

## Episode 101 show notes and advice

### Episode description

For the next episode in our '12 best' series, Sarah is joined by Gary Newell, Senior Horticultural Buyer at Sarah Raven. Incredibly knowledgeable when it comes to choosing and cultivating the perfect plants for all types of gardens, here, Sarah and Gary share their 12 best plants for small gardens, guaranteed to breathe colour and life into smaller outdoor spaces.

### In this episode, discover:

- ❖ Sarah and Gary's 12 best plants for small gardens
- ❖ Gary reveals his favourite new perennials coming onto the market
- ❖ Exciting ways to reinvent small gardens

## episode 101 advice sheet

Gary takes inspiration from the sustainable environment and design course he attended at Falmouth College, where he specialised in landscape design, sustainability, and longevity.

### Top tips for small gardens (7:00)

- ❖ Gary explains that with small spaces, he always looks to incorporate a high point into the garden. This might be a large shrub or a small tree that's easy to maintain. This creates focus and great scale in the garden.
- ❖ Beneath that, Gary suggests working down to a 'sub shrub structural layer' – which holds the form of the garden together throughout the winter months.
- ❖ Next, Gary says it's time to start thinking about ground cover, which isn't necessarily the low growing plants, but more the self-seeding plants that will literally cover the ground for you, injecting colour or interest.
- ❖ Gary says he always starts with a palette of self-seeding plants, building up a matrix and letting them take over. The key, he explains, is to edit as you go along.
- ❖ This will allow the space to develop into something wilder and more naturalistic. A romanticised vision of a cottage garden where the plants are slowly taking over.

## Gary's tree and shrub recommendations for the top layer (9:00)

- ❖ Gary explains that year-round coverage is one of the most important things to look for when you're curating your space. Specifically, foliage colour in autumn, flower colour, and berries play a large role in finding the best top layer tree.
- ❖ Gary and Sarah both love *Amelanchier lamarckii* – it copes well with pollution or wet boggy ground and responds really well to pruning. Sarah loves that it's multi-stem which means you can sculpt and direct it by removing the central stem. It's also a great food source for male and female blackbirds that love to feast on bright scarlet berries early in the season.
- ❖ Gary says the form creates a great habitat beneath the *Amelanchier*. Introduce shade loving plants below such as Ferns and Hostas, or *Epimediums*.
- ❖ Something like *Sambucus* will add instant height and is easy to prune and keep under control. Great for adding an established feel pretty instantly.

## Sub-shrub layer

- ❖ Don't use heavy, thick set, evergreen shrubs. Instead go for the woodier *Salvia* x 'Phyllis Fancy' or *Salvia greggii* 'Amethyst Lips'. Long-flowering too, well into December.
- ❖ Gary says make sure you give plants time to come back after the cold winter spell, as many can surprise you, returning much later in the year.
- ❖ 'Black and Blue' is a particularly hardy *Salvia*, and a good alternative to 'Amistad'. Gary suggests this variety for gardens that might not be as protected as his.
- ❖ Sarah loves a Rosemary plants like 'Vatican Blue' which she says doesn't stop flowering at Perch Hill. Sarah says their method is to mulch with grit, which prevents unsightly and harmful weeds.

## Sarah and Gary's 12 best plants for small gardens

### First layer

- ❖ *Amelanchier* (see above for more information)
- ❖ *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva' – (see above for more information)

### Sub-shrub layer

- ❖ *Salvia guaranitica* 'Black and Blue'
- ❖ Rosemary 'Vatican Blue'

## Potted

- ❖ *Erysimum* 'Red Jep' - a perennial wall flower that thrives even when you forget to water it. A prolific flowerer too, although it only lives 3-4 years. Also self-seeding, which started off in a container in Gary's garden and migrated into a garden.
- ❖ Dahlia 'Waltzing Matilda' – great for smaller places, in a sunny spot with a wayward silver birch structure for it to cling to.
- ❖ *Petunia* 'Tidal Wave Red Velour' F1 – a great series and natural climber. Ideal to grow from seed and very worthwhile. Store the seeds in a cool, dry, and dark place.

## Ground cover

- ❖ *Erigeron karvinskianus* 'Profusion'
- ❖ Foxgloves
- ❖ *Verbascum*
- ❖ *Hesperis matronalis* var. *albiflora*
- ❖ *Lunaria annua*
- ❖ Poppies
- ❖ *Geranium* 'Bill Wallis' – early flowering period and sets seed vigorously, so you'll have to edit it out if you don't want it to take over. Although it won't be eaten by the rabbits!
- ❖ *Nemesia* 'Lady Lisa' – super long-flowering, cut back and it will bloom again and again. Perfect in May when the tulips have finished flowering, all the way until the middle of autumn.
- ❖ *Diascia Personata* – extraordinary coral pink, bright pink, and apricot tones.

## **New plants coming onto the market (28:10)**

- ❖ Compact versions of all-time favourites, plus, some new plants too.
- ❖ *Perovskia* 'Bluesette' - UK-bred and the same classification as *Salvia* but nowhere near as popular. Around 50cm, but doesn't need any support, and like a *salvia*, flowers for ages, and is adored by pollinators.
- ❖ *Nepeta faassenii* 'Purrsian Blue' – Bred to be less messy. Upright and considerably neat with plenty of flowers sticking their head above the foliage. Periwinkle blue flower with purple calluses. A bee magnet too!
- ❖ *Geranium* 'Bill Wallis Alba' – a white form of the classic which Gary is really excited about.

### Other favourites

- ❖ Agapanthus 'Midnight blue' or 'Navy Blue' – a very deep and rich blue. Sarah loves the colour and its pretty foliage. Looks nice at the front of a border, or a pot, and holds onto its seed heads very well. Easy and quick to flower too, a top performer.
- ❖ Caryopteris x clandonensis 'Sterling Silver' – the bees love this plant throughout the summer, which is fairly late to flower. Looks almost like a dwarf buddleia, it's a great plant for the future as summers get warmer due to climate change.