

Episode 132 show notes and advice

Episode description

Today's episode is all about creating your very own teas, tisanes, and cordials from produce grown at home. Join Sarah as she explains everything you need to know about growing fantastic plants for their exceptional properties. Teatime just got a lot more interesting...

In this episode, discover:

- The best plants to infuse month by month
- Exciting new varieties to try
- Sarah's delicious cordial recipe

episode 132 advice sheet

Teas (2:00)

As a rule, Sarah and the Perch Hill team always use beautiful glass Tisanières to serve teas. Simple and stylish with a built-in central chamber for your leaves and petals, so you don't need a strainer. Perfect for fresh herb teas picked straight from your garden.

Sarah recommends picking five leaves for the tea and leaving it for five minutes to infuse.

Cordials (2:40)

- Pick the flowers and put them into water with some citrus.
- The citrus adds an extra element if you want to cut through the sweetness, Sarah likes to incorporate orange or lemon slices.
- Next, bring up to the boil and leave them to steep/soak overnight.
- Put the mixture through a jellybag or a sieve, and then add sugar to taste to create a sugar syrup. Although sugar is a preservative, it's important not to add too much to make it too sweet.
- Sarah and the team tend to make cordial in batches when they have a glut of elderflower or other leaves. Pour the liquid into old plastic milk cartons for storage and then freeze.

Teas throughout the year (4:32)

January and February

Pelargonium 'Attar of Roses' – The leaves are fragrant, delicious, and perfect for making a tisanes. Use the five and five rule for an unusual Turkish delight taste. Although pelargoniums aren't cut-and-come-again, you will need to cut your plants back around then, so why not use the cuttings for tea.

February

Backhousia (sweet verbena) – Evergreen, shrubby in appearance, and has a higher concentration of lemon oil in it than even lemon verbena. Sarah grows this as a house plant because it isn't hardy, but it does go out once the frost finishes. It's not hugely prolific, but a good choice for February.

March

Moroccan mint – Brought in and forced in cold frames. Moroccan mint is an excellent choice, very fresh with bright green leaves. Be generous with the mint, instead of five leaves, go for three to five stems.

April

Sweet Cicely – Delicious with a real aniseed taste. You can eat almost all the plant and its particularly common in North Yorkshire. Early to emerge and flowers in April time. Half a palmful steeped in water for five minutes should do the trick.

May

Lemon balm – Easy to grow and very lemony. It's a prolific self-seeder, so be careful that it doesn't run riot across the garden. For contained growing, plant in a pot.

June

Blackcurrant leaf – A favourite of Ukrainian chef, Olia Hercules. Listen to the episode in full here: www.sarahraven.com/podcast/show-notes-ep125 Blackcurrant leaf makes a terrific tea, or why not try rose petals for a truly aromatic tea.

July

Camomile – Easy to grow from seed. Pick bunches and hang them to dry inside for tea all winter long.

August

Lemon basil – A much smaller leaf than the 'Sweet Genovese' variety, with an intense lemon taste. The 'Mrs. Burns' Lemon Basil' variety is particularly delicious when made into tea.

September

Lemongrass – Excellent for growing in pots. An essential flavouring within Thai cuisine, this is great infused with water to make a warming tea. Easy to grow from seed and a tender perennial, what's not to love!

October

Lemon verbena – A totally classic herbal tea. This is grown in a south-facing patch or in the greenhouse. Lemon verbena drops its leaves, so around October, give it a good prune and pick lots of the fresh leaves. Hang the leaves inside to dry with a paper bag below to use all winter.

November and December

Dry varieties throughout the year to create a blend of your very own!