

episode 16 show notes and advice

Give hardy annuals some new, open ground, and their flamboyant flowers will fill out any garden. Tending to them in just the right way helps to bring your outdoor space to life, and in this episode of 'grow, cook, eat, arrange', we discover Sarah and Arthur's top 5 hardy annuals.

We also have a whole year's worth of edible flowers which promise to bring a burst of flavour to your cooking; from wild garlic and elderflower to chives and hibiscus, with everything in between.

In this episode, discover:

- How hardy annuals can provide years of decoration in your garden
- Sarah & Arthur's favourite selections of hardy annuals
- Advice on direct sowing, and avoiding competition among hardy annuals
- Sowing edible flowers for every month of the year
- Tips to avoid weeds germinating

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

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

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

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

Products mentioned:

Edible flowers - <https://bit.ly/3f8vkJp>

Violas - <https://bit.ly/3obmGxV>

Polyanthus - <https://bit.ly/3ezVSnN>

Broad beans 'Crimson-flowered' - <https://bit.ly/3hjJBpA>

Dianthus - <https://bit.ly/3eCc883>

Salvias - <https://bit.ly/33ytX1p>

Roses - <https://bit.ly/2RDvpwJ>

Chives - <https://bit.ly/3tzSyxi>

Dahlias - <https://bit.ly/3vXhD78>

Runner bean 'Polestar' - <https://bit.ly/33yiFhL>

Runner bean 'White Lady' - <https://bit.ly/3vRdUrw>

Sweet pea 'Painted Lady' - <https://bit.ly/3ffMmFQ>

Hibiscus - <https://bit.ly/3uCqjPS>

Tagetes - <https://bit.ly/3biLQWf>

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

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

Episode 16 advice sheet | Hardy annuals & edible flowers

These are our natural cornfield annuals that will self-seed through your garden from one year to the next. Now is a great time to sow them direct, straight into the garden.

Arthur's and Sarah's favourites – as discussed in this episode

1. Opium poppies – stacked full of pollen and brilliant for bees. Arthur loves 'Black Beauty' most, which looks like a peony; a true party flower.
2. *Salvia viridis* 'Blue' – such a good edging plant, the more you pick, the more it flowers. The showiness of this is in fact not the flowers but the brilliant-coloured flower bracts. The flowers are typical hooded salvia flowers; small and almost hidden (but stacked with nectar for the bees).
3. *Nigella love-in-a-mist* - wonderful for its seedpods as well as its flowers. As Arthur says, "Like fairy dust for sprinkling by a path or at the front of a border."
4. *Ammi majus* and *Ammi visnaga* – like elegant cow-parsley, beautiful for scattering amongst white roses as in Arthur's new Aphrodite's white garden.
5. *Orlaya* – another umbellifer, puffy, ethereal and delicate. Related to the carrot, this can be tricky to grow as it gets carrot root fly but it's so worthwhile.
6. Calendulas, English marigolds. Arthur's favourites are 'Indian Prince' and 'Neon' in Jaffa-cake orange.
7. *Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens' honeywort - packed with sugar-rich nectar, they are THE plant for pollinators,
8. *Briza maxima*, greater quaking grass – like teardrops on a stem.
9. Annual scabious, *Scabiosa atropurpurea* 'Black Cat' – Sarah recommends cutting these back mid-season by one third of their height, just using hedging shears. They then quickly flower up again and keep going, so it's much quicker than endless deadheading.
10. Cornflowers, *Centaurea cyanus* 'Blue Boy', 'Black Ball' and 'Polka Dot' are all great and their flowers are edible and dry well.
11. *Euphorbia oblongata* – must be handled with extreme care to avoid getting sap in your eyes or on your skin. That said, it is a wonderful foliage foil to all these flowery annuals.

Tips for greatest success

1. Thin your seedlings even if they've self-sown when they first germinate. This gives them more space to fill out quickly, get bigger and flower for longer.
2. With the taller annuals, e.g. scabious and cornflowers, you NEED to stake. We do ours through horizontal jute netting at 45cm and a second row at about 80cm tied between bamboo canes or even better, hazel posts.
3. Autumn sowing is best with lots of these e.g. ammi and cornflowers, but all the rest are fine sown in April or May.

How to grow hardy annuals in May

Can direct sow them now. It's a perfect time.

1. Prepare the soil with a rake, getting the tilth to look like apple crumble topping.
2. Mix the seed with sand in a jamjar and then dust the soil with the seed/sand mix, just as if you're sowing a special wildflower mix. Then the seeds are sown randomly and look completely natural.
3. You can sow into a noughts and crosses grid of sand, with the lines spaced at 30cm apart. Then you'll be able to tell your weeds from your desired seedlings and hoe them off. The grid will soon merge seamlessly into a nice block of flowers.

(If you do the grid you can mulch between the lines to decrease the chance of more weeds germinating).

4. Make sure you put something to keep the birds off or they'll eat your seed. Tie CDs in canes to fly about until the seed has germinated.
5. Water every few days if no rain.
6. Go back and thin your seedlings so they're spaced at least 15cm apart, but Sarah often thins to at least 30 cm.
7. Stake the tall varieties as above (with jute netting and canes).

Edible flowers

Lots of these hardy annuals have flowers which are edible

A year of edible flowers

January and February: Violas and scented-leaf pelargoniums (if inside) and polyanthus and primrose e.g. 'Stella Champagne'.

March: Crimson-flowered broad beans added to the ones above. We grow these just for their edible flowers, not the beans.

April: Wild garlic is added to the crimson-flowered broad beans, violas and polyanthus which will still be going.

May: Borage, Dianthus (all the sweet Williams e.g 'Sooty'), wild garlic and elderflower.

June: Roses, Salvias, as well as Borage with Dianthus carrying on from May.

July: Salvia viridis 'Blue', Calendulas, chives.

August: Dahlia petals, as well as all ones from June and July, and nasturtiums (which taste peppery).

September: Add runner beans e.g. 'Aurora' in coral-pink, 'Polestar' which is scarlet, 'White Lady' (white) and 'Painted Lady' which is pink and white. Dahlias and other summer flowers still going strong.

October: Hibiscus from the greenhouse, as well as dahlias still, plus the lovely, Tagetes patula 'Linnaeus Burning Embers' and chrysanthemum petals.

November and December: Violas and polyanthus starting again and scented-leaf pelargoniums from the greenhouse such as 'Attar of Roses'.

How to use

- Make decorated ice cubes
- Make edible flower ice bowls: line the bowl with cling film, pour in water layer by layer, with the petals in the middle layers.
- Scatter over salads, cakes and puddings
- Edible flower jelly – use clear fruit jelly (see recipe).

Recipe

A pretty and delicious summer pudding with no bread, and light on the jelly. This is made from freshly juiced apples, holding together many punnets of super healthy berries and a handful of edible flowers.

This needs to be made the day before serving. It's tempting to buy the apple juice – and if you do, always buy the cloudy and ideally organic – but fresh home-pressed juice contains much more goodness than any commercially extracted juice. So, if you have a juicer, make your own.

This rather precise amount of gelatine will give a nice soft, (not rubbery), set.

For 8:

- 4 x 1.6g gelatine leaves
- 450g strawberries, hulled and halved if large
- 250g raspberries
- 250g blueberries, plus extra for decoration
- 200g blackcurrants or redcurrants
- Handful of edible petals e.g. rose petals, calendula petal threads, pansies and a few more for decoration
- 600ml freshly home-pressed apple juice
- A few lemon verbena or mint leaves

Put the gelatine leaves into a bowl of cold water.

Put the fruit into a 2-litre summer pudding bowl, alternating handfuls of berries and scatter edible petals between.

Warm the apple juice in a pan. Squeeze the water from the gelatine leaves and add to the juice. Stir to dissolve over a gentle heat and allow to cool slightly before pouring over the fruit.

Chill overnight until set.

Dip the bowl into warm water and turn out onto a plate. Decorate with the extra blueberries and a few leaves of lemon verbena or mint and more edible flowers.