



We Love October

for bright sparks and first frosts

Can you feel the deliciousness of autumn? I am not sure that the British are built for hot weather – except in occasional bursts while by a swimming pool on holiday. After all that heatwave nonsense in the summer there is something very comforting about reaching for a jumper when you go outside. This month the leaves have turned, there will probably be a storm or two and, for some of you, there will be a frost. But the change of season does not mean that our gardens stop singing: it is just a matter of slightly changing the melody.

Words by James Alexander-Sinclair

STAR OF THE MONTH
Symphyotrichum laeve 'Calliope'

Some plants flower in clumps, some in sprays, some in wisps, some in elegant flushes, others in dots, and some even in gushes and splats. This is – and I am pretty sure that you will agree – a cloud. A veritable stratocumulus of tiny lavender daisies. Asters (or *Symphyotrichum* as we must learn to call them) sit there patiently all summer trying very hard to blend into the background – sometimes it feels as if they will never get their act together but, like the US Cavalry, they appear at the last minute to give our gardens the final summer hurrah.

Sun or partial shade. Susceptible to mildew, so keep plants healthy and well watered. Divide every third spring.
Height x Spread 120cm x 30cm

PHOTO: JASON INGRAM



ONE FOR THE FUCHSIA

This is a real summer/autumn cusp combination. The heather whispers rumours of winter, while the fuchsia harks back to the party dresses and wild jubillations of summer - like Jack Frost dancing a wild pasodoble with Olivia Newton-John's Sandy from Grease. Pretty unusual but interesting to watch.

Calluna garden girls series

They need lots of sunshine. Prune in mid-spring after the worst frosts have passed. Need to be replaced every 10 years or so.

H x S 30cm x 30cm

Fuchsia 'Tom Thumb'

Propagate from softwood or semi-ripe cuttings in summer. Good in pots or raised beds. Mulch well for winter protection.

H x S 30cm x 30cm

BUMBLING ALONG

These shrubby salvias are amazing. I have some that began flowering around May and have not stopped - they are as energetic as a wind-whipped miscanthus. And that red is it pillar box? Guardsman? Lipstick? So bright and contrasting nicely with that *Eucomis* and the rest of the *Verbena*.

Salvia 'Royal Bumble'

Needs sun and good drainage. Grows easily from cuttings in summer. Deadhead to prolong flowering.

H x S 15cm x 50cm

Eucomis autumnalis

Needs a bit of shelter and a thick winter mulch in colder areas. Sow seed in autumn or spring. Untroubled by pests and diseases.

H x S 40cm x 15cm

Verbena bonariensis

A border stalwart. Flowers for ages, grows easily and has a colour that goes with pretty much anything.

H x S 2m x 50cm



easy container combo

COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO

Some displays are there for the duration and some just for the moment. This one is brief - but what a moment! Zingy enough to shame a squeezed lemon. And some orange violas, too.

Carex buchananii 'Red Rooster'

Redder variety of *Carex buchananii*. Evergreen and holds its colour well, so good as a foil to tubs and annuals. **H x S** 50cm x 10cm

Pyreantha 'Saphyr Jaune'

A large shrub after a few years and very spiky, so great as a burglar deterrent. Can be grown in a pot for a year or two, then plant in a bed.

H x S 25m x 25m

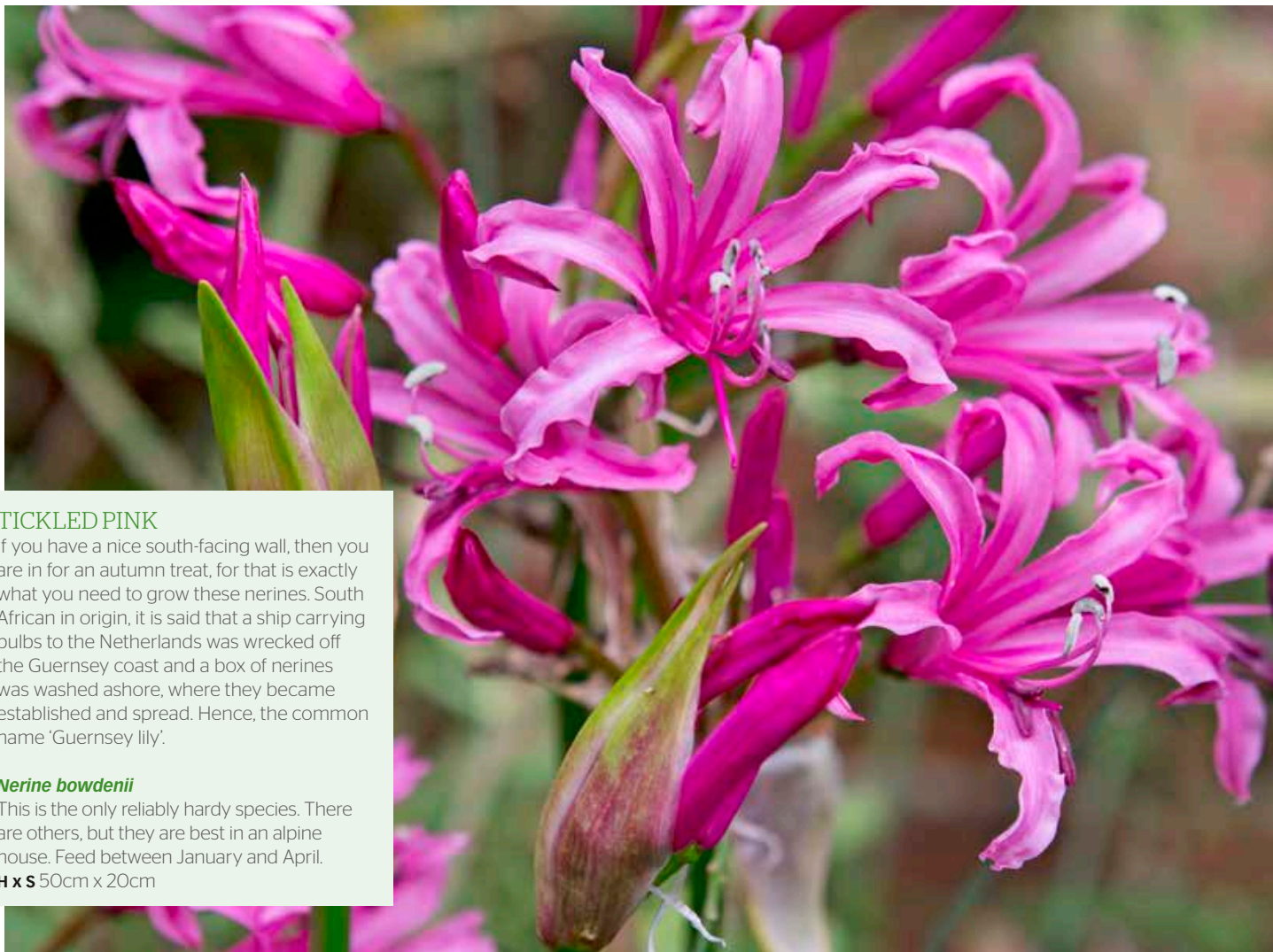
Solanum capsicastrum

Related to tomatoes but also to deadly nightshade, so don't eat the fruit! Overwinter under glass to keep them going.

H x S 60cm x 40cm

Viola 'Sofnet Orange'

Deadhead regularly to keep it flowering. Stands up to cold well, so perfect for overwintering in a pot. Good for pollinators. **H x S** 15cm x 20cm



TICKLED PINK

If you have a nice south-facing wall, then you are in for an autumn treat, for that is exactly what you need to grow these nerines. South African in origin, it is said that a ship carrying bulbs to the Netherlands was wrecked off the Guernsey coast and a box of nerines was washed ashore, where they became established and spread. Hence, the common name 'Guernsey lily'.

Nerine bowdenii

This is the only reliably hardy species. There are others, but they are best in an alpine house. Feed between January and April.

H x S 50cm x 20cm



BRONZED BEAUTIES

Time was when every self-respecting gardener grew lots of chrysanthemums. Whether for picking or for competition, they were very popular - sadly no more, although maybe they, like the dahlia, are due for a renaissance. This one is the same gleaming orange as good marmalade and is perfect for cheering up an autumn afternoon. They will flower profusely and look good in a vase for over a fortnight.

Chrysanthemum 'Bruno Bronze'

Tender, so don't leave out over winter. The plants are quite brittle, so will require some staking or support. Needs good, rich soil.

H x S 120cm x 30cm

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS