what to do with your allium seedheads

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WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR ALLIUM SEEDHEADS

Alliums are really wonderful in May in this garden - this is the Oast Garden - and they look fabulous. 'Purple Sensation' is an Allium hollandicum, and these are a species that when 'Purple Sensation' self-seeds it reverts to; they're beautiful and just slightly paler mauve than 'Purple Sensation'.

By August I personally don't really like seeing the seed pods in the garden because it makes it feel rather autumnal and I don't want it to feel autumnal in July. I want the garden to still be full of juice and colour, so I'm just going to remove all these seed pods from the border, but they don't go on the compost heap. What we do is we store them for a couple of weeks so they dry out properly and then, in about a month's time, I spray them silver to add to the Christmas tree and they look fabulous.

This one is 'Purple Sensation', which is the smallest, but in June you get cristophii, which is a bit bigger and also dries brilliantly, and schuberti which is huge, sprays fantastically and is the best of all alliums to go on the top of your Christmas tree.

The ones that we've picked already are still a bit green, but soon once they've lost all the green and are completely dry, then they're perfectly ready for spring. We've also got nigella pods waiting to dry which are beautiful made into chains for a Christmas tree. You can just put wire through them and you get these beautiful chains for a Christmas tree.

And then for big decorations, we use angelica. They shed their seeds but you are left with these beautiful globe-like spheres of stems and these look fantastic sprayed too.
The Allium schubertii is the crowning glory of all alliums, it's just massive, and you can imagine it sprayed silver on top of the Christmas tree. It's perfect to harvest either now or even when it's a little bit dry, but don't leave it too late because once you get the winds in the autumn they just get blown away and smashed really easily. So, pick them when they've still got a bit of greenness and juice to them and just hang them upside down in a barn somewhere, or your potting shed, and then they'll be ready for Christmas.

To spray them you want to work outside because you don't want to inhale the chemicals from the paint. I just put them on a big outside table with lots of newspaper all around. Put on either a black dustbin bag or an apron that you don't mind getting bit of silver paint on and then literally just spray them. I spray them, allow them to dry for half an hour, turn them around, spray them again, allow them to dry for half an hour, turn them around and that should coat them pretty evenly. That's it then, you just leave them and then they're perfect on the Christmas tree.

The reason I love alliums so much is if you just have your baubles on the end of the Christmas tree stems or even halfway down you get something that's almost a pyramid or a triangle, whereas if you have the alliums, you can realize the beauty and the three-dimensionality of the whole thing. Alliums are the best possible thing for that, both little ones and massive ones like the schubertii.

Happy gardening,

Sarah

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useful kit...

![Allium cristophii](image)
![Allium hollandicum 'Purple Sensation'](image)
![Allium schubertii](image)
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