

episode 24 show notes and advice

With high summer now upon us, and a move towards autumn, there are some great perennials which are beginning to sweep into season; from the hard-working and richly scented Phlox paniculata 'Blue Paradise' to the hardy mainstay of the garden - the beloved salvia family.

Sparking inspiration for your own containers, borders, cut flower arrangements and everywhere in between, this week, Sarah and Arthur run through a plethora of perennials they consider to be the pick of the bunch, and Sarah gives us her simple and delicious smoked haddock crunchy fishcake recipe, made with peppery, crushed nasturtiums.

In this episode, discover:

- A gorgeous selection of phlox, adding soft and strong clouds of colour to a border
- Fabulous asters that come into their own in the autumn garden
- Vital advice for this time of year - an ideal time to propagate your own salvias
- Sarah's delicious recipe for smoked haddock fishcakes, replacing pepper with a colourful collection of crushed nasturtiums

Links & references:

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

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Episode 24 advice sheet | Sarah and Arthur's favourite summer perennials

- Crocosmia
- Japanese anemones
- Asters
- Echinacea
- Veronicastrums
- Phlox
- Astantias

Echinaceas

e.g. 'Marmalade', 'Summer Salsa', 'Summer Samba', 'Envy'

Pros

- Vase life of 10-14 days
- Fantastic for pollinators
- Health-giving plants to us too, a traditional stimulant of the immune system — brilliant against colds and flu

Cons

- They hate over-crowding, so they are good in a cutting garden, in a row with space around them, or right at the front of a border where they don't have competition on all sides.

Astrantias

e.g. *Astrantia major* 'Gill Richardson group', 'Ruby cloud', 'Sparkling stars pink', 'Buckland', 'Claret', 'Shaggy'

Pros

- Thrive in dappled shade
- Great vase life
- Slugs and snails don't eat them
- A brilliant pressed flower
- Flower all summer from June to August, or even longer, if you keep picking or deadheading.

Cons

- Slightly odd smell

Phlox

e.g. 'Blue Paradise', which has incredible colour and 'David' which is a hugely long-flowering and healthy white variety with fantastic scent

Pros

- Will put up with dappled shade
- Low maintenance – just need staking in spring
- Great vase life (sear stem end for 15 seconds), then every 3 or 4 days take them out of the vase and give them a vigorous shake outside to dislodge any aging flowers. Cut the stem ends and change their water, add clear vinegar and they will go on for another 5 or 6 days.

- Wonderful scent

Cons

- Some get mildew, but not 'Blue Paradise' or 'David'
- Will need watering in a hot, dry summer. They visibly flop in a drought. Put a hose on them for a good 10 minutes or so at the root.

Crocasmia

e.g. 'Lucifer', 'Burning Embers', 'Emily Mackenzie', 'Hell Fire'

Pros

- Really robust, wonderful foliage in the spring
- Just when you need electric orange in summer, out they come.
- Don't need staking, (but not a bad idea if you have some silver birch or hazel to hand to make them a nest)
- Cheap if bought as a spring corm (as opposed to already growing and flowering in a 2L pot)
- Seedheads are also lovely – and can look beautiful right through winter

Cons

- The 'wild' so-called monbretia has quite insignificant flowers and can be quite invasive, so take care to buy a named variety.

Acanthus

e.g. *Acanthus mollis* 'Rue Leddan'

Along with Japanese anemones, Sarah has them growing with bird's foot ivy, trained on metal obelisks on a north-facing border at the back of the garden and cookery school. This trio makes a great shady border all year.

Pros

- Evergreen – so they have a great presence all year round
- This one is mildew resistant
- 'Rue Ledan' is happy in shade

Cons

- Can get mildew in late summer

Cardoons

Hardier, larger relation of the artichoke

Pros

- Brilliant for structure in the garden – will get to 12ft tall
- Great for pollinators
- Fantastic silvery foliage
- Pretty evergreen (although not quite as evergreen as artichokes at Perch Hill)
- Keep flower heads for Christmas decoration

Cons

- Gets tatty if you leave it be through the summer flowering away, but this can be managed by cutting it right down. It will quickly re-grow and the lovely leaves remain pretty fresh, neat and tidy for the rest of the year.

Bronze fennel

Both our gardens would be a lesser place without bronze fennel

Pro

- Fabulous frothy pot and garden filler
- Great colour as well as texture
- Exceptionally easy to grow
- Comes up so early in the year to fill in between tulips and then early roses and foxgloves

Cons

- Can drown more delicate plants out. Keep cutting it down, giving it several trims throughout the year. This will stop it getting ahead of other things and drowning them.
- Seeds everywhere but cutting it back regularly will stop it flowering and setting seed.
- You'll get endless, fresh and handsome growth.

Asters

e.g. *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'September Ruby', a magenta pink, very tall, old variety and *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Violetta' which is purple blue

Pros

- Incredibly long-flowering. They keep going as the last firework in the garden right to the end of autumn.
- Wonderful rich-coloured flowers.
- Bees LOVE them

Cons

- Some get mildew but not these varieties if you give them a good feed and water and mulch through the summer and winter

Salvias

e.g. S.'Amistad' – exceptionally long-flowering in the richest blue

S. involucrata 'Hadspen' which looks like a brilliant pink Lotus flower

S. 'Nachtvlinder' – rich crimson, small-flowered, small-leaved one

S. 'Cerro Potosi' – wonderful bright pink

S. uliginosa – turquoise

S. 'Amante' – like mulberry jam with touches of fuschia pink. Not as vigorous, but still superb.

Pros

- Hugely long-flowering into November
- Very easy to propagate – from cuttings

Take a non-flowering side shoot

Remove the apical tip

Remove any foliage below soil level

Push the cuttings around the edge of the pot of gritty compost

Remove most of the other leaves, bar a pair at the top

Pot them on 6 weeks later into individual pots

- Fantastic for pollinators – bees love them!
- Edible flowers – e.g. pineapple sage is great for puddings
- With sulphur in their scent profile, they are invaluable for underplanting roses to keep them fungal (mildew and blackspot) free

Cons

- Not fully hardy, although they are at Perch Hill if we leave the frosted tops on them until the middle of April. This provides protection even in hard winters like the one we just had. And they're simple to propagate (see above).

Veronicastrum

e.g. 'Fascination'

Pros

- Tall, rocket shape, giving fantastic spires for late summer structure – and fantastic seedpods
- Happy in dappled shade
- Very perennial and very hardy
- Slugs and snails don't eat them
- Pollinators love them

Cons

- Fasciation is quite common with *Veronicastrum* 'Fascination' – Fasciation is when flower spikes are thickened, almost looking like two spikes have merged into one. You can cut those spires back, but fasciation does not seem to affect the overall health of the plant.

Recipe - Smoked haddock and nasturtium fishcakes

This looks and tastes marvellous. Serve it with really rich tomato sauce, with fresh (or tinned tomatoes), reduced right down with plenty of salt and olive oil, and a green salad.

For 4:

- 500g undyed smoked haddock (or pollock)
- About 500ml milk
- A few black peppercorns
- 1 bay leaf
- Some parsley stalks
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- A little olive oil
- 4 medium-sized potatoes
- Knob of butter
- 1 egg yolk plus 1 other whole egg, beaten
- 100g Parmesan cheese, grated
- Salt and black pepper
- 15 nasturtium flowers, torn or roughly chopped
- Seasoned flour
- Breadcrumbs

Put the haddock (or pollock) in a shallow heatproof dish and cover with milk. Add the peppercorns, bay leaf and parsley, and poach until just cooked.

Lift the fish out of the milky sauce, reserving this for later, and carefully flake with a fork, keeping the flakes as generous as possible.

Fry the onion and garlic in a little oil until translucent.

Boil the potatoes until tender, drain and add a generous knob of butter and some of the reserved milk in which the fish was cooked. Mash, but keep the mixture quite stiff.

Add the cooked onion and garlic and the egg yolk to the potato, together with some of the Parmesan, and season well with salt and pepper.

Very carefully fold in the flaked fish and some of the torn nasturtium petals, without mixing it up too much, and then shape the mixture into small round cakes.

Have three plates ready – one with seasoned flour, a second with the beaten egg and a third with breadcrumbs mixed with Parmesan and nasturtium petals. Make sure that the fishcakes are lightly covered first with seasoned flour, then egg and lastly the breadcrumb mixture.

Put into the fridge for a couple of hours (this helps them 'set') and then either shallow-fry or bake in an oven preheated to 190°C/gas mark 5 until golden.