

episode 14 show notes and advice

There's nothing quite like bringing the garden together with alliums, to take over from the last of the late tulips. If you tend to them carefully, removing the leaves that are prone to looking tatty, you can welcome structure and colour into your garden, comparable to the Chelsea Flower Show.

Alliums are an equally exciting addition for use in the kitchen, with 'Society Garlic' bringing the flavour without the halitosis. We also cover chives in this episode, which is a stunning perennial herb, great for use in delicious salads or as a tea.

In this episode, discover:

- Sarah and Arthur's favourite selection of alliums to fill the 'May Gap'
- How to treat allium foliage to allow other flowers to bloom
- The need to tend to alliums that self-seed before they hinder other flowers
- Picking wild garlic and chives, and growing them in the home
- Sarah's baked potato recipe with Wensleydale and garlic pesto

Links & references

Order Sarah's new book: <http://bit.ly/3cR0kyh>

Pre-order Arthur's new book: <http://bit.ly/3qiBqUs>

Shop on the Sarah Raven Website: <http://bit.ly/3jvbaeu>

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

Products mentioned:

Alliums: <https://bit.ly/3dwrvhA>

Allium hollandicum 'Purple Sensation': <https://bit.ly/3v04c5C>

(Browse our allium collections now, ready to order bulbs when they become available in summer for autumn planting)

Chives: <https://bit.ly/2QDEJ3k>

Garlic Chives: <https://bit.ly/3as1a2h>

Follow Sarah: <https://bit.ly/3iDTvBp>

Follow Arthur: <https://bit.ly/3jxSKK5>

episode 14 advice sheet | alliums and chives

Alliums are THE plants to plug the May colour gap in the garden, in pots and in the border. Stacked with nectar, they are fantastic for butterflies and bees.

Arthur's Favourites

- *A. cristophii* – Arthur's number one because they don't shed their seeds in the house, particularly at Christmas.
- 'Purple Sensation' - Arthur loves them planted with mauve tulip 'Blue Parrot'
- 'Purple Rain' -plant with foxgloves (which you want to sow now) particularly *Digitalis* 'Sutton's Apricot'
- 'Violet Beauty'

Sarah's Favourites

- Also 'Purple Sensation'
- *A. cristophii* – SUCH good value
- *A. schubertii* (gentle honey scent, not oniony). For a party, arrange with peonies as single stems all the way down your dining table.
- *A. sphaerocephalon*

Top Tips with alliums

You can remove the foliage of alliums once they start to flower. It's safe, and won't compromise the long-life of the bulb, because the allium leaves emerge so early, they have pretty much done their food factory job by the time the flower opens.

Gather the seedheads before they are fully ripe and brittle, partly because they're lovely dried and then sprayed with paint, and partly to prevent them self-seeding too much. Wrap them in tissue and put them in the attic until the following year.

For edible flowers, grow some of the finer ones — *A. cowanii* and *A. unifolium*, or chives, and pull the flowers apart to scatter over soup or salad.

Cut the foliage of your chives right back once they start to flower in May. And do this again in July, and again in late August. This keeps the taste good, maintains high levels of essential oils

and avoids rust. Water and feed if you want with potash-rich feed. This applies to all perennial herbs, including mint, lovage, fennel and even tarragon if it starts to flower.

Chive tea can serve as a natural fungicide against blackspot or mildew. Make it just as you would nettle or comfrey tea, allowing it to rot down in water and then remove the sulphur-rich liquid, diluted 1:10 with more water and douse your problem plants.

If you pick alliums for the house, a drop of bleach or vinegar in the flower water stops the stems rotting, so they don't get pongy.

Wild garlic pesto

I make lots of this in the spring, using it as pasta sauce and to stuff baked potatoes (see below). It freezes well, for use right through the year.

For a large jar:

2 handfuls (about 100g) of wild garlic leaves with flowers

200ml extra virgin olive oil, plus a bit more for sealing

50g pine nuts or walnuts

50g Parmesan cheese, grated

Salt and black pepper

Blanch the wild garlic leaves in boiling water for about 10 seconds. Refresh in cold water and pat dry on kitchen paper.

Put the wild garlic, olive oil, pine nuts or walnuts, together with the garlic cloves, into a food processor and blend to a purée.

Transfer to a bowl and mix in the grated Parmesan. Season carefully and put into a sterilised jar.

Pour over a little extra olive oil to seal and cover tightly.

Stuffed baked potatoes with pesto

My children used to love these when they were small. In the autumn, I make them with basil pesto, while in the spring I make them with wild garlic pesto.

For 4:

4 baking potatoes

200ml crème fraîche

175g grated cheese (Wensleydale or another crumbly hard cheese; Parmesan is also good, but halve the amount)

150ml pesto (homemade as above)

2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed

Salt and black pepper

Preheat a medium (180 °C/gas mark 4) oven.

Wash the potatoes and score round the full diameter of the potato with a sharp knife, only just piercing the skin. This makes it easier to cut them precisely, so that you get two perfect halves.

Bake the potatoes for about an hour, until they're cooked all the way through. Remove them from the oven, keeping the oven on, and cut the potatoes in half. Carefully scoop out the potato from the skins and put it into a bowl.

Add all the other ingredients to the potato flesh and mix thoroughly with a fork. Spoon the mixture back into the potato skins, piling them up above the edges so that they look generously filled. You may need to sacrifice a couple of skins to get enough filling to do this. Return them to the oven for about 15 minutes, until the tops become golden.

Stuffed baked potatoes can be made in advance and kept in the fridge for up to two days to cook when needed. They are also suitable for freezing at the just-stuffed stage.