

episode 94 show notes and advice

episode description

In this episode, Sarah and Arthur discuss their top recommendations for trees, shrubs, and climbers, which make perfect additions to any type of garden. Cherry-picked for their most defining qualities, learn how these fantastic varieties for add structure and style.

In this episode, discover:

- ❖ Crab apples for the kitchen and garden
- ❖ Sensational shrubs to elevate your garden or patio
- ❖ Foliage that garden birds will love

episode 94 advice sheet

The wonderful world of crab apples (2:50)

A wonderful mixture of blossom and fruit and an important source of food for birds.

Arthur's favourite crab apple varieties

- ❖ Malus 'John Downie'
- ❖ Malus 'Royalty'
- ❖ Malus 'Wisley'

Sarah's crab apple picks

- ❖ Malus 'Hupehensis' - inspired by the beautiful trees at Great Dixter. Although a full-size tree, pruned, it would fit in any small to medium urban garden. It's also covered in tiny, bead-like crabs, that the male blackbirds adore. Generally, birds seem to love this tree above apples, rosehip, amelanchier, and hawthorn.
- ❖ Malus 'Dartmouth' – inspired by Sissinghurst. Albeit no longer planted in the grounds, this variety boasts a classic crab apple blossom with jewel-like medium crabs. Sarah suggests that one single branch in a vase looks brilliant. Loved by the sparrows, dunnocks, and blue tits.

Sarah's crab apple recipes:

Here's a selection of condiments for you to try at home that make excellent use of crab apples. Arthur suggests using Malus 'Wisley' for its large and citrusy fruit.

Rowan and apple jelly recipe

Makes 12 small jars (75ml-100ml)

- ❖ 2kg rowan berries
- ❖ 1½ kg apples
- ❖ Granulated sugar – 1 pint of juice to 1 pint of sugar

Method

- ❖ Pick the berries from the stalks and wash out any earwigs. Cut the apples into chunks. Put the rowans and apples in a pan and just cover with cold water. Simmer them until they're pulpy. This takes 30-40 minutes.
- ❖ Strain through a jelly bag overnight. Do not squeeze the jelly bag but allow it to drip naturally. If squeezed it will make the jelly cloudy.
- ❖ Measure the juice in a measuring jug and add the same amount of sugar by bulk.
- ❖ Put a saucer in the fridge to help test for the setting point later. Heat until the sugar has dissolved, then boil briskly to setting point. This usually takes about 20 minutes, but test after 10 minutes: place a teaspoonful of jam on the cool saucer from the fridge – when cool it should wrinkle when you push it with your finger (you could also use a jam thermometer here – when it reaches 104-105°C, the mixture will set).
- ❖ Remove any scum from the top and pour into warm, sterilised jars and seal. You can eat this straight away, but it will keep unopened for up to a year.

Chilli jelly recipe

makes 4 x 450g jars

- ❖ 2kg Bramley or crab apples, unpeeled
- ❖ 175ml cider vinegar
- ❖ about 900g granulated sugar
- ❖ 6 jalapeño or medium-hot chillies, 3 red, 3 green, sliced into rings, deseeded if you want less heat

Method

- ❖ Place a saucer in the fridge, ready for when you come to test setting point later on.
- ❖ Roughly chop the apples, core and all, and place in a large, heavy-based, stainless-steel pan with enough water to cover. Bring slowly to the boil. Cover and simmer until the apples are soft (about 20 minutes). Add the cider vinegar and boil for 5 minutes.
- ❖ Strain overnight through a jelly bag or muslin into a large glass or china bowl. Don't be tempted to squeeze the bag as this will make the jelly cloudy.
- ❖ Measure the juice (2kg apples will yield about 1 litre of juice), and for every 570ml, weigh out 450g sugar. Pour the juice into a large, heavy-based, stainless-steel pan and add the sugar. Stir over a gentle heat to dissolve the sugar completely.

- ❖ Add the chillies, then raise the heat and boil vigorously for about 15 minutes. Pull the pan off the heat and test for setting point. Take the saucer from the fridge and place a teaspoonful of the juice on it. When cool, it should wrinkle when you push it with your finger. You could also use a jam thermometer here; when it reaches 104-105°C, the mixture will set.
- ❖ Leave to stand for at least 20 minutes, then stir once more to ensure the chillies are distributed evenly through it. Taste to check it's spicy enough - you can add a few more chillies at this stage, but remember that it will get hotter during storage.
- ❖ Pour the jelly into dry, warm, sterilised jars (you can sterilise them in a very hot dishwasher, or boil them in a pan of water for 10 minutes). Cover each jar with a wax disc, then seal and label with the date. Unopened, the jelly keeps for at least a year. Once open, store in the fridge and eat within a couple of weeks.

This recipe appears on p321 of Sarah's Food for Friends and Family Cookbook.

Shrubs and trees that Arthur and Sarah love (9:00)

Holly trees – always alive with birds which use the barbed leaves for protection. Female holly plants also have a beautiful honey-like scent and little white blossoms. As the season draws on, the tree grows spectacular red berries which become more vivid as the season progresses. Also great for blue tits, robins, and black birds.

Crataegus persimilis 'Prunifolia' (Cockspur Hawthorn) – an amazing hawthorn with crab apple-sized haws. Wonderful in the spring with big hawthorn blossoms, and absolutely covered in berries for the birds. Ochre, red, orange, flame – the sort of colours to expect from this wonderful variety.

Amelanchier – multi-stem varieties.

Understory plants (10:30)

- ❖ Arthur adores *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Incrediball' - excellent for picking, great value, and long-flowering life.
- ❖ Sarah loves *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight'.

Climbers (11:58)

- ❖ To dress a wall or a fence, *hydrangea paniculata* is hard to beat.
- ❖ *Solanum laxum* 'Album' white potato vine – produces blooms similar to potato flowers. In a protected place, can flower on until Christmas.
- ❖ Clematis 'Madame Julia Correvon' – people often say that clematis doesn't flower for very long. But this is a vigorous and healthy climber. Look great above rebar frames.

- ❖ Honeysuckle 'Graham Thomas' – alongside hawthorn or looks gorgeous in the Nero Vase with Narcissus 'actaea'. Also, Bullfinches love the berries.

Black-eyed Susan trials at Perch Hill (15:07)

Lovely combinations to try in your garden.

- ❖ *Thunbergia alata* 'African Sunset' – apricot, moving through pink and soft crimson. Muted and lovely. Spread out, experiment with hanging baskets, as well as climbing up and through things.
- ❖ *Thunbergia alata* 'SunEyes Terracotta' – rich, burnt terracotta. Marvellous with pale palettes.
- ❖ Alternate with *Ipomoea batatas* 'SolarTower Black', which cuts through brilliantly and vigorously. Lovely trailing and curving shape in a vase, cascading down. Orange and crimson-black, a winner.
- ❖ *Cobaea scandens* – Sow in January on a windowsill, and then plant out when the nights are warm. Grow up trellis or an arch, a tremendous dresser.