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## the cinderella of green manures

Posted in All posts on 4th April 2016



Arthur shares the benefits of *Phacelia tancetifolia* in the garden - useful both as a green manure and as the perfect addition to a cottage garden...

*Phacelia tancetifolia* is a wonderful annual flowering plant that deserves to be used much more often, both in the garden and allotment. Scatter a bag of this seed onto

cleared, raked earth or in a pot, ideally in a place that gets a decent amount of sun and you'll be immersed in a quickly growing mass of hairy, lush leaved plants that then turn

into an ocean of lilac flowers.

Bees and hoverflies will be buzzing to the wisteria-scented flowers from dawn until dusk, as *Phacelia* is rich in nectar and flowers profusely. Few plants that you can chuck from your hands as seeds are as reliable and beautiful.



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You won't often find them with the bulk of flower seed packets at the garden centres however, as they are classed and sold normally as a green manure. Its soil improving qualities delivered through its root structure, sees it being used as such, but I think it's high time it was seen as the must have cottage-garden-style cut flower.

You can sow it either in September, so that it flowers with the alliums or right now and up until May.

I've just scattered a packet of it upon the raised rose bed in the Emma Bridgewater courtyard amongst the emerging tulips and alliums. I'm hoping that with the decent showers and sunshine we've been having this

week that the seeds will quickly germinate and grow well, and flower in time for the Stoke on Trent literary festival in June which is being held at the Emma Bridgewater factory. Both Sarah and her sister-in-law Juliet Nicolson are giving talks on the Saturday - [www.stokeliteraryfestival.org](http://www.stokeliteraryfestival.org)

The garden is really waking up this week. The tissue paper, lemon and lime star-like, totally double Narcissi 'Vip Van Winkle' are a cheerful site in the planted toughs. Due to the mild winter, I'm finding myself wiping the fattening buds of the roses with baby wipes to remove gatherings of green fly. I try to not use any pesticides due to the uncertainty of their effect upon visiting pollinators so this time consuming exercise does seem better than reaching for a bottle of chemicals.

Using tons of tall silver birch and some precious, straight, branchless but bendy, long whips of hazel I've made a sweet pea tunnel which goes over the raised beds at the back of the garden. All of the branches, I've gathered from some wasteland at the back of a Mecca bingo car park! I'm hoping that growing the sweet peas up a tunnel structure will make picking them a quicker and easier process than growing them up wigwams.



It's been so mild that I've planted out all the sweet peas now. These varieties which consist of 'Barry Dare' 'Lord Nelson' and 'Black Knight' I sowed back in December in long plastic pots. They were more than ready to get romping away and with their planting trench scattered with chicken manure pellets and bone meal I hope that they will get growing with great gusto!

Happy gardening.

Thanks for reading!

*Arthur works as the gardener and florist at the Emma Bridgewater factory in Stoke on Trent. He follows Sarah's principles in growing cut flowers which are used in the factory shops, café and during events. Before this, he worked for Sarah for a summer after completing training at the Royal Botanical gardens of Kew. Arthur's favourite plants are those which make fabulous cut flowers but that are also bursting with pollen and nectar for visiting pollinators. His first love are chickens and feels strongly that a garden is not complete without the presence of poultry.*

useful kit...



Sweet Pea 'Lord Nelson'

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