

episode 34 show notes and advice

No late summer garden is complete without dahlias - their vibrant array of colours and high cut flower productivity make them a true must-have, and worthy of a full episode to themselves.

Sarah Raven and Arthur Parkinson - perhaps the most enthusiastic dahlia advocates - share their top picks from this must-have family of flowers; which ones are most appealing for birds and bees, tips on protecting pot-grown dahlias from frost, and how they even make a delightful addition to a salad.

In this episode, discover:

- Over a dozen decorative varieties of dahlia
- The best single dahlias to encourage our oh so vital pollinators
- Perfect planting partners for dahlias including Rudbeckia Hirtas
- New dahlia varieties to explore, such as the vibrant dahlia 'Mats'
- Sarah's advice for protecting your dahlias from the frosts to help them return the following year

Links & references:

Order Sarah's new book: <https://bit.ly/2TWHJcz>

Order Arthur's new book: <https://bit.ly/3xOov7H>

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

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

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

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

Episode 34 advice sheet

The dahlias are finally looking fantastic – and it's about time! They are SO late this year, but we thought we'd chat about them this week as there are lots of dahlias featuring at Chelsea flower show.

Arthur's Favourites

'Bishop of Auckland'

All the Bishops give good foliage, dark and lacy (like a black elder) compared to the average

dahlia. 'Bishop of Auckland' is the best of them in Arthur's view, with beautiful, single (like all the bishops) claret-coloured flowers and it forms good tubers – they bulk up quickly – and so it easily becomes perennial.

'Happy Halloween'

Vase life is excellent with this one and it travels well. As a non-driver Arthur travels on the bus, tube and train and likes to take bunches as presents to friends. This still looks great after lots of mileage. It's a brilliant orange large pompom and is super-reliable.

'Tartan'

A dark purple striped with white. Just one flower in a single stem vase or mug on the table will take the room by storm. Scottish kilt, crossed with Muller fruit corner territory here. Not one so easy for the garden but magnificent for the vase.

'Totally Tangerine'

Very early to flower, a so-called Anemone flowered variety, fantastic for butterflies, good in a pot – Arthur grows it in a tin bath, planted with Panicum 'Frosted Explosion'. It flowers its socks off. For an even brighter orange, slightly more compact variety which looks similar, also try 'Josie' named after the Perch Hill head-gardener. That's her number one favourite.

'Thomas A Edison'

Cadbury bar purple, with large flowers, very strong and floriferous. This variety has been in the Perch Hill Garden, without being lifted, for over 20 years.

'Akita' – Arthur's favourite new one. Arthur fell on this for huge vases, like we have in the Perch Hill shop. Looks like a Chinese New Year dragon in soho. Great cut flowers – and huge.

Sarah's Favourites

'Lou Farman'

Named after her old university friend and business partner, Lou, who found this in a dahlia trial in Holland with Sarah. It's a large, elegant single in a deep pink, with pointed tips to each petal, and lovely thin, graceful, long stems. It's also very reliable and THE top favourite for pollinators. Nice foliage too.

'Labyrinth'

Curvy petals facing this way with a peony-like opulence, in apricot, pink, peach, cream all in one flower. Good vase life. Lovely as a single stem in a bathroom or by your bed. The brand new 'Red Labyrinth' (in our Perch Hill trial this season) is a stunner too.

'Molly Raven'

This reminds me of beautiful Venetian marbled paper, or those feathered balloons, stylish but old-fashioned. Pink base stippled with crimson over it. Very good for a large pot.

'Holyhill Spider Woman'

This crazy cactus variety is spectacular for picking, with a ton of petals in purple and white all pointing in different directions. Sarah fell on this in a trial field in Holland 5 or 6 years ago and has grown it for picking ever since.

'Verone's Obsidian'

Looks like a chocolate cosmos but with pointed starry petals (single) in the richest plain chocolate crimson with a dazzling golden centre. Looks great in a border and easy to slot in there, plus stellar in a vase.

'Sarah Raven'

It's a collarette, terracotta with a crimson heart, like a Jammy dodger, with a whirl of smaller petals inside the main whirl.

'Mats' – Sarah's favourite new one

Glamorous, slightly crazy with crimson, ochre, white all in one flower. Really lifts a vase.

What we're doing over the next few weeks

1. Scatter the petals over an autumn or winter salad. All parts of dahlias are edible.
2. And of course, pick, pick, pick for the vase
3. If your dahlias are in a pot, lift and dry them inside, out of the frost.
4. If they're in the ground, mulch every crown with a good six-inch depth of compost
5. over their heads as a protection for winter. Label – so you know what is what next April when they start to sprout again.