

episode 21 show notes and advice

While lupins might be unfairly labelled as lacking subtlety, and many gardeners overlook irises and peonies, Sarah and Arthur feel it's high time for a renaissance of these romantic, vigorous flowers.

From the rousing, warm tones of Lupin 'Terracotta', to the rich shades of Iris 'Dusky Challenger', there's a strong case for adding these beautiful varieties to your garden. They deserve praise for both their aesthetic merit and their pretty low level of maintenance.

In this episode, discover:

- A family of striking, bold lupins, perfect for any border
- Beautiful irises, and the influx of colour they bring to a garden
- Magnificent peonies - the queen of the cut flowers
- Sarah and Arthur's favourite selections of each of the lupins, irises and peonies, with helpful tips on how and when to plant them
- Advice for keeping lupin aphids at bay

Links & references:

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

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

Products mentioned:

Lupin 'Beefeater': <https://bit.ly/3xE74Xe>

Lupinus 'Terracotta': <https://bit.ly/3iUoJ96>

Lupinus 'Blue Javelin': <https://bit.ly/3qcC9Pt>

Peony Collection: <https://bit.ly/3zRLwsn>

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

Follow Arthur: <https://bit.ly/3ixSKK5>

Episode 21 advice sheet | Lupins, bearded iris and peonies

In this episode, we discuss the stalwarts of the British cottage garden for this time of year – lupins, bearded iris and peonies.

They fit brilliantly into the romantic style of gardening Sarah and Arthur both love, and as perennials, they are pretty good for low-maintenance floweriness. They may all have a short-flowering season, but they are truly the Queen Elizabeth of flowers – stately and glamorous.

Lupins

- We used these in our Chelsea Colour Cutting Garden at RHS show in 2017
- They smell of black pepper
- Incredible spires, for structure in your garden
- Beautiful palmate foliage

Our favourite perennial varieties are all from Sarah Conibear of West Country Lupins

- ‘Beefeater’ – blood orange, magenta red-like summer punch
- ‘Terracotta’ – deep pink merging with orange
- ‘Masterpiece’ – deep purple

And there are wonderful annuals too

- *Lupinus polyphyllus* and *L. angustifolius*, both lovely with beautiful silvery, downy foliage and blue flower spikes.
- ‘Blue Javelin’ and ‘White Javelin’ we grow at Perch Hill and pick as scented single stems for running down the centre of the table.

FANTASTIC as cut flowers. Sear the stem ends in boiling water for 20 seconds and they’ll last 5 days in a vase and look spectacular.

FANTASTIC green manure. They fix nitrogen in the soil and so are often used on organic farms.

FANTASTIC for bees, as they are so dense with nectar and pollen.

The one big problem with lupins is the species-specific lupin aphid, but we (fingers crossed) seem to have controlled this with filling the area of the garden in which we grow lupins, with birdfeeders. The finches all feast on the aphids — and definitely seem to help keep them under control, naturally, which is even better.

Bearded Iris

- They have the most gorgeous, exotic scent
- Each one is a William Morris creation – with the combination of the furry falls over the velvet petals. You want to wear them to a party as a dress.

- Most flower in late May and June, but if you select varieties carefully you can have a bearded iris in flower from April to July (at least).

Favourite in dark and rich range

- ‘Dusky Challenger’ – pure silk velvet in purple-black.

Favourite in soft and pale range

- ‘Jane Phillips’ – in beautiful sky blue with fantastic scent

To grow them well

- Don’t let them flower the first year after planting. They need to develop their root structure before the demands of flowering cause an energy drain.
- Need to divide the rhizomes every two to three years in mid to late August/September.
- Plant the rhizome again straight away, having cut back the full height of the spear-like leaves, leaving the rhizome showing, right above the soil surface, orientated to the south so they bake well and promote flower formation.
- They love very free-draining soil and on the whole, chalk suits them better than clay.

Peonies

Almost everyone’s favourite cut flower.

Our Favourites

- ‘Duchesse de Nemours’ smells of lily of the valley crossed with roses, white fully double perfection
- We also love ‘Madame Jules Elie’, a rich pink, and again with lovely scent
- ‘Lord Kitchener’ a deep proper claret red
- ‘Buckeye Belle’ – silk magenta, semi-double

To grow them well

- Plant bare root in the autumn (or early spring)
- Do not bury the bulbous root deeply – otherwise they won’t flower and don’t over-mulch
- Will happily move (even though people tell you not to)
- They last for decades in the garden
- Leave the foliage to die right back, so they’re not ideal for containers because they start to look a bit ragged and don’t like too much competition.