


We love November for...

...the scent. I always imagine that each month should smell of something. It doesn't necessarily have any relation to reality, for example December should smell of Christmas and cinnamon, February of mineral water and cocoa, May of white wine and newlyweds, August of hot wood and sun-tan oil. To me, November is one of the most evocatively scented months. As the leaves fall, the world smells of burnt sugar, slowly cooking sausages and the ghosts of Roman centurions marching away into a misty forest.

Words by James Alexander-Sinclair

 CATCH UP WITH JAMES in
his regular *Gardeners' World*
blog at gardenersworld.com

Mischief makers

Evil small boys (in whose number I'd never count myself) use the insides of rosehips as itching powder. If you were so inclined, then *Rosa rugosa* 'Alba' would be a good source. For those of us who are above such things, they provide a fine autumn display – plump, shiny and like an embarrassed octopus in shape and colour.

DETAILS An excellent rose for shrubberies and hedges • White flowers
• Take hardwood cuttings in autumn • Height 2m (if left unpruned)



Luzula nivea



Sesleria nitida



Carex testacea



Carex dipsacea



Stipa gigantea

Wafting into winter

Some of you won't like grasses. "Oh no, ghastly weedy things without colour or form," you'll cry. "Why should I allow them into my garden?" Well, perhaps because they're wafty and softly architectural. Because they perfectly complement many perennials, shrubs and (especially) roses. Because the flowers and seedheads are intricately and delicately beautiful. And also because even in winter some of them just keep on giving. Have I convinced you yet?

***Luzula nivea*, snowy woodrush**
DETAILS Grow in moderately fertile soil in sun – it works well on the margins of shrub borders or woodland • Divide plants in early summer • Sow seed in pots outdoors in autumn • Height 60cm

***Sesleria nitida*, nest moor grass**
DETAILS Also known as nest moor grass, which I think is rather charming • Good in slightly alkaline soil in full sun or dappled shade • Sow seed in spring or autumn • Height 60cm

Carex testacea
DETAILS Leaves of olive green and pale orange • Good in most soils, but avoid extreme wet or dry • Divide during late spring • Sow seed under glass in early spring • Height 75cm

Carex dipsacea
DETAILS Flowers are almost black and shorter than foliage • Leaves are reddish in winter • Native to New Zealand, where it grows in swamp edges • Copes with flooding but not drought • Height 45cm

***Stipa gigantea*, golden oats**
DETAILS Flowers in midsummer, initially purplish-green, fading to gold • Likes light soil in full sun • Excellent in large pots • Rake out dead leaves in spring • Divide in early summer • Height 2.5m



Saxifraga 'Rubrifolia'

Simply red

For such a small plant the saxifrage family is complicated, split into sections such as *Porphyron* and *Xanthizoon*! All you need to know about 'Rubrifolia' is that it has striking red stems.

DETAILS Prefers rich soil in deep or partial shade • Ideal in a rock garden or at the edge of a border • Needs good drainage • Detach rosettes and root as cuttings in May • Height 20cm



Cornus capitata

Fruits with bite

At this time of year the fruits of *Cornus capitata* are a major feature – round and slightly knobby, like tightly rolled alligators. They taste a bit like an overripe banana, which may, or may not, be a good thing.

DETAILS A really good small evergreen tree • Resistant to honey fungus and tolerates sea winds • Best in warmer parts of the UK • Propagate by layering in summer • Height 12m



Hedera helix 'Pittsburgh'

Hot shots for winter pots

In spring and summer, colour runs unfettered through our tubs, pots and windowboxes. Our lives are awash with cascading annuals and majestic bulbs. But at this time of year, what should we do? Fear not, here are some of my favourites for winter containers.

Hedera helix 'Pittsburgh'

DETAILS Ivy is great draped over container edges • This is one of many, many varieties – lots of other leaf sizes, shapes and colours are available

Solanum sisymbriifolium

DETAILS Poisonous, shiny, orange-red fruits in winter • Can also be planted in borders • Sow seed with a little heat in spring • Height 40cm

Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'

DETAILS It looks like a grass, but in fact belongs to the lily family • Water sparingly during winter • Pale mauve flowers in spring • Height 20cm

Viola 'Karma Blue Butterfly'

DETAILS Pansies are unfairly sneered at by plant snobs, but are indefatigably cheery and invaluable in winter • Sow seeds either in February or at any time from June to September • Height 15-20cm



Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'



Solanum sisymbriifolium



Viola 'Karma Blue Butterfly'

What a rotter

Medlars, the fruits of *Mespilus germanica*, aren't for the faint hearted, as they're at their best when rotting and slightly mushy (known as bletted). They're traditionally made into an aromatic jelly.

DETAILS Pretty blossom during spring • Best in moderately fertile, slightly acidic soil • Likes sun and good drainage • Height 6m



Mespilus germanica



Coronilla valentina subsp. *glauca* 'Citrina'

Lemon sweetie

Remember lemon bonbons? Powdery outside, chewy lemony toffee inside. They were much the same colour as *Coronilla valentina* subsp. *glauca* 'Citrina', but much worse for your teeth.

DETAILS Needs full sun • Protect from strong winds • Sow seed under glass or take cuttings in early or late summer • Height 80cm