

*We Love April
for bringing on the razzle-dazzle*

There are many remarkable things about April – for starters, it is the only month that contains the letter ‘p’ and no other months rhyme with ‘squill’ (or trill). But, most importantly for us gardeners, April is the gateway to spring. I know that we have been optimistically trumpeting the arrival of spring since the first snowdrop poked its tentative snout from the cold soil of January, but this is, I swear to you, the real thing. We are now teetering at the top of the slide shouting, “Watch me, Mum”, before launching ourselves off into the thrilling ride that is summer.

Words by James Alexander-Sinclair

STAR OF THE MONTH
Erythronium 'Citronella'

This glorious inhabitant of the woodland fringes is overburdened with common names – I really don’t understand the logic of some of them. Dog’s tooth violet? Easy, that’s due to the shape of the bulb. Fawn lily? Um, no idea, it doesn’t seem particularly deer-like. Trout lily? Likewise, not at all fishy. Adder’s tongue? Possibly because of the flickering stamens. Never fear, sometimes we really don’t need to know the whole story and should be happy enough just enjoying the effect that, in this case, is delightful enough to put a sparkle into anybody’s day.

Needs shady woodland, although not too close to trees that may vacuum up all the summer moisture. Plant in drifts where they can spread undisturbed. **Height x Spread** 25cm x 20cm

PHOTO: TORIE CHUGG



A DIGNIFIED REMINDER

A fabulous plant and poignantly named in memory of the terrible events of 9/11. *Fritillaria persica* has existed for many centuries as a wild flower in the Middle East, and latterly as a stalwart in our garden pots and borders. That deep, sultry purple looks amazing with bright tulips and the fresh greens of spring, and each bulb sends up not one, but two flower spikes.

***Fritillaria persica* 'Twin Towers Tribute'**

Bulbs are best planted (in autumn) on their sides to reduce the chance of rotting in wet soil. Watch out for slugs. Propagate from seed sown in autumn under glass. **H x S** 80cm x 30cm



works well in coastal gardens

PARTNERS IN PINK

This is a handsome combination of pinks for a well-drained or gravelly corner of the garden. The pale erodium with its blue-tinged, fern-like leaves is undoubtedly the finer plant. In a beauty contest, the rather more solid and beefy lychnis doesn't stand much of a chance, but the combination works.

Erodium rupestre

Propagate from newly ripened seed or cuttings. Needs sharp drainage as wet winters will do it no good at all. **H x S** 15cm x 30cm

Lychnis alpina

Deadhead frequently to encourage longer flowering season. Propagate from seed. Has sticky stems hence common name of alpine catchfly. **H x S** 15cm x 20cm

FRESHLY LAUNDERED

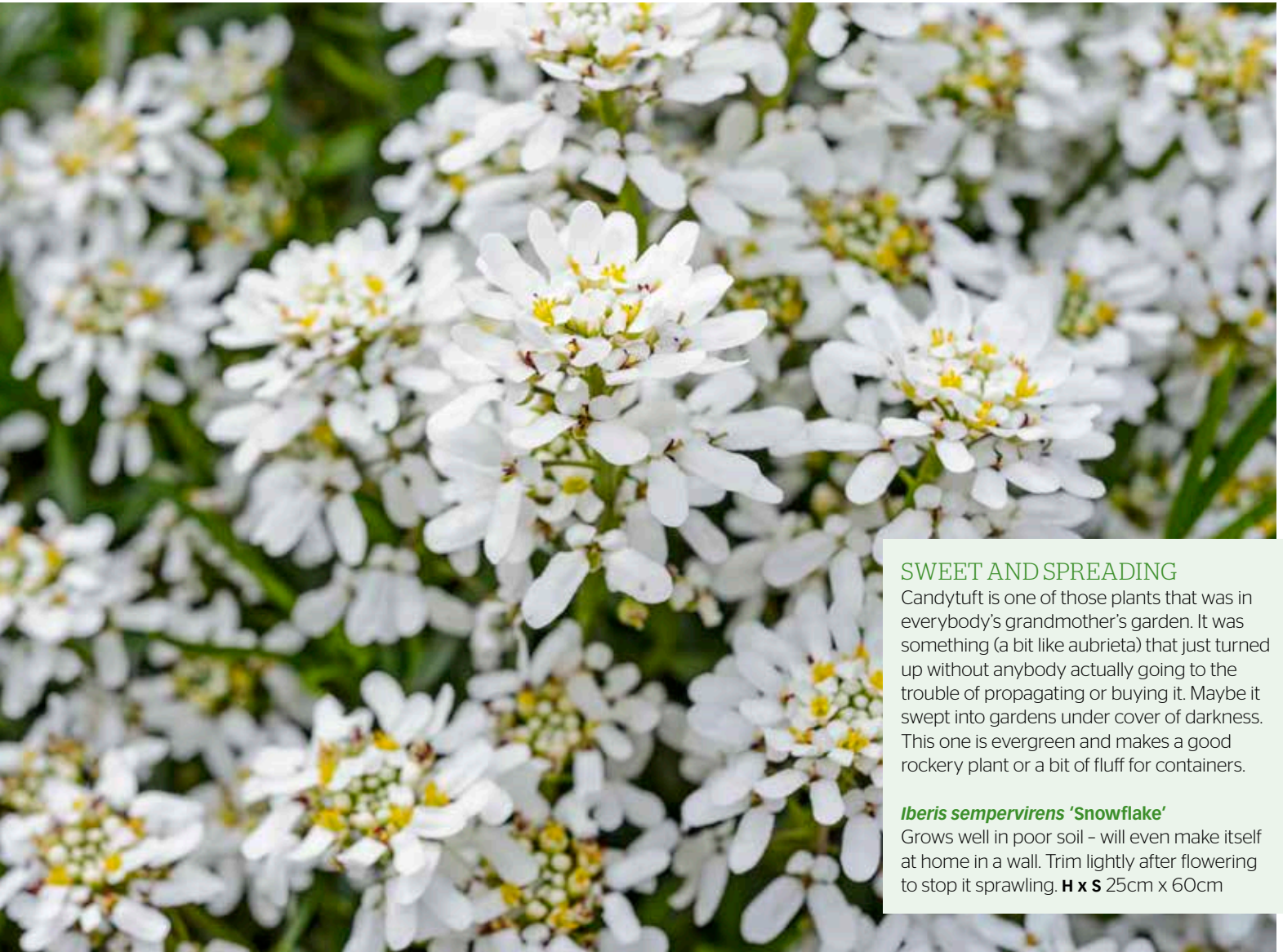
In old television advertisements for washing powder they always trumpeted on about the wonderfully bright and fresh 'bluey whiteness'. I always found this mildly confusing, but now I can appreciate what they mean. As evidence, I give you this divinely coruscating anemone: as bluey white as the down of a swan, the pellegrina (cape) of the Pope, a bucketful of marshmallows or the southern slopes of Mont Blanc.

***Anemone blanda* 'White Splendour'**

Plant tubers in autumn in a sunny or partly shaded spot in fertile soil. It's good under shrubs and trees as it needs to be kept dry-ish after flowering in summer. **H x S** 15cm x 15cm



PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; JASON INGRAM



SWEET AND SPREADING

Candytuft is one of those plants that was in everybody's grandmother's garden. It was something (a bit like aubrieta) that just turned up without anybody actually going to the trouble of propagating or buying it. Maybe it swept into gardens under cover of darkness. This one is evergreen and makes a good rockery plant or a bit of fluff for containers.

Iberis sempervirens 'Snowflake'

Grows well in poor soil - will even make itself at home in a wall. Trim lightly after flowering to stop it sprawling. **H x S** 25cm x 60cm

A TANTALISING TRILOGY

After years of uncharacteristic dithering (I am seldom able to resist a plant for long), I planted this in my garden for the first time last autumn (in among some shrubs with lots of compost), so I hope that, by the time you read this, I will be enjoying my own little patch of North American exotica in Oxfordshire. Each shoot has three glossy leaves and one perfect claretty flower, comprising three sepals and three petals.

Trillium erectum

Needs a good, rich soil - some leaf mould in autumn would not go amiss. Plant in dappled shade and keep an eye out for slugs and snails. **H x S** 50cm x 30cm



PHOTOS: GETTY/JACKY PARKER PHOTOGRAPHY; JASON INGRAM