

episode 22 show notes and advice

With the summer months upon us and the hope of even better weather to come, the prospect of gatherings in the garden grows ever more appealing.

It's not too late in the year to plant your own, and now is a perfect time for us to consider some of the best gladioli to add to your garden, bringing structure, elegance and bright and rich colour to your outside space. This week we have the help of the wonderful Tom Brown, Head Gardener & Tutor at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation.

Also, in this episode we hear about some of the unique discoveries that have emerged from Sarah and Tom's shared love of trialling, with a few fantastic tips for your own planting.

In this episode, discover:

- Tips for growing gorgeous gladioli in your garden
- A selection of Sarah, Arthur & Tom's favourite gladioli
- Sarah and Tom's shared passion for trialling
- Fascinating revelations from Sarah's trials of potato tubers

Links & references:

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

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

Products mentioned:

Gladiolus 'Belle de Nuit' - <https://bit.ly/3q7btzk>

Gladiolus communis subsp. byzantinus - <https://bit.ly/3iSMbn8>

Acidanthera murielae syn. Gladiolus murielae - <https://bit.ly/3zycmW6>

Gladiolus 'Evergreen' - <https://bit.ly/35CtV9P>

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

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

Episode 22 advice sheet | Magnificent gladioli with Tom Brown and the new potato trial

GUEST Tom Brown, Head Gardener, West Deane Gardens in West Sussex.

Tom used to be at Parham, also in West Sussex, another incredible walled garden where they carried out lots of trials under Tom's lead. Sarah met Tom there as she went regularly to Parham to write up the trials for The Telegraph. Tom had a brilliant trial training from his days at RHS Wisley.

Sarah has written up Tom's trials of

- Tulips
- Alliums
- Dahlias
- Sunflowers
- Sweet peas
- Annual climbers

But today they're chatting about the Parham Gladioli Trial from 2017. Tom chose gladioli for one of his first trials at Parham. Trialing them is really useful because you can't tell the true colours of gladioli flowers from catalogue pictures – they just don't reflect the richness of colour.

Why grow gladioli?

- They make brilliant cut flowers
- They are perfect for the shoulder months of late summer/early autumn, with a firework-like impact
- Incredibly reliable flowerers – like summer tulips, if you get them in the ground, they will flower
- Give you colour down to a timeline e.g. if you've having a party
- You can plant lots of clumps round the garden – say 10 clumps of 5, to give an almost naturalised look.

How Tom grows them

- Don't need much space so really pack them in.
- Good value, so use as an annual, put them in almost touching, as they don't need space to expand year on year
- Dig hole a spade's depth and width – then put 5-7 bulbs at the bottom of the hole and they'll come up as a clump
- Alternatively, dig a trench and put them in almost touching
- They need cultivated ground, but not too fertile as you want flowers not leaf

- Plant them deep because it makes them more perennial (like tulips), provides a more consistent temperature and moisture content and they won't need staking. They will come into flower about 100 days after planting.

To pick

- Flowers at the bottom of spire need to be showing colour.
- Remove the very top two buds out from the spike. If not, the flower does not develop so well.
- If you want them to be perennial, leave some leaves behind and below where you cut
- If treating as annual, Tom tends to pull them out bulb and all.
- In perennial borders, just top up by planting a few more of the same colour as the year before.

Thrips can be a problem with gladioli

Tom recommends

- Don't go for monoculture
- Use biological controls
- Use SB Plant Invigorator as the buds are developing

Arthur's Favourites

- 'Plum Tart' - fiery bubblegum, deep pink magenta (great with Crocosmia 'Lucifer').
- 'Belle de Nuit' - very dark crimson

Tom's Favourites

- 'Violetta' - beautiful deep purple
- 'Sylvia' is a miniature and very pretty and delicate
- 'Flevo Laguna' - another miniature, so works well in a vase or border with other garden flowers - as not so dominant as the grandifloras.

Sarah's Favourites

- *G. communis* subsp. *byzantinus* - Mediterranean one in rich magenta, tough grower but so delicate and fantastic for May colour gap. Is called 'Whistling Jack' in the Isles of Scilly where it has naturalised.
- *Acidanthera* - scented cousin of the gladioli, also called the Abyssinian (or Ethiopian) Lily, white with purple-crimson splotch on its throat, a bit like a foxglove in its shape and scale. Fantastic for pots with its handsome spear-like leaves and elegant curved flowers and it flowers late for August to October. This is not hardy so lifted for replanting the following spring. And

vase life of 5-7 days. Tom recommends growing them in a clutch in 2L plastic pot, get them into bud and then hide the plastic pot within a terracotta pot and they'll last much better than when cut – giving you impact for 2-3 weeks at least.

- 'Evergreen' – the best of the greens, which does not turn yellow as it ages!