates (2-2) en-eH \7 sensit Of negly 9 DOWN 2 Arborescent 3 Okra 4 Life or death 5 Narcissus 6 Calendula

19 Autumn in America with hosta

20 Genus of foliage houseplants

with beavily patterned leaves.

2 Resembling a tree in growth

3Known as 'lady's fingers'

the edible ports of Hibiscus esculentus (4)

4 Said of whether someone (or

something) lives or dies - as in watering a plant, perhaps! (4,2,5)

this week's Miscelland (%)

6 The pot maripold penus (9)

9 Snake mentioned in the co name of Echium vulgarel (5)

10 Alternative common name for witch especially the common

17 Design technique that creates a

vertical barrier while preserving an

uninterrupted view of the

5 Genus relating to the subjects of

known sometimes as the never-

Emerald' and '

cultivars'

Dazzler1(4)

to the maranta (9)

or appearance (11)

autoreauto de lies (a cier sa Cereautor ACROSS 1 Deficities 7 Mbis 8 OVAT 11 Car 12 One 13 Empered 1 202

wotch (5)

#### CHOMESOND BAOAE CHOREMOND

KEYWORD TO WORD SEARCH 608 (19 February): AND THE WINNER IS: MARK WORTH, BOSTON,



# Watering cans

#### There's more to a watering can than some think. Steve and Val put six to the test

OU may think a watering can is just a watering can, but they do vary widely and there can be more to your final selection than you expect. For instance, the type of can you need depends on the type and size of your plants and where they are, and the distance to a water supply.

#### Size is important

If you have lots of containers or need to water plants growing outside in borders,

#### Spear & Jackson Kew Gardens (9 Litre) £31.19



#### Features \*\*\*\*

This is a traditional-spie watering can with an over-shared body made of steel with a protective enamel coating in raccing green. Both the carrying handle and the back handle have a burnished cooper-coloured finith. The carry handle is hinged so it can be folded down. The pould is melal with a racing green coating and the detection that are and the second and the detection of the second has a burnished cooper head. A rubber washer field to the base of the rose ensures a tight fit onto the base.

#### Performance \*\*\*

The hinged handle provides good balance while pouring. This can is well made with fully sealed seams and rivet holes. Pours well, but the jets from the rose are a bit fierce so is more suited to watering plants rather than seedlings.

#### Specifications \*\*\*\*

Capacity: 9 litres, length: total 53cm, body: 24x18x28cm [LxWxFi], spout: 28cm, rose: 10cm, weight (empty/filied): 1.25kg/10.25kg, Attractive, traditional appearance, expensive. you may need a big watering can with around a foiltree capacity to help you water everything efficiently. If you struggle with a 10 Hire size, look at a smaller option such as a 5 or 7-litre can, bearing in mind It does mean more refilis from the tap or hosepipe. Where a can is intended for use indoors, in a conservatory or in a greenhouse, a smaller capacity of around 4 litres is more popular, as It is easier to manage when pouring.

#### Metal or plastic?

Other considerations include the material from which the can's made, as metal cans can be much heavier than plastic cones even before any water is added. Some may be as much as fixg heavier than a similar-sized plastic model. Marry plastic cans are now made from recycleid materials and can be recycled again after you finish with them, which can help lessen the environmental impact.

#### Burgon & Ball Waterfall (5 Litre) £28.00



#### Features \*\*\*\*

Kent & Stowe

(4 51 itra) \$24 99

This traditional-sple watering can has a round body mode of nust-resistant galvanized steel in a powdered minkight-blue costing, with a metal seal on the top of the cost. Bank a cost of the steel steel steel steel in the steel on the top of the cost. Bank and the steel in the steel steel steel in the steel steel binged so that it can be folded down. The spout is metal and the detachable circular metal rose that sorews litto the spout has a policited steel head. A nose ensues a tight fit onto the spout. This can is available in other colours.

#### Performance \*\*\*

The hinged handle provides good balance while pouring. The large top opening makes filling easy. Pours well, but the jets from the rose are too fierce for seedlings and young plants.

#### Specifications \*\*\*\*

Capacity: 4.5 litres, length: total 44cm, body: 16.5x16.5x23cm (LxWxH), spout: 23cm, rose: 7cm, weight (empty/filled): 0.65/5.15kg. This is a small attractive can better suited to indoor use.



#### Features \*\*\*\*

A sturdy can made from galvanized steel with a lough powder coated finish coloured state grey, with a metal seal on the top. The oval shaped body has a single handle for both carrying and pouring. The spout is also metal with a site grey covering and the detachable circular metal love which screws onto the spout is state grey with a site grey what. There is a mylon washer fitted to the end of the spout to ensure a tight fit.

#### Performance \*\*\*\*

This can is designed so that the balance helps the handle slip through the hand so that the emptier the can gets, the makes filling very easy. Pours well, droplets too heavy for seedlings and young plants.

#### Specifications \*\*\*\*

Capacity: 5 litres, length: total 44cm, body: 23x15x22cm (LxWxH), spout: 29cm, rose: 9cm, weight (empty/filled): 110/610kg. This is a small can better suited to indoor use, and it's expensive.





#### Different styles

There are lots of colours, materials and styles to choose from, with designs catering for looks as well as needs. For many pardeners the appearance is important and, for this reason, many

#### **Dobbies Plastic** (101 itra) \$799



#### Features \*\*\*

This garden centre chain's own-brand watering can is made entirely from recycled material. This md-green moulded plastic watering can with a broadly oval-shaped body has a large opening in the top for easy filling. The body has a single integral handle running over the top and rear of the can for both carrying and pouring. The circular rose is made from two pieces of moulded plastic that clip together, and it slides (rather than screws) onto the spout providing a tight fit. If this watering can ever becomes damaged or leaks it can be recycled

#### Performance \*\*\*

Lightweight, good balance, but rose produces coarse droplets. Difficult to fill, though, as the large handle works as an obstruction.

#### Specifications \*\*\*\*

Capacity: 10 litres, length: total 62cm. body: 25x16.5x25cm (LxWxH), spout: 25cm, rose: 10cm diameter, weight (empty/filled): 0.35/10.35kg. This is a reasonable can for the price.

#### Features \*\*\*\*

This bright-red watering can is made entirely from recycled 3mm polypropylene moulded plastic. It has a broadly square-shaped body with a large opening in the top for easy filling, with a carry handle running over the top and a rear one for pouring. This can comes with a broadly oval-shaped rose head made from two pieces of moulded plastic, while the head is red moulded plastic and the nozzles are clear. They clip together and slide (rather than screw) onto the spout and provide a tight fit. The finish on this can could have been better, as it had some rough, sharp edges.

tal cans are copies of traditional

capacity cans to make lifting easier.

can is also important, depending on

Strata Plastic

(71 itra) \$6 95

The rose that fits on the spout of the

what you grow. They come with different

choose the spray to suit your plants, with

sizes and numbers of holes so you can

#### Performance \*\*\*\*

The rose with this can is designed for applying weedkillers to a lawn, but it works very well for watering young plants and seedlings. It's a squat can with a low profile, but well balanced and pours well.

#### Specifications \*\*\*\*

Capacity: 7 litres, length: 52cm total. body: 25x15x18cm (LxWxH), spout: 25cm, rose: 13x3cm oval, weight (empty/filled): 0.30/7.30kg. Ideal for beginners:

those that produce a finer, more gentle iet being preferred for seedlings and younger plants to avoid damage. Some manufacturers offer a range of different roses to cone with these needs

We tested four metal and two plastic watering cans to see how they performed and compared.

#### The Haws Warley Fall (9 litra) \$74 99



#### Features \*\*\*\*\*

A sturdy watering can made from steel, which is given a hot galvanized dip after manufacture and finished with a tough powder coating in racing green, with a metal seal on the top. The cylindrical body has a broadly oval-shaped neck attached to the top. with the handles attached to it. The front one is for carrying (which also supports the spout) and a rear handle for pouring. The long metal spout also has a racing-green coating, and the fully detachable non-drip oval shaped brass rose that slots onto the spout. It works with multiple interchangeable accessories. This can has a minimum life expectancy of 20 years. Haws has been making watering cans since 1886, and the design and quality clearly show.

#### Performance \*\*\*\*\*

The ultimate professional's choice this long-reach metal watering can is perfect for watering seeds, garden plants and flowerbeds. Heavier than some cans, this model has perfect balance and is very easy to use. Its tall profile made filling from a water butt awkward, though.

#### Specifications \*\*\*\*\*

Capacity: 9 litres, length: total 81cm, body: 21x21x25cm (LxWxH), spout: 85cm, rose: 10x7cm oval, weight (empty/filled): 2/11kg. Expensive. but best performer - a good investment.



## Anne Swithinbank's masterclass on: creating a moon garden

this swallow tailed moth might be attracted to your moon garden

> of young birch trees with .... pale stems that will climmer at dusk

As well as flowers that emit fragrap We're looking at a group will to attract pollinating moths, pale foliane aride structure. I'm taking cuttings of some soft, silvery-leaved Phiomis italica for our moon garden C CARLON DE LA COMPANY

## Making a moon garden

Our 10-year-old daughter has read about a moon garden and is asking for ideas on how to make one. I want to encourage her interest in the garden, so could you provide any tips about plants to grow to create this type of garden? Helen McKinney,

#### Kidderminster, Worcestershire

My daughter might be 31, but has A a romantic disposition and made a similar request for a garden to enjoy on long summer evenings as dusk turns to dark. An area filled with pale, glowing, night-scented plants is also perfect for those returning late from work and unwinding by candlelight.

like a challenge, and any new project starts with a site and plan. You might earmark a secluded corner, but we're looking at a group of young birch trees planted into the lawn, whose pale stems will glimmer at dusk. By cutting a bed, we can make a planting area 26ft (8m) long and 16ft (5m) wide. If this sounds like your whole garden, it will be attractive by day as well as enticing by night. Path access through the bed - widening in

the middle to a small paved area will be needed, and luckily we have snare slabs and a hean of nale silven/ grey granite sets perfect for the job.

In no time, my daughter came up with a long list of plants, and I suggest you encourage yours to create a mood board, listing and sketching plants and features. Include stories and legends about the moon, and creatures like moths, bats, frogs and toads that might be attracted to a garden planted for the night time.

Large climbers like wisteria and honevsuckle are prime contenders. but these will need a climbing frame and time to settle. We'll be growing moon flower (laamoea alba) from seed sown in April, but be aware because the seeds of morning glories often contain poisonous alkaloids. They need a sheltered spot and a wigwarn of poles for their twining stems, and I can't wait to see the wide, fragrant blooms opening. Whiteflowered lavender berbaceous Phiox ogniculata White Flame Rosa Kent and notted 'Casa Blanca' lilies are also on our list.

## Practicalities to consider...

TO create a bed in a lawn, first mark the shape with pegs and string. The next job is to lift away unwanted turf by cutting sections using a half-moon edging iron or sharp spade, and slicing beneath. Pile the turf in a corner of the garden, as it will rot down into a fabulous fibrous loam for compost and mulching. Dig the soil, adding well-rotted organic matter, and allow it to settle before planting.



Remove unwanted turf in sections by slicing

#### Plants for Anne's choices a moon garden



Nicotiona alata: Sow seed now or order plants of this tall night-scented tobacco plant, whose white flowers only open properly in the evening. Plants can reach 4ft (1.2m) high



Zaluzianskva ovata 'Orange Eve Night scented phlox blooms open in summer on plants 6in (15cm) high, so are ideal for a container. Overwinter in an unheated greenhouse.



othera biennis: Weed, wildflower or garden plant? Evening primrose has fragrant blooms opening on plants to 4ft (1.2m) tall. Plants are good at self seeding



Mirabilis jalapa: Known as the marve of Peru, you can buy the four o'clock plant as long tubers for planting out. or raise from seed. Plants reach 2-3ft (60-90cm) high and usually come as mixtures, but you can buy just white.



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# Letters to Wendy 🔊

## Surprises that brighten up my day

ANVE spent quile a kot firme this last month preasing the allotment digging in manure. Despite unsettied weather. I managed to enjoy uplifing sumy intervals to get my jobs done. On one visit, I found two unexpected supprises that really brightneed my day! How the delicate white crocus got into my tidled raspherry bed I'ven oldas, and I was stunned to see a subabilito butterfly so early

Just goes to show, there can be wonderful treats just waiting around the corner for you!

Iona Chisholm, Lichfield, Staffs





## Smart filing

I AM sending you some photos of planters that I made from old metal filing cabinets.

First of all, I scraped the drawers, I then turned them on their back and cut the drawer rails out. The pattern on the front is made from rubber mats stuck on with No Nails adhesive,

I then painted them with a black metal paint and lined the inside with polystyrene and here is the end result. Joseph Jones. St Annes. Loncs

## **Reader's Tip**

STRAWBERRIES normally ripen around Wimbledon time (end of June). My tip for getting an earlier harvest is to pot them up into a rain gutter in early March and bring them into the greenhouse. We are able to get ripe strawberries six weeks ahead of those growing outside.

This photo was taken on 4 May last year. We picked and ate them as they ripened while pottering around in the greenhouse. We call it the gardeners' perk. When we finish harvesting those fruits in the greenhouse, the outdoor ones will be ready too.

You can also easily transplant them outside. Simply dig a trench at the suitable spot and slide the strawberry plants in place. Viola! Ruth Huang, Leicester





# Gardening

## Classifieds

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## Capturing memories in a calendar

ONCE a month. I try to visit a different open garden with friends. On a recent walk my pal, lenny and I spotted this delightful clump of snowdrops growing alongside Cyclamea coum

I always take photos and plan to nick the best to create a wall calendar for 2023. There are companies that offer this service using your own pics. My friends will receive a conv of the calendar for Christmas, and one for myself and I hope it will serve as a snapshot of our spare time well spent. Susan Campbell, Cheshire

## What I turn to first...

PI EASE thank Graham Clarke for the Gardeners' Miscellany information he always gives us. I think his sense of fun comes through in his writing and it always makes me smile.

I always do the wordsearch first, my favourite thing to do with a cup of coffee to begin

the day The historical gardening events is always so interesting, thank you Graham for making my day. I wonder what other

readers turn to in the magazine first? Mrs Rose Shaw. Oadby, Leics

## It's spring – hurray!

I KNOW spring is really coming when my first Inis reticulata bursts open, always so unexpectedly as if they so like to surprise me as I walk down the garden. Such beautiful little flowers. and colours

flowers of bursting # nunh

Svivia Monk Hayling Island, Hants

Primroses, crocuses and daffs are guaranteed to lift the spirits



HERE'S a "beauty spot" in my garden and a promise of things to come. I hope your readers will enjoy the mood lifting colours. Boots and trowels at the ready.

Wendy says Indeed, it's all go in the garden, the early flowers certainly prompt us to get cracking!

Future Publishing Ltd Unit 45 Winnersh Triangle

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#### Subscription dalage

Disruption decays Disruption remains within UK and International delivery

Circulation Retail Category Director: Ben Oakden

Production Group Head of Production: Mark Constance Senior Production Manager: Matthew Eplington

Advertising Production Manager Joanne Crosby

Director of Group Finance: Oli Foster

E-lands| Director Bhoda Parry

Managing Director Jason Orme

roun Manaoino Director Sonhie Wybrew Bond

stributed by Marketforce (UK),121-141 Westbourn mace, Paddington, London W263R. 10 marketforce





26 MARCH 2022 AMATEUR GARDENING 57

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and the second s

Stephen Ward, Choppington, Northumberland

# Toby Buckland

## Plantsman and BBC gardening presenter



Sunflowers, seen here growing in the Ukrainian fields, are indelibly linked

## **Plants of peace**

Sunflowers are adored by finches, like this greenfinch, that feast on the seeds

Sunflowers are linked with brave Ukrainians, says **Toby**. Plant some now to show solidarity and the hope for peace

VE always had a big thing for sunflowers. Growing in a few weeks into skyscrapers, they are living miracles – up there (pardon the pun) with the best of them.

As I push the stripy kernels into the astonishing summer height and heft to come, although recent events mean that now I can't help but reflect on how lucky we are to live in a free and peaceful land.

Surflowers are inextricably linked with the brave and beleaguered people of Ukraine. Not only are they their national flower, but the image of the golden petia against a blue sky also evokes the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag, while oil pressed from the seed provides a significant chunk of Ukraine's agricultural weath.

Sunflowers aren't native to Europe but hark back to North America, where they've been grown by the indigenous people as a seedy staple for thousands of years. It was only after European settlers brought back the seeds that they

## "In Ukraine, sunflowers signify peace"

spread east, and were adopted and eaten by Ukrainians as a snack.

invited from tiny seeds into monumental

skyscrapers, inspiring sunflowers represent living miracles in more ways than one

Interestingly, the original sunflowers didn't resemble the single-stemmed giants that we now know, they had a branched habit akin to that of a coneflower or aster, producing a succession of relatively small flowers.

And they would have stayed that way, but for the Russian Orthodax Church, which banned cooking with butter and lard during Lent. Rather than go without, breeding programmes from the 18th century to the Soviet era created single sunflowers suited for a mechanical harvest and pressing for OII. This meant

## Toby's trivia



Ukraine and Russia supply up to 70-80% of the world's sunflower oil.



2 Sunflowers come in many forms, from huge singles bred to flower and rippen for seed at the same time, to dwarfs suitable for pots and repeaters for cut flowers.

the people could observe the religious restrictions and still enjoy a fry-up!

Small-flowered modern varieties like Thompson & Morgan's repeating SunBelievable are closer to North American originals than the giants – but although they give a longer display, the singles are still the most striking, and are adored by bees and finches that feast on the seeds.

In Ukraine, sunflowers signify peace. And while that may be a distant dream, planting sunflowers is a show of solidarity and a prayer of thanks for the liberty, equality and fratemity we enjoy.

### Sow sunflowers for better days

SUNFLOWERS are child's play to grow. Sow the seed in pots, or push the seed into the soil where you want them to grow, and they'll sprout and start reaching for the sky within a fortnight. They are a boon for wildlife; bees love the flowers, and if kept in a dry shed the seeds make excellent bid food.

The deep roots can also improve drainage and aeration. To support the tall stems, they grow deep taproots that find their way in, and then expand fissures in otherwise compacted soil.





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