

We Love July

for bold borders and swelling veg

Are any of you surfers? I have always been rather captivated by the idea of swooping and turning atop a crashing wave. Duck diving, barrel riding, wipeouts and doggy doors. However, I only ever get as far as standing up for a short, though glorious, moment before coming a cropper. Gardening has the advantage of being both dryer and less painful, but the feeling of watching your flowers bloom and your vegetables swell is – and some of you dudes might disagree with me – just as exciting, just as satisfying and just as invigorating. And all this without getting sand in your pants.

Words by James Alexander-Sinclair

STAR OF THE MONTH *Lobelia cardinalis* 'Queen Victoria'

Help, help...the reds are coming! Not since the last tulips fell beneath the onslaught of May weather have we been blessed with such glorious reds. June is a bit pasty, but the next couple of months will be lit up with a bonfire of flaming colours. This is a glorious example, with claret coloured foliage topped by flowers as scarlet as a regimental sergeant major in full sail. It is one of the many plants named after Queen Victoria – there are even more than are named after Alan Titchmarsh (which is saying quite a lot). One for a hot, flashy border.

Best in damp soil – edge of a pond or stream works well. Sun or part shade. Propagate from seed when ripe.

Height x Spread 90cm x 30cm



SWEETS FOR MY SWEET

I have a tiny problem with this plant. As a child of the 1960s and 1970s, I was brought up to think that raspberry ripple ice cream was up there with the titans of sophisticated dessert. This was in the food wilderness years when most things tasted of cardboard. This sweet pea is, I maintain, speckled rather than rippled, a tiny glitch, which does not make this old, distinguished and wonderfully scented variety any less delicious.

***Lathyrus odoratus* 'Wiltshire Ripple'**

As with all sweet peas, keep picking them to get more flowers. Feed regularly throughout the season. **H x S** 1.8m x 30cm

Perfect for pollinators



ONE FOR THE BEES

This is one of my favourite summer combinations. Pretty easy to grow and very eye catching, especially with a bit of grass in the mix as a contrast. Perfectly spherical blue globes, the deep blackcurrant sorbet of echinacea and topped by one of the most invaluable plants in any garden - the splendid verbena.

***Echinacea* 'Vintage Wine'**

This has stubbier petals than most echinaceas. Needs good soil and should not be too crowded. Excellent for bees and butterflies. **H x S** 90cm x 50cm

Echinops bannaticus

This is great for wildlife. Lift and divide clumps in springtime or take root cuttings in winter. **H x S** 1.5m x 60cm

Verbena bonariensis

Easily grown, provided ground is not too wet. Self-seeds very prolifically if happy. Remove older plants after a couple of years to make space for youngsters. **H x S** 1.8m x 30cm

BORDER DANCING

Imagine for just a moment that the flat topped achillea in the foreground is not just a plant, but a wide plain, across which the gaily dressed agastache dancers advance.

All of them perfectly in time, dipping and spinning as their skirts billow and gleaming silver buttons flash in the sunlight.

***Agastache* 'Summer Glow'**

Needs lots of sunshine. Divide plants in spring or take cuttings in the summer. Deadhead regularly. **H x S** 70cm x 30cm

***Achillea* 'Terracotta'**

Hates having wet roots in winter so drainage is very important. Relatively short-lived, but can be propagated by division in spring. **H x S** 80cm x 30cm



PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS; JASON INGRAM



PHOTOS: PAUL DEBOIS; NEIL HEPWORTH

IN THE PINK

You want pink? It doesn't come much pinker than this monarda. As pink as wine-stained linens, pinker than bubblegum, as pink as the day-glo socks I bought from a classified advertisement on the back of *Melody Maker* when I was a teenager, or as pink as a hamster's tongue.

Monarda 'Pink Supreme'

Fragrant leaves (smell of Earl Grey tea). Excellent seedheads, attractive to birds. Divide in the spring. **H x S** 60cm x 40cm

Alchemilla mollis 'Thriller'

A more upright variety of the traditional cottage-garden plant. Cut back hard to stop self-seeding and to refresh foliage. **H x S** 50cm x 50cm

LET THE SUNSHINE

The most famous brown-eyed girl is probably the one from the Van Morrison song. You remember... "Slipping and sliding, all along the waterfall, with you, my brown-eyed girl." It is a sensational track and, in the world of sunflowers, this floral version is equally arresting. That tie-dyed centre would have particularly appealed in 1967 when the song was released.

Helianthus 'Sunbelievable Brown Eyed Girl'

Multi-branched and extraordinarily floriferous variety. Excellent for pots and makes a great cut flower.

H x S 60cm x 60cm

