



Centaurea atropurpurea

The fat buds emerging above the intricately cut grey leaves are so beautifully patterned with shiny dark-edged, overlapping scales that there seems almost no need for any flowers. But soon the top of the bud is forced open by the dark, wine-red thistle flowers spreading outwards like a stain of blood. Flowering all through July and August, they add a touch of drama to the garden.

Height 1m.
Growing conditions Sunny spot with good drainage.
Hardiness USDA 5a-9b*.
Origin The Balkans.
Season of interest July – August.



July plants

There are so many great plants for high summer that it's hard to know where to start, but Derry has managed to narrow her choice to ten favourites

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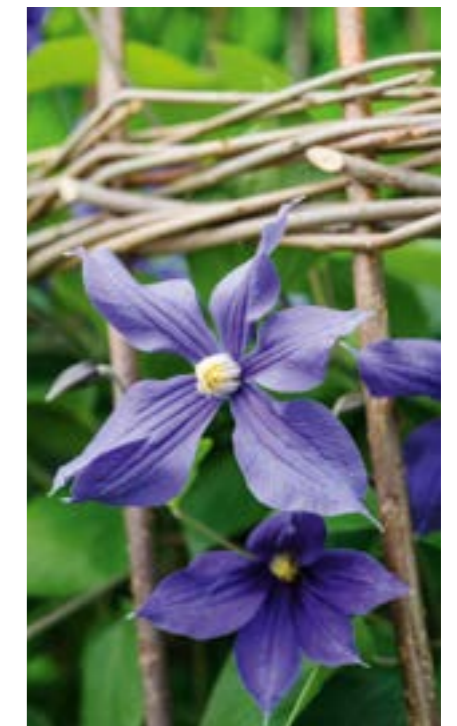
Derry Watkins is the owner of Special Plants nursery near Bath specialplants.net



Agrostemma githago
 'Ocean Pearl'

A pure-white corncockle with the faintest brown lines stippled down the centre of each petal. Corncockles were lovely weeds of cornfields before herbicides put paid to their life cycle. We now grow them as ornamental hardy annuals. This one has extra big flowers that waft about on long, slender stems. Best tucked in among other plants, otherwise it can look lanky and flop a bit. Ravishing with grasses. A wonderful cut flower. Unfortunately, it does not self sow for me, but easy to grow from seed.

Height 80cm.
Growing conditions Sunny with good drainage; not rich soil.
Hardiness USDA 4a-10b.
Origin UK.
Season of interest July.



Clematis x durandii

A herbaceous clematis that does not climb but if supported well will clamber. A bit of a handful – happy to straggle two metres in any direction – but infinitely rewarding, producing showers of big, deep-blue-purple flowers month after month. Books tell you to grow it through a shrub but you never see the flowers that way. Best with plenty of sun and a support of its own that you can keep tying it back into. It will grow up to 2m and then cascade back down, covered in flowers. AGM.

Height 1.5-2.5m.
Growing conditions Good soil in sun or light shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Origin A 19th-century hybrid of *C. integrifolia* and *C. lanuginosa*.
Season of interest June – September.

Lochroma australe

I bought this as a conservatory plant many years ago. It was nice enough, but after a few years it had grown far too big and I had to chuck it out. I planted it in the garden for one last summer of glory, and it has never looked back. Fifteen years later it is a three-metre shrub, sailing through the hardest of winters without a qualm. In June and July the undersides of every branch drip with deep-purple bells like tiny *Datura* flowers, replaced in autumn with seedheads like green marbles. AGM*

Height 2.5-3m.
Growing conditions Sunny spot with reasonable drainage.
Hardiness USDA 8a-11.
Origin South America.
Season of interest June – July.



*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. *Hardiness ratings given where available.



Papaver somniferum
'Lauren's Grape'

These big, sumptuous, silky bowls of deep purple are probably my favourite opium poppies. Designer Lauren Springer spent years removing all the opium poppies that weren't deep purple from her garden. When they have only themselves to cross with they come almost entirely true. Best sown in pots or *in situ* to avoid disturbing the root. If you want to grow more than one colour, you'll either have to remove all seedheads and sow fresh every year or resign yourself to the colours mixing and muddying back towards the wild, lavender opium poppy.

Height 90cm-1.2m.

Growing conditions Sun and drainage.

Hardiness USDA 7a-10b.

Origin Species from Asia, bred in USA.

Season of interest June – July.



Phlox paniculata
'Blue Paradise'

By far and away my favourite phlox. On warm summer evenings its scent drifts across the garden, and at dusk its lavender-blue flowers seem to get bluer and bluer as the light slowly fades. They're almost purple at midday. Cutting back some of the stems by a third in May will extend blooming and make for sturdier plants. Selected by the great plantsman Piet Oudolf, it's remarkably mildew resistant. Divide your plants every three or four years to renew them.

Height 90cm-1.2m.

Growing conditions Sun or part shade; good soil, not too dry.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

Origin Species from USA, bred in the Netherlands.

Season of interest July – August.

Salvia 'Amistad'

This cultivar, which was found by plant expert Rolando Uria in an Argentinian garden – *amistad* means friendship in Spanish – became the best salvia in my salvia-ridden garden last summer. Deep, purple-blue flowers sprout from almost-black calyxes on long, dark stems. Both the young plants, 1m tall, and older ones, up to 1.5m tall, all flowered profusely from July right through October. The vigorous bushy plants are self-supporting with glossy green leaves. So far it has been hardy for me, but we have not had a hard winter to test it.

Height 1-1.5m.

Growing conditions Full sun, good drainage.

Hardiness USDA 8a-11.

Origin Cultivar found in Argentina.

Season of interest June – October.



Eryngium x oliverianum

Everyone wants to grow *Eryngium alpinum* with its dramatic, big, soft blue ruff of lacy bracts. But *Eryngium alpinum* fades away, dwindling in all but the most perfect conditions, while *Eryngium oliverianum* bulks up well and just gets better year on year. It has almost the same big, blue, lacy flowerheads, plus it has handsome jagged leaves on stout, purple stems. I grow both in my gravel garden, but I have to replant *E. alpinum* every couple of years in order to keep it going. Both of them have handsome seedheads which stand well into winter. AGM.

Height 90cm.

Growing conditions Full sun, good drainage.

Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

Origin 19th-century hybrid.

Season of interest July – August.

Freesia laxa

A tiny iris relative, previously called *Anomatheca laxa*. It looks like a little *Sisyrinchium* until it begins to bloom, when the red flowers open to show a darker red central blotch. After flowering, fat, green seed pods form and eventually split open to reveal bright-red, shiny seeds like a pomegranate. They self seed profusely in my gravel garden, bulking up fast, but are easy to pull out if you get too many. The self-sown seedlings bloom the following year, but if you sow your seed in spring they bloom the same year.

Height 15-20cm.

Growing conditions Sun and very good drainage.

Hardiness USDA 8a -10b.

Origin Southern Africa.

Season of interest July – August.



Veronicastrum virginicum
'Album'

The height of restrained elegance, veronicastrums hold their dark-green leaves in layered whorls giving a distinctive texture to the garden before the flowers appear. The white flower spikes surge upwards out of the foliage, each one densely clothed with tiny, white flowers. The myriad vertical spires look like a cluster of tall spears. It is the perfect crisp, white accent to the billowing excesses of the late summer garden. Dark-brown seedheads follow, extending interest to January, and contrasting with the horizontal whorls of leaves below.

Height 1.2-1.5m.

Growing conditions Sun or light shade.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

Origin USA.

Season of interest July – August.



Places to visit

Derry shares some of her favourite places to see plants at their best.

Wollerton Old Hall is four acres of intensively gardened heaven. The happiest of plants in the happiest of combinations. Each area with its own character, one magnificent display following another as the seasons change. Open 12pm-5pm Fridays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. Easter until August. Wollerton, Market Drayton, Shropshire TF9 3NA. Tel 01630 685760.



Wollerton Old Hall.

wollertonoldhallgarden.com.

Scampston Walled Garden is an enormous 18th-century walled garden recently replanted by Piet Oudolf. You walk round the entire garden in a narrow, densely hedged alley way admiring at close range a collection of rare plants, then suddenly you turn a corner and a breathtaking zig-zag of grasses takes you out into the huge central space. A modern

garden design full of excitement. Open mid April until October, 10am-5pm Tuesday – Sunday. Malton, North Yorkshire YO17 8NG. Tel 01944 758890, scampston.co.uk

Coleton Fishacre was once the country house of the D'Oyly Carte family. Its glory is in the garden. Now owned by the National Trust, it has the mildest climate of all the National Trust's gardens,

sloping steeply down to the River Tamar. Amazing semitropical plants survive outside, so go in summer. Brownstone Road, Kingswear, Devon TQ6 0EQ. Tel 01803 842382, nationaltrust.org.uk

Wildside is an experiment in new naturalism. "By allowing our observations of natural landscapes to inform our plantings, I believe that we can loosen the strait-jacket



Coleton Fishacre.

that long-established horticultural practices impose, allowing the enormous creative potential, latent within most of us, the freedom to express itself," says Keith Wiley. He is a genius. Go. Open 10am-5pm first five days of June, July and August 2014. Green Lane, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7NP. Tel 01822 855755, wileyatwildside.com