

We love August

This month is all about heat. Lie on the grass and you can feel the warmth deep in the ground. Look around and you'll see that most of the plants are in brighter colours than earlier in the year. The birds are less frantic and more languid than in spring, when there was so much to do, and the sun carries a hefty punch. It's a month for going slowly and easing back a little. Words by **James Alexander-Sinclair**

STAR OF THE MONTH *Kniphofia*

Oh, sing praises to the red-hot poker – especially when, as here, it's not actually red but sunset orange. These border stalwarts also come in yellow, acid green and bright red ● **Care** Divide large clumps in early summer or sow seeds in spring (although varieties won't come true) ● **Height x Spread** 150cm x 60cm

PHOTO: GARDENPHOTOS/ELKE BODKOWSKI



1 Agapanthus 'Black Pantha'



2 A. 'Windsor Grey'

Around the globe

For some odd reason, one of the common names given to the agapanthus is 'lily of the Nile'. This is a pedant's paradise, as it's not officially a lily nor does it grow anywhere near the Nile. Instead it's a very widespread native plant across South Africa and is a sort of botanical half-way point between an allium and an amaryllis. So now you know.

In Australia (and, strangely, on the Isles of Scilly) it's teetering on the edge of being an invasive weed, but over here it's one of the best plants for late summer. It hybridises quite easily so there are many varieties that can cope with colder climates.



3 A. praecox 'Maximus Albus' 4 A. 'Lilliput'



August 2011



5 A. 'Flore Pleno'

1 Agapanthus 'Black Pantha'

Our pedant would be shocked by the spelling, but it's a great colour ● **Height x Spread** 100cm x 40cm

2 A. 'Windsor Grey'

Large grey-violet flowerheads and green pollen. A strong grower ● **H x S** 120cm x 80cm

3 A. praecox 'Maximus Albus'

Evergreen in sheltered areas ● **H x S** 100cm x 100cm

4 A. 'Lilliput'

A shorter variety (there's a surprise!), perfectly suited to growing in pots ● **H x S** 40cm x 40cm

5 A. 'Flore Pleno'

Ideal in coastal gardens ● **H x S** 50cm x 45cm

Agapanthus care Need full sun and sharp drainage. After flowering, don't let them dry out. Mulch thickly to protect in winter or put pots in a greenhouse. Sow seeds in spring and keep seedlings under glass for the first winter. However, seedlings don't usually come true, so to ensure the colour propagate by dividing in spring. Don't divide too often, as this reduces flowering – only split large clumps every four to six years.

PHOTOS: GAP PHOTOS/CLINE NICHOLS, DAVE BEVAN, DAVE MARCUS, JULIE DANSEREAU, SARAH CUTTLE

Hot shots

In the words of that 80s disco classic: "So we go rum, bum, bum, bum, feelin' hot, hot, hot!" This month our borders are awash with strong, vibrant colour. Indeed, the whole summer's been building up to this moment. So, if I sing: "How you feeling?", I'm sure you'll reply: "Hot, hot, hot!" – especially if you have any of these scorchers...

1 *Tropaeolum speciosum*

A nasturtium like no other. It's a perennial climber and looks great growing through a yew hedge ● **Care** Divide in spring. Prone to blackfly ● **Height x Spread** 3m x 3m

2 *Hedychium gardnerianum*

Ginger gives an exotic feel to any garden ● **Care** It's best grown in a pot, so you can bring it out of the frost. Divide the rhizomes in spring ● **H x S** 150cm x 60cm

3 *Helenium 'Moerheim Beauty'*

One of the best varieties – tough and reliable, and it's great in large drifts with grasses ● **Care** Protect from slugs. Divide in autumn or spring ● **H x S** 90cm x 60cm

4 *Crocsmia 'Emily McKenzie'*

Beautifully marked flowers ● **Care** Can get congested when older (don't we all!), so divide every few years in spring or sow ripe seeds in pots ● **H x S** 60cm x 8cm

5 *Cosmos atrosanguineus*

It really does smell of chocolate – the good stuff, with a high cocoa count ● **Care** Keep frost-free over winter. Take basal cuttings in spring ● **H x S** 75cm x 45cm



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2 *Hedychium gardnerianum*



3 *Helenium 'Moerheim Beauty'*



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5 *Cosmos atrosanguineus*



1 *Tweedia caerulea*



2 *Sollya heterophylla* 'Alba'

Keep on climbing

By this time of year, many climbers (roses, clematis, etc) have done their stuff. What your fences and pergolas need now is a little bit of added zing to liven things up. How about these? Although they all need a little TLC.

1 *Tweedia caerulea*

Flowers change from blue to purple ● **Care** Tender. Feed monthly in growing season. Take cuttings in summer ● **Height x Spread** 100cm x 30cm

2 *Sollya heterophylla* 'Alba'

Grow in a greenhouse or conservatory. Produces edible blue fruits ● **Care** Water parsimoniously in winter. Shade from hot sun ● **H x S** 150cm x 30cm

3 *Gloriosa superba* 'Rothschildiana'

The national flower of Zimbabwe ● **Care** Grow from tubers planted in early spring. Dry and store the tubers over winter ● **H x S** 2m x 2m

4 *Berberidopsis corallina*

Adorned with tiny flowers, like an earring display in an upmarket store ● **Care** Take cuttings in summer. Mulch to protect roots ● **H x S** 3m x 40cm

5 *Campsis radicans* flava

A girlfriend's house was so covered in this you could use it to climb out of the window... ● **Care** Prune late winter/early spring ● **H x S** 10m x 2.5m



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