

Episode 127 show notes and advice

Episode description

This week, Sarah is joined by old friend and fellow gardener, Arthur Parkinson to talk all about the lessons they've learned in the garden over the past year. Learn along with the duo as they share their most helpful observations from Perch Hill and reveal some of their recently discovered must-have plants.

In this episode, discover:

- The best new varieties for introducing colour and charm
- Sarah's tips on creating impactful borders
- Why now is the best time to embrace a naturalistic planting scheme

episode 127 advice sheet

With such a busy life and time spent far away from home, Arthur finds refuge in his garden, opting for as many different varieties of plants as he can. He says that this is essential for improving mental wellbeing and a great project too.

Arthur explains that since introducing more variety to his garden and moving away from dolly tubs planted up with dahlias, he finds it more romantic than ever before. He also explains that it now has more of its own ecosystem, with a herb parterre garden and lots of bearded iris, lavender, and self-seeding varieties laden with bees. This is part of creating a garden that has its own culture and rhythm and that also looks great throughout the seasons.

Although Arthur explains that he has just ordered Dahlias 'Molly Raven' and 'Rosie Raven.' Pots with brightly coloured varieties are also great for adding glamour, which is always welcome in Arthur's garden.

Roses (4:39)

Roses are another great addition to the garden that contribute to the look and feel of a wild, British outdoor space. This year has been particularly good for roses with most kinds producing the biggest and healthiest flowers, thanks to the cold winter, very wet spring, and warm start to summer.

Sarah has discovered a few new varieties of roses that have blown her away, along with a couple of varieties she has grown for a while.

These include:

- Rosa 'Timeless Purple' – a newly-bred variety that opens purple before turning intense pink and has an impressive scent. It lasts well in the vase too and is healthy, vigorous, and hugely floriferous.
- Rosa 'James Mason' – brand-new and has made a fantastic impression already, it has a deep-crimson velvet glamour that stands out in the garden with gorgeous gold anthers.
- Rosa 'Just Joey' – A muted and custardy coral colour that Arthur simply adores.
- Rosa 'Belle Epoque' – Planted outside the staff room door at Perch Hill, the inside is a soft coral yellow with a plum-coloured reverse. It also has an extraordinary scent, which fills the garden with perfume.

Cottage garden and cutting garden favourites (7:30)

Discover Sarah's brand-new course with Create Academy here:

<https://www.createacademy.com/courses/sarah-raven>

Sarah is cultivating a cutting patch which is 20ft X 20ft as part of her Create Academy course. Recently, she spent a whole weekend making frames to support the contents, weeding, hoeing, staking, and mulching, and although this sounds slightly high maintenance, it's so worthwhile, particularly in the nice weather.

Arthur agrees that it's important to take time to spend in the garden and there's something totally invigorating about bringing a packet of seeds to life. Arthur's weekend project is combining the smoky-pink Cosmos 'Apricotta' with a more traditional favourite, Cosmos 'Rubenza' – as these two varieties will look fantastic dancing in the autumn light.

Yellow rattle (9:40)

Sarah explains that at Perch Hill, there is very coarse grass running down the drive and she has battled with sowing wildflower seeds. They have tried for years to sow yellow rattle, and finally, it has really taken hold.

Sarah says there are large patches of yellow rattle lighting up the driveway, which in turn suppresses the grass due to its parasitical properties. But it is already standing at hip height. This should allow the grass to become impoverished, paving the way for wildflowers to grow and prosper. This could be attributed to the coldness of the winter which has made it a lot more vigorous.

Sarah recommends sowing in August, September, and October time for great results. The cold should help with sparking germination too.

Bearded iris (11:40)

Arthur explains that more than ever, people seem to be inspired by flower-filled gardens but confused by wild gardens. For Arthur, Sarah Price's garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show really captured the imagination, thanks to the 'human to flower contact', with many varieties of plants, including bearded iris, lining the path.

Arthur explains that there is a British beauty to bearded iris, that also has a striking Mediterranean quality. Sarah planted some of these in March 2020 just before lockdown, once the iris has finished flowering, nerines follow, which Sarah says looks wonderful. Sarah says that both of these varieties love being parched and undisturbed.

Mulching with grit is an effective way of bringing out the best in these varieties, as mulching with organic matter will lead to enriching the soil too much. This also helps with weed suppression. At the end of this season, around August time, Sarah will divide her irises.

To do this, lift the whole thing, removing the central section and taking the juicy outer bits of the clump of corms and plant them near the soil, or on the soil surface to prevent windrock, cut the foliage back a little bit, leaving a little bit for photosynthesis.

A simple organic treatment for mildew (16:20)

Linked to climate change, Sarah has found that increasingly with the heat, mildew can become more of a problem when it comes to the heat. To combat this, Sarah and the Perch Hill team have started a treatment programme for the ranunculus, which combines bicarbonate of soda with a teaspoon of washing-up liquid and a teaspoon of sunflower oil. The washing-up liquid and sunflower oil make it into a stickier liquid that adheres to the leaves. Spray before there are any visible signs of mildew.

Shade and ferns (16:56)

Arthur received a beautiful silver fern from Sarah last year which he says is really beautiful in the morning light and super drought tolerant. Arthur says this is a great addition to the garden in the heat and reminds him of William Morris wallpaper.

Sarah has also experimented with plants that thrive in shady spots, in late spring Sarah planted a large water trough of a simple mix of *Pelargonium tomentosum*, *Nicotiana sylvestris*, and cosmos. Although the cosmos might struggle a little bit, the area sits in dappled shade, with intermittent light.

The importance of minarets (19:40)

Drawing inspiration from Vita Sackville West, Sarah says there is great merit in thinking of horizontal and vertical interest.

Adding minarets to your borders is a must, in particular, plants like *Digitalis purpurea* f. *albiflora* interspersed with wild and abundant *Linaria* 'Canon Went' and *Allium* 'Summer Drummer.' The alliums planted in Autumn 2021 are already 10 ft tall and have clumped with seven minarets per bulb. These are scattered throughout the Oast Garden and offer terrific scale.

Honesty (21:30)

Another terrific value plant that Arthur adores, they were also adored by butterflies, and great for early spring. Really easy to space out and sow in a seed tray, it can also self-seed which is valuable. 'Chedglow' is a top choice, in a pretty crimson amber, and looks great alongside *Alstroemeria* 'Indian Summer.'

Clematis through shrubs (23:20)

Sarah says she regrets not planting more shrubs when she first moved to Perch Hill roughly 30 years ago as shrubs can add a really lived-in look and feel to an outdoor space. Sarah says that she's going to start growing more climbers through existing shrubs.

Perfect for filling the colour gap when the shrubs are sparse, it's a simple win with good results. *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva' and *Clematis* 'Prince Charles' work well together.

Another great new find is the compact clematis 'Boulevard series', which has been specifically bred for containers. Clematis Nubia is a gorgeous variety which looks as if it's been cut from velvet and cuts really well. Sarah has been cutting from it regularly and searing the stem ends has really helped to prolong vase life.