

episode 4 show notes and advice

Episode Description

Crocus are lovely picked to decorate your kitchen table. It's the sheer delicacy of the outer petals of many varieties, and that they're the perfect miniature scale, so that an egg cup becomes an ideal vase. And all-importantly, crocus, stacked full of pollen and nectar early in the year, play a crucial role in the survival of our pollinators.

In this episode of **Grow, cook, eat, arrange**, Sarah Raven and Arthur Parkinson discuss their love of chard, the delight of many a veg gardener come the winter months. While Arthur explains his reluctance to pick chard, Sarah has several tasty recipes for you to try and explains why it's best to sow chard twice a year for a year-round crop.

You'll also hear how you can bring vivid splashes of colour into your garden with one of the most vibrant and versatile plants - the antirrhinum.

In this episode, discover...

- How to incorporate crocus into the home with egg cups
- Sarah's tips for the fastest and most natural-looking way to plant crocus
- Sowing chard twice a year for a colourful and delicious addition to your garden
- Two sumptuous chard recipes to add depth to your cooking
- Incorporating antirrhinums into your garden for lavish splashes of colour

Links and references

Pre-order Sarah's new book: <http://bit.ly/3cR0kyh>

Pre-order Arthur's new book: <http://bit.ly/3qiBqUs>

Browse Sarah Raven Website: <http://bit.ly/3jvbaeu>

Get in touch: info@sarahraven.com

Products mentioned:

Crocus tommasinianus: <http://bit.ly/3pNkQTb>

Crocus chrysanthus 'Snow Bunting': <http://bit.ly/3snmTPk>

Crocus vernus 'Flower Record': <http://bit.ly/3umv941>

Crocus minimus 'Spring Beauty': <http://bit.ly/3bxWYri>

Swiss Chard 'Bright Lights': <http://bit.ly/3snGM8X>

Antirrhinum majus 'Liberty Crimson': <http://bit.ly/3uokhma>

Sarah Raven Antirrhinum Collection: <http://bit.ly/3aKIJ9N>

Antirrhinum Chantilly Series: <http://bit.ly/3bAgycC>

episode 4 advice sheet | crocus, chard and antirrhinums

Crocus

The ones we particularly love are:

- 'Flower Record' - pretty stonking size, a deep Cadbury chocolate wrapper purple with orange stamens, flowers at the end of February.
- 'Orange Monarch' - one of the first to flower in mid-February, brilliant orange with fine crimson markings on the outer petal surface.
- 'Spring Beauty' - mauve with very delicate purple stripes, flowers at the end of February
- Crysanthus hybrids.

Crocus are a particularly brilliant source of nectar and pollen for bumblebees, emerging early in the year when there are few other flowers around.

Buddleia 'Buzz Series' are perfect for containers as they are compact, evergreen and SCENTED. Arthur has them in pots, underplanted with crocus to give a good succession of nectar; crocus for spring and buddleia in summer.

Chard

The ones we particularly love are:

- 'Bright Lights' (also called Rainbow Chard) Brilliant, coloured stems and some stained-glass coloured leaves.
- Swiss Chard This is the one with a broad white stem. It's by the far the biggest, most prolific and productive.
- 'Lucullus' Bred in Australia, and very bolt resistant, so the best to sow and grow if summer is approaching.

Chard gratin

A fantastic meal-in-one recipe, which is delicious just as it is, served with a few potatoes. It's also lovely with good quality olives cut in half and added to the chard. Or you can add mussels

cooked in white wine – a Provençal version, which we had as the first course of our wedding dinner.

For 6–8:

- 1.5kg Swiss chard
- Salt and black pepper
- 3 garlic cloves
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 10 anchovies in olive oil, drained (or rinsed salted), finely chopped
- 50–75g butter
- A few stems of fresh marjoram (if available)
- Plenty of grated nutmeg
- 275ml double cream
- Parmesan cheese, to grate over the top

For the mussels (optional):

- 1kg mussels
- 30g butter, plus some for the dish
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 250ml white wine

Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Put a pan of salted water on to boil.

Strip the green leaves from the chard stalks and cut the stalks about 1cm wide across. Wash both leaves and stalks in a colander. Cook the stalks in the boiling salted water. When they're just cooked (no longer resistant to the point of a knife), remove with a slotted spoon and drain on a tea towel.

Blanch the greens for about 2–3 minutes, remove and drain any excess water, pushing with the back of a spoon in a colander or sieve, or twist in a tea towel. Then coarsely chop.

Chop the garlic finely and heat in a pan with the olive oil. When the garlic begins to colour, add the finely chopped anchovies. Add the chard stalks and cook gently until the anchovies start to dissolve. Remove from the heat.

To cook the mussels, if you are using them, debeard and clean them, discarding any open ones that don't close when tapped. Melt the butter and 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large pan. Add the finely chopped onion and garlic and sweat until translucent.

Add the mussels with the wine and cook them for 3 minutes until they open, but no more. Drain the mussels and allow to cool enough for you to be able to handle them, then remove from the shells.

Roughly butter a baking dish and spoon in the chard stalks and anchovy to cover the base of the dish, then scatter over half the shelled mussels (if you are using them). Lay the green chard leaves lightly over the top. Scatter the marjoram, grated nutmeg and remaining shelled mussels over them. Pour over the cream. Season with salt and pepper and grate some Parmesan over the top. Some of the chard will be uncovered and some submerged.

Cook the gratin in the preheated oven for 25–30 minutes.

Snapdragons (Antirrhinums)

Antirrhinums provide fantastic spires for flower bunches and are brilliant for pots. They last for ages in the garden and vase.

You can sow your own (fiddly as the seed is tiny), or buy them as seedlings. If you grow your own, pinch out the tips of the seedlings when they are about 10cm tall to make them branch.

The ones we particularly love are:

- 'Liberty Crimson' Rich crimson, velvet spires
- Chantilly Series Bred in Japan, amazing range of colours from orange to pink, apricot to white. And SCENTED. They only have the top lip not the full snapdragon pairs of leaves.
- Sonnet Series including 'Orange Scarlet' which is punch-bowl orange, Arthur's favourite.