

There are seats free on all the trains, the roads are little less busy and shopping seems a tad more relaxed. What is going on? I will tell you: it is August, and many people are enjoying far-off beaches and the myriad pleasures offered by the departures lounge at Luton airport. It is holiday season and many gardens have been left to their own devices. I try never to go anywhere this month so I can enjoy the sunshine (fingers crossed), the flowers, the warm evenings and the inevitable glut of courgettes. Lower your carbon footprint and stay in your garden this August!

STAR OF THE MONTH Echinacea purpurea 'Rainbow Marcella'

When I first saw this plant, I was immediately reminded of those tinned peaches in tooth-rotting syrup that I was occasionally fed when I was a schoolboy. Usually, they came with evaporated milk, but the tastebuds of an eight year old will forgive many things. Moving on from school dinners... Most of the echinaceas that you will have met previously would have been either pink or white, so this is something to get tongues wagging. Pop it in a hot summer border with lots of reds, purples and yellows, and your garden will be impossible to overlook.

Performs best in warmer, more sheltered parts of the country. Good seedheads for birds and ideal as cut flowers. Height x Spread 50cm x 40cm



SYMPHONY IN BLUE

Never underestimate the glory of a lacecap hydrangea. Some people may sneer and say that they are dated and old fashioned, but they are doing themselves out of a treat. With big muscular leaves and trouble-free flowers (that dry beautifully), this is great in borders, a pot or as a hedge. Badda bing!

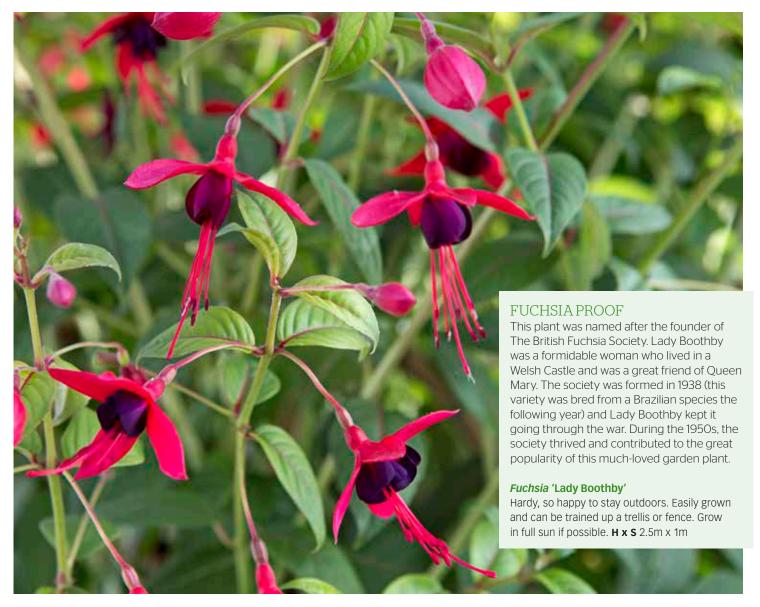
Hydrangea macrophylla 'Mariesii Perfecta' Keep plants well hydrated (the clue is in the

name!) during dry spells. For reliably blue flowers, it needs an acidic soil with a pH of 5.5. **H x S** 1.2m x 1.2m



TROPICALFEVER Bring a machete – it is jungle party time! The big, bold leaves of jungly plants like these are at their best this time of year, making the most of the sunshine. Fast growing with zingy flowers late in the season they bring sub-tropical heat to suburbia. Canna 'Panache' Needs plenty of water and lots of goodness in the soil. Dig up and store in a frost-free shed after the first frosts. **H x S** 2m x 75cm Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora 'George Davison' Needs a bit of winter protection in cold areas, so mulch with compost or bark. Divide congested clumps in spring. **H x S** 90cm x 15cm





THINK PINK

We are majoring on shades of pink this month. This is an almost accidental combination, as the calibrachoa is a great container plant while the clematis is a terrific late-flowering climber that has just dropped in to have a bit of a nose around.

Calibrachoa 'Morning Star'

Get them in early enough and they will flower for four months. Perfect for pots and borders. Feed when they start flowering. **H x S** 20cm x 40cm

Clematis 'Madame Julia Correvon'

A viticella clematis, so needs to be hard pruned (to about knee height) in winter. $\mathbf{H} \mathbf{x} \mathbf{S} 3m \mathbf{x} 1.5m$



PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS