


# We love September for...

...often coming as a wonderful surprise. As August closes there is a temptation to resign ourselves to summer being over, but instead we are delighted by September's soft sunny days – and slightly chilly nights, when the duvet is warm and comforting. There is no shortage of late flowers to inject pep and zing into our borders, and they are a comforting reassurance that there are still a few weeks left before we have to start thinking about extra layers and mugs of warming soup. **Words by James Alexander-Sinclair**

 **CATCH UP WITH JAMES** in his regular *Gardeners' World* blog at [gardenersworld.com](http://gardenersworld.com)

## Picture of health

Once ubiquitous and lauded throughout the land, the Michaelmas daisy has the tarnished reputation of a raddled courtesan. It doesn't seem fair – many varieties are as fresh-faced and sprightly as a storybook fairy. ***Aster novae-angliae*** 'Septemberrubin' is one.

**DETAILS** Needs good soil and sunshine • Vigorous and free flowering • Sow seed in autumn or divide runners in spring • One of the New England asters, which are generally mildew resistant • Height 1.5m



*Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora* 'Dusky Maiden'

## Dusky allure

Who can resist the sultry allure of *Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora* 'Dusky Maiden'? It's a plant that looks at you across candlelit shadows, and you know that it's going to be a memorable evening.

**DETAILS** Best with decent drainage and sunshine • Easy to propagate by splitting corms in early spring, just before they burst into life • Sow seed in autumn • Height 50cm



*Eucomis bicolor*

## Good hair day

The tuft of leaves atop the flower of *Eucomis bicolor* resemble the foliage of a pineapple. They also remind me of the perky topknot of a slightly confused and tonsorially challenged cockatiel.

**DETAILS** Needs a warm climate, gritty soil and deep mulch over winter • Take offsets in spring or sow seed under glass in autumn • Do not water in winter • Height 50cm

## Gratuitous nudity

They're confusing things, colchicums – also known as autumn crocus or, in racier circles, 'naked ladies'. We're not really expecting crocuses at this time of year and their naked pinkness excites differing emotions. Some think of them as complete autumn perfection; others liken them to distressed crustaceans or dismembered Barbie dolls. I like them! I find their newborn presence a refreshing change from the encroaching decrepitude of autumn.

### *Colchicum speciosum* var. *bornmuelleri*

**DETAILS** Can be naturalised in turf if soil is good and fertile • Divide corms in summer while they are dormant • Height 20cm

### C. 'Waterlily'

**DETAILS** A bit floppy, so best grown amongst other plants if possible • Plant in autumn about 10cm deep in good soil • Height 12cm

### C. 'The Giant'

**DETAILS** Oddly, not particularly giant but has large tulip-like flowers • Broad leaves after flowering • Height 20cm

### C. *autumnale* 'Nancy Lindsay'

**DETAILS** Distinctive purplish 'stem' • Thrives in reasonably fertile and not overly dry soil • Height 12cm

### C. *byzantium* 'Innocence'

**DETAILS** Plant under trees as they need to be as dry as possible during summer dormancy • Sow seed under glass in late winter • Height 12cm



*Colchicum speciosum* var. *bornmuelleri*



*Colchicum byzantium* 'Innocence'



*Colchicum* 'Waterlily'



*Colchicum* 'The Giant'



*Colchicum autumnale* 'Nancy Lindsay'

# Climbing stars

There is a very good reason why clematis are one of Britain's favourite plants – the same reason why Des Lynam is one of our favourite TV anchormen – they are both very good at what they do. But clematis just have the edge on Des as they're prettier.

### *Clematis 'Alba Luxurians'*

**DETAILS** A larger flowered variety • Perfect for a pergola once the roses have faded • Prune hard in spring to 40cm above ground level • Height 4m

### *C. 'Princess Diana'*

**DETAILS** Perfect for scrambling through a small tree or large shrub • Propagate from cuttings in spring and summer, or by layering in winter • Height 2.5m

### *C. 'Niobe'*

**DETAILS** Not too tall, so good on a fence • Prune lightly, removing damaged wood in early spring and cutting back to emerging buds • Height 2-3m

### *C. 'Arctic Queen'*

**DETAILS** After a first flush of flowers in early summer, this semi-double clematis blooms again in September • Best in sunshine • Height 4m

### *C. x triternata 'Rubromarginata'*

**DETAILS** An exuberant variety with hordes of small, slightly twisty flowers • Scented • Grow in good soil with some shade around the roots • Height 4m



*Clematis 'Alba Luxurians'*



*Clematis 'Princess Diana'*



*Clematis x triternata 'Rubromarginata'*



*Clematis 'Niobe'*



*Clematis 'Arctic Queen'*



*Anemone x hybrida 'Honorine Jobert'*

# Innocent eyes

When I was a boy I sang in a choir. I wore a pure white surplice, a starched ruff and the light of innocence shone in my eyes. I was not unlike *Anemone x hybrida 'Honorine Jobert'*.

**DETAILS** Can spread indefinitely, but is never a pest • Tolerates partial shade well • Must not get waterlogged in winter • Height 1m



*Salvia guaranitica 'Black and Blue'*

# Blue for you

Sometimes plant names are pleasantly self explanatory. A sage with flowers of mourning black and clearest blue = *Salvia guaranitica 'Black and Blue'*. Simple.

**DETAILS** • Only hardy in mild areas • Take basal cuttings in spring or semi-ripe ones now • Can reach a height of 2m

PHOTOS: THE GARDEN COLLECTION/NICOLA STOCKEN TOMKINS; ALAMY/NIALL MCDIARMID; GEOFF WILKINSON; GAP PHOTOS/RICHARD BLOOM; JONATHAN BUCKLEY; RICHARD BLOOM