

We Love May

May has an awful lot to offer – it's a month to be savoured by gardeners and nature lovers alike. All around us are bursting buds, the unfurling of foliage, and the unmistakable signs of burgeoning and overflowing fertility. Mayflies buzz about trying to pack as much travel and procreation into the short lifespans granted to them, and May trees (aka hawthorn aka *Crataegus monogyna*) are in full flower. Spring has most definitely sprung and summer is just around the corner. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the most anticipated month in the gardening calendar.

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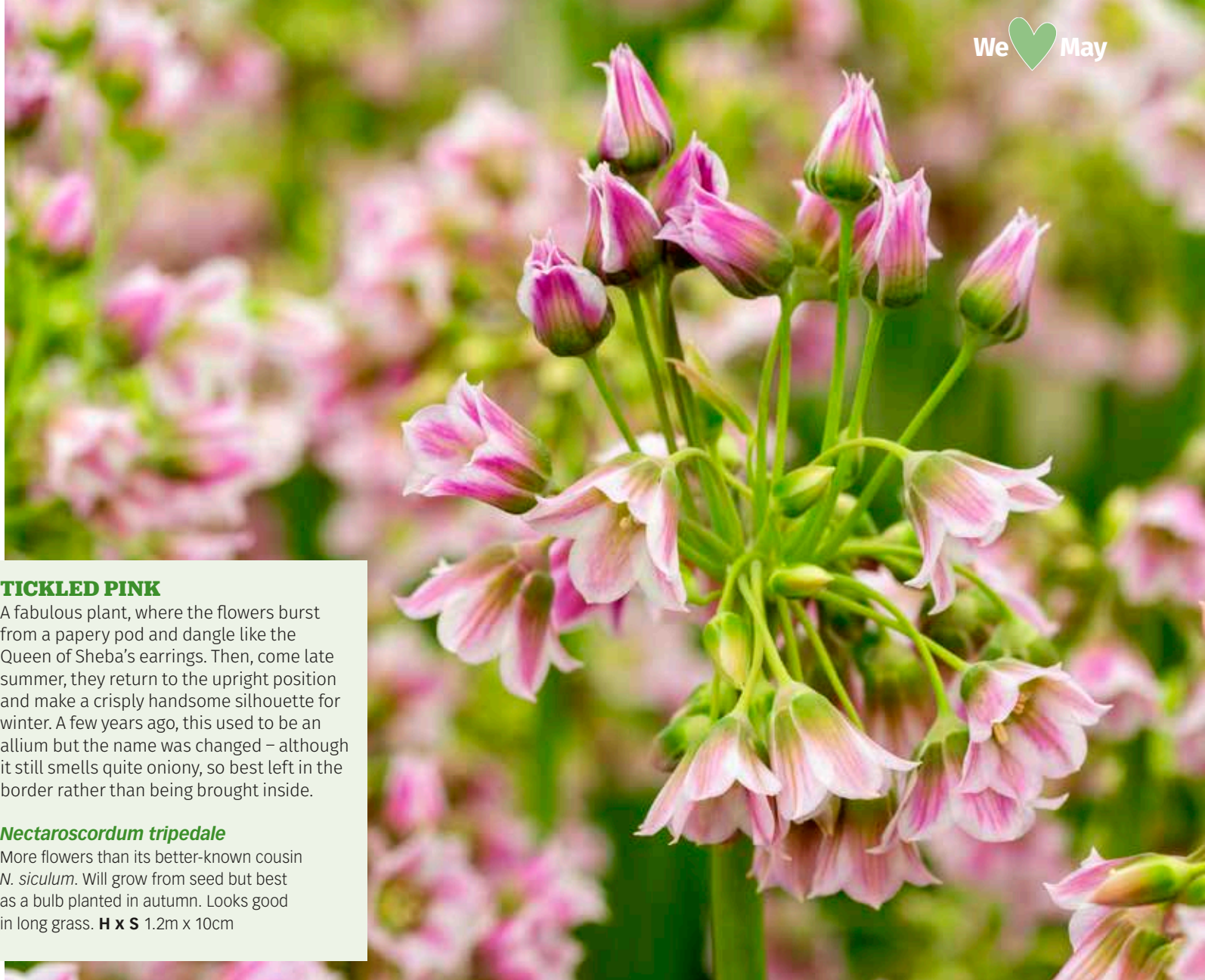
“Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May”
Shakespeare

STAR OF THE MONTH
Primula 'Inverewe'

When I was a child, we used to have a tin of boiled sweets in the car glove box: they were dusted with icing sugar – I am pretty sure that many of you will know exactly what I am talking about. These were dished out at moments of extreme boredom or imminent car sickness. I am mentioning them here because the orange-flavoured sweet, once it had been sucked for a bit, was exactly this colour – this flower even has a dusting of white to remind us of the sugar. A bright, cheery orange that will light up a shady corner.

Best on edge of a pond or stream under deciduous shrubs. Sterile, so divide in autumn. **H x S** 80cm x 40cm

PHOTO: TORIE CHUGG



TICKLED PINK

A fabulous plant, where the flowers burst from a papery pod and dangle like the Queen of Sheba's earrings. Then, come late summer, they return to the upright position and make a crisply handsome silhouette for winter. A few years ago, this used to be an allium but the name was changed – although it still smells quite oniony, so best left in the border rather than being brought inside.

Nectaroscordum tripedale

More flowers than its better-known cousin *N. siculum*. Will grow from seed but best as a bulb planted in autumn. Looks good in long grass. **H x S** 1.2m x 10cm



WILD BLUE YONDER

Sometimes, if I am lucky, I happen upon a field of flax while tootling around the countryside and I always pull onto the verge to enjoy the sea of pale-blue flowers nodding in a gentle wind. You, too, can have the same thing in your garden with, or without, tall spikes of echium.

Linum perenne

Perennial flax. Best with lots of sunshine and excellent drainage. Propagate from seed or cuttings **H x S** 60cm x 30cm

Echium wildpretii

Also known as the 'Tower of Jewels'. A spectacular biennial plant, flowering in the second year. Protect from frost. **H x S** 1.5m x 60cm



BALLS AND SPIKES

When combining plants, you need to look not just at colours and cultivation, but also flower shape. This is a good example of what I like to call a balls and spikes combination, which always works well. The lime-green fluff that ties them all together in this particular photograph is a euphorbia

Allium 'Mount Everest'

Good in flower and as a seedhead. Propagate by dividing bulb offsets. Removing foliage as it gets tatty does no harm. **H x S** 1.2m x 30cm

Salvia 'Caradonna'

Very popular mid-height perennial. Cutting back after flowering promotes a second flush later in the summer. **H x S** 50cm x 30cm



EXCLUSIVE MEMBERS ONLY

If you happen to stumble across this plant you will fall in love. You will see that flower as blue as a winter sky and you will covet it but, unfortunately, this plant is temptress. She will captivate you but not very many of us are lucky enough to have the right conditions in our gardens. Chalky soil? Forget it. Hot dry corner? You're havin' a laugh mate. This is a plant for the chosen few.

Meconopsis 'Lingholm'

Needs slightly acidic soil, cool, damp summers (Scotland is good), moist soil and shelter – you see what I mean? **H x S** 80cm x 30cm



IN THE GREEN

When we think of tulips, we usually picture fanfares of rich colour in pots, borders and, of course, vases. With that thought in mind then, a green tulip may seem like a weirdly pointless invention. Rest assured that it isn't – it is, instead, a valuable curiosity that goes well with other tulips and the fresh foliage of spring. And it flowers for ages – right into June if you are lucky.

Tulipa 'Evergreen'

Plant bulbs in November once temperatures have dropped enough to deter tulip diseases.

H x S 60cm x 10cm

VELVET AND LACE

I was taught that red and white together was unlucky – although fine for the Swiss flag – I think it was to do with blood and tears. However, with these two plants I will make an exception. The only thing missing is a sashay of *Stipa tenuissima* to give a bit of movement.

Orlaya grandiflora

Really long-flowering annual. Sow seed in autumn for beefy plants – if you have a cold frame. **H x S** 60cm x 60cm

Geum 'Mrs J. Bradshaw'

Avoid very wet soil, Sow seed in a cold frame or divide plants in either spring or autumn.

H x S 60cm x 60cm

