

episode 19 show notes and advice

Rich in fragrance and saturated colour, biennials are a wonderful group of plants that promise to really enhance the sights and smells of your garden, from magnificent early wallflowers to the aromatic Icelandic poppies. Sow these now and they'll spend the summer putting down strong roots ready for a fabulous display next year.

One biennial which we grow for its delicious, nutrient-packed roots is the humble carrot. On this week's 'grow, cook, eat, arrange' we hear how you can add carrots to your veg garden, the best ways to keep them safe from carrot fly, and Sarah's brilliant recipe that puts them to good use in a salad.

In this episode, discover:

- A selection of the most fragrant and fabulous biennials for your garden
- Biennials' role in bringing through a succession of colour
- Growing your own delicious carrots easily with seed tape
- Keeping home-grown carrots safe from the threat of carrot fly
- Sarah's recipe for a delicious carrot salad

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:

Wallflowers: <https://bit.ly/3wh1z0m>

Foxgloves: <https://bit.ly/3pJ2pjZ>

Poppies: <https://bit.ly/3znxezs>

Carrots: <https://bit.ly/3f22prG>

Kale 'Redbor': <https://bit.ly/37qazWY>

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

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

Episode 19 advice sheet | Biennials

Biennial flowers such as foxgloves, sweet Williams plus edibles – carrots and parsley

Sown in early summer, plants will form roots and leaves that year, but not flower until the following spring or summer.

Why grow biennials?

- Many will plug the May colour gap
- They give good height and drama in the garden
- They give form in your borders in winter – e.g., foxglove rosettes and bright green, healthy looking clumps of sweet Williams. They're such a hardy group of plants that do well whatever weather our winter brings.

Arthur and Sarah's favourites for sowing now

- Wallflowers e.g. Erysimum 'Fire King', and 'Blood Red'

- Honesty (Lunaria annua)

• Foxgloves (Digitalis)

- Arthur loves the wild one, in a woodland in evening light, but you need a large flock for effect.
- 'Pam's Favourite' has a purple spotted throat which is beautiful.

Bumblebees love them, like a delicious high-rise of nectar cafés for pollinators.

- 'Sutton's Apricot'

Brilliant for spires in the garden, as Vita Sackville-West would say, "You need minarets rising above the domes of a mosque". That's what spires do with curvy, bosomy flowers like roses.

Seed tray sowing is best as seeds are tiny, so they're very fiddly. Scatter a small amount of the seed quickly over a tray with a large surface area to get a thin but even seed distribution.

- Sweet Williams, *Dianthus barbatus* 'Sooty' is Arthur's favourite.
- Sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)
- Iceland poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*) e.g. 'Champagne Bubbles White'. They need their stem ends seared in boiling water for 10 seconds to make them last in the vase. Don't grow them in rich soil.
- Purple cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing') – will self-seed, loves dappled shade, elegant and delicate. Again, sear the stem ends.
- *Daucus carota* 'Dara' and 'Purple Kisses' are beautiful ornamental forms of carrot.

How best to grow. Sow into seed tray, not direct. This has been more successful in the Perch Hill trials. Flea beetle is too much of an issue with wallflowers and hesperis and stocks are all brassicas if sown outside.

Edible biennials

Carrots

- Sarah now uses carrot tape for sowing and growing all the carrots at Perch Hill. This means you don't need to thin. It's the scent of the thinning that draws the carrot fly in.
- At Perch Hill carrots are often grown inside in the greenhouse, between the tomatoes, to make sure there is no carrot fly infestation, or in a raised bed.
- Sarah recommends growing carrots in a really gritty mix

Grated carrot and poppy seed salad

A good salad for when you've got a few maincrop carrots that are a bit on the old side in mid-winter and even better when the carrots are perky and just picked.

This salad has a delicious sharp and nutty taste. Make it a few hours in advance so that the carrot gets a chance to marinate in the lime and oil. The texture of grated carrot is quite dense, so a little of this salad goes a long way.

For 6:

- 3 large carrots
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Juice and grated zest of 1 lime
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 tablespoon poppy seeds, toasted
- 2 tablespoons other seeds e.g. pumpkin, sunflower, sesame - all toasted

Peel the carrots and grate on a medium-grade grater.

Mix the oil with the lime zest and juice, and salt and pepper, in the base of a large salad bowl. Put the carrot in on top, followed by the hot toasted seeds, straight from the pan.

Stir everything together and leave for a couple of hours. Actually, this is surprisingly good the next day.