

Episode 135 show notes and advice

Episode description

On today's episode, Sarah is joined by her husband, the writer, Adam Nicolson to talk all about the wonder of woodland and garden birds. Discover everything you need to know about Britain's native varieties and ultimately, how to protect them.

In this episode, discover:

- Tom's top ticks for picture-perfect pots
- New varieties to try in your outside space
- Tom's advice for small urban gardens

episode 135 advice sheet

Tom's garden (5:08)

Residing in the centre of Ely, Cambridgeshire, Tom has a relatively small urban courtyard garden. Surrounded by tall fences for privacy, these are adorned with climbers including roses, clematis, and hydrangea petiolaris.

Tom also has a couple of flower beds which are edged with box, and cut into various topiary shapes, which he feels adds structure throughout the year. In the flower beds, Tom loves to mix colourful annual and perennial plants such as tulips and narcissi, foxgloves, and honesty.

For bursts of summer colour, spring stalwarts are replaced with later-flowering favourites such as campanula, geraniums, and annuals such as ammi, nigella, and orlaya, and dahlias. Instead of a lawn, which Tom says would be difficult to maintain given the size of his garden, he has small pea gravel with various pathways. The garden also has a series of terracotta and zinc pots and Moroccan-style lamps that glow after the sun sets.

Tom's love of pots (7:23)

As we approach the end of the growing season, Tom reveals some of his best combinations and top tips for picture-perfect garden pots.

Tom loves to use perennials in pots, as it offers those with less space the perfect opportunity to grow different varieties.

- Use large pots for added drama. Plus, they are easier to water and will retain moisture better than smaller vessels.
- Using Sarah's classic formula of the bride, the bridesmaid, and the gate crasher for foolproof pots and containers, Tom says to use *Gaura lindheimeri* as 'The Bride' with *Salvia curviflora*, with a classic *Cosmos atrosanguineus* 'Chocolate.'
- *Verbena canadensis* 'Homestead Purple,' although not the neatest of plants is an excellent performer, with an intense and vivid 'Liberty' purple colour. Tom likes to encourage this plant to have a laxer habit, with a personality of its own. Match with *Heliotropium arborescens* 'Reva.' This does get a little bit soft in a pot, so deadhead regularly, and place nearer the centre. This soft, scented favourite looks amazing with the verbena.

Tom's favourite pelargoniums for pots (13:40)

- *Pelargonium sidoides* – with their lovely leaf shape and colour. It's really easy to care for and its long stems with burgundy flowers are very impressive. Tom grows this pelargonium in a small window box. Sarah suggests pairing with *Dahlia* 'Heroine' for impact.
- *Pelargonium* 'Attar of Roses' – with its glorious, scented leaves, Tom suggests planting this on the edge of a pot, as it will release fragrance as you brush past it.
- *Pelargonium* 'Ardens' – similar to *sidoides* with a more scarlet flower and silvery delicate foliage. This plant will go into dormancy. Grow this singularly in a pot, and when it's at its best, place it on an outside table.

Dahlias (17:58)

- *Dahlia* 'Honka Fragile' – Tom has dotted these through the beds in his garden, or he uses them as a centrepiece in large pots. This variety is loved by pollinators.

Annuals to pair with perennials (19:35)

- *Antirrhinum majus* 'Chantilly' – lovely habit in a pretty variety of colours. Tom likes to plant these at the centre of pots.
- *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Sonata White' – Great for all sorts of containers with feathery foliage.

- Tobacco plants, also known as *Nicotiana*, are a great choice in lime, purple, and white. These have an excellent scent, and they flower long and hard.
- *Scabiosa atropurpurea* 'Black Cat' – incredibly tall and lovely with it, this is one of Tom's favourite. This might require a little bit of support.
- *Actaea simplex* 'Pink Spire' – handsome dark foliage, and scented.

If the mildew becomes troublesome, remove the worst affected leaves, and introduce more air and light. Combine bicarbonate of soda, washing up liquid, and sunflower oil for a kinder and more natural treatment.