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vogue flowers

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Alliums are making a big statement in the floral world this year – particularly after having been showcased by M&S at this year's Chelsea Flower Show with great pride, as a star of the new range of Great British-grown cut flower bouquets.

After years of being a bulb in the shadow of tulips, alliums seem to be finally getting the vogue spotlight that they have always deserved. They are truly one of the most value-for-money bulbs you can choose to plant, being very perennial in habit if they are provided with a soil of good drainage and lightness. Each spring they come back with seemingly bigger violet and purple glitter-like globular flowers.




Many people are surprised that they are indeed an onion. If you pull their leaves off or happen to accidentally dig up a bulb then you'll quickly recognise the distinct odour which gives the game away.

Alliums are great if you have free ranging bantams, as they don't like the taste of them and their stems are quite strong so resist much of their scratching.

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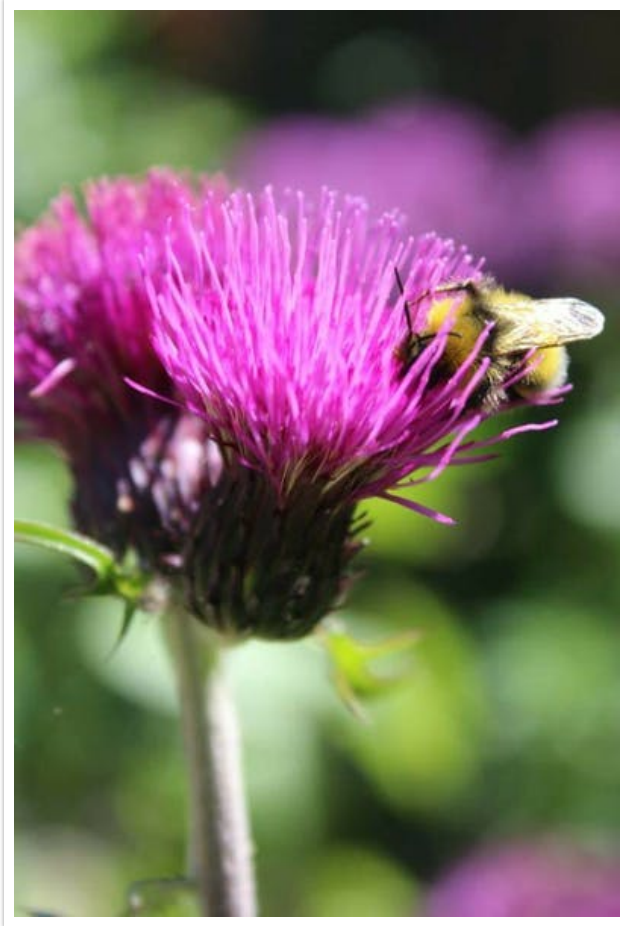
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They are one of the best pollinator-friendly late spring bulbs, so plant tons and watch the bees buzz from each violet globe with great gusto. We planted a new allium last year called 'Purple Rain' (above) and I highly recommend it. It's a bit more macho than the stalwart 'Purple Sensation' which we also have along with the elegantly tall and white blooming 'Mount Everest' (below).



In partnership with the flowering alliums in our garden are the Plume thistles (*Cirsium rivulare*, below). I planted a new one last year, which is an attractive lilac colour. The traditional claret coloured sort is a plant that is used year after year at Chelsea but no one seems to complain about its constant reappearance, and on sale day you'll notice it's one of the very first plants to be snapped up.



My first blog for Garlic and Sapphire was about one of my favourite plants, the oriental poppy – in particular the cultivar 'Patty's Plum' (below). Oriental poppies last the longest as cut flowers out of the poppy family if you sear their stem ends. The blooms give the greatest of presence both in the garden and in the vase with their size and crumpled silk, flamenco dress petals.



One day I'll have an avenue of them but for now I just have a cherished one that's sat happily in a pot...

Happy Gardening!



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