

Salvia microphylla 'Cerro Potosi'

Shrubby salvias are one of the delights of any sunny garden. In bloom from June to early November, in almost any colour, they are deciduous shrubs so look dead in winter but come back to life beautifully if pruned hard in spring. Collected at high elevation on a mountain of the same name in Mexico, 'Cerro Potosi' has extra big flowers of such an intense hot pink that they seem to vibrate with what I call burn-a-hole-in-the-landscape pink.

Height 80cm.

Growing conditions Full sun, good drainage.

Hardiness USDA 7a-9b[†].

Origin Mexico.

Season of interest June – October.



June plants

There's a wealth of plants that look good in June, but how to pick the best? Derry Watkins selects her favourites

WORDS DERRY WATKINS PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

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Paeonia rockii

The most beautiful of all tree peonies, and fragrant too. Long-lived and tough despite its sumptuous exotic appearance. *P. rockii* with its enormous ruffled white flower, which is 12cm across and has a black blotch at the base of each petal, is possibly the closest we have to the original peony introduced from China by Joseph Rock. Pink, red and white, frilled, double hybrids have been developed over hundreds of years by the Chinese, now collectively called *Paeonia* Gansu Group (or Gansu Mudan) because Gansu is the province from which they come.

Height 2m.

Growing conditions Sun or light shade.

Hardiness USDA 5a-9b.

Origin China.

Season of interest May – June.



Nepeta kubanica

Nepeta cataria is an addictive drug for cats. *Nepeta kubanica* does not interest cats, but is addictive for me. It is a giant nepeta, 1.2m-tall, with substantial, solid-looking, 45cm-flower spikes on dark stems. Blue flowers emerge from the darkest of blue buds and almost black calyxes in tight whorls. A show-stopping plant when in full flower. The leaves have the usual good minty nepeta smell, and the substantial seedheads stand well into winter. De Hessenhof, my favourite Dutch nursery, gave me this a few years ago and it is magnificent.

Height 1.2m.

Growing conditions Sun and good drainage.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

Origin Central Europe, Caucasus.

Season of interest June – September.



Lathyrus odoratus 'Matucana'

The sweetest smelling of all sweet peas. 'Matucana' closely resembles the original sweet pea introduced by Cupani in 1699, but it has four rather than two flowers per stem and they're slightly bigger. Both have deep magenta upper petals and purple-blue lower petals. A hardy annual best sown in October and kept under cover without heat until March. They can be sown in February or March but will never get as big or produce as many flowers. In a good year I need a step ladder to pick the flowers from my autumn-sown ones.

Height 2m.

Growing conditions Full sun, not too dry.

Hardiness USDA 2a-11.

Origin Sicily.

Season of interest June – September.

[†]Hardiness ratings given where available.



Tropaeolum majus
'Hermine Grashoff'

The flowers of 'Hermine Grashoff' are so double they cannot set any seed so it has to be propagated from cuttings every year (easy to root from non-flowering sideshoots). The Victorians loved its brilliant colour and vigorous trailing habit, but the seventies fashion for pastel colours nearly put paid to poor Hermine. Fortunately, orange is back and now we have an apricot one as well, 'Margaret Long'. For some reason double nasturtiums tend to bloom above their leaves instead of below so are much showier in the garden.

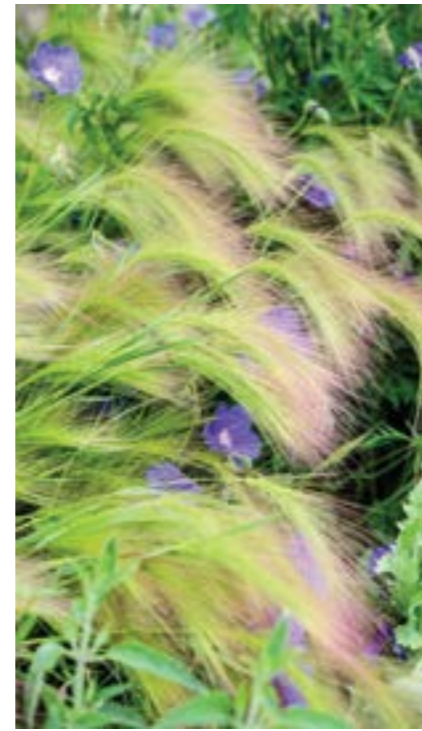
Height 15-30cm.

Growing conditions Sunny, not too rich.

Hardiness USDA 10a-11.

Origin South America.

Season of interest June – September.



Dianthus carthusianorum

Long, straight, slender stems emerge from narrow, grey-green leaves, bearing at their tips a tight cluster of small, bright-pink, single flowers. Fabulous dotted through clump-forming grasses, magenta jewels waving about above the mist of the fine grass leaves. They look like 'pinks' on stilts. The dark seedheads carry on the drama. It was grown by the Carthusian monks who helped it spread across Europe. Its airy habit makes it equally comfortable in modern planting schemes and in wild-flower meadows or cottage gardens.

Height 40-60cm.

Growing conditions Sun, drainage and alkaline soil.

Hardiness USDA 5a-10b.

Origin Europe.

Season of interest June – August.



Persicaria x fennica

The giant, white-fleece flower, known by many as *Persicaria polymorpha*, looks like a huge, creamy white cloud of froth that has just settled on the garden. In bloom from June to October, the fluffy plumes of flower slowly change from white to beige and then eventually to pink. The sturdy, bamboo-like stems gradually bow outwards under the weight of flowers until the plant reaches about 2.5m across. It looks frighteningly vigorous, and it takes up a lot of room, but it is not invasive, increasing in size only slowly.

Height 2m.

Growing conditions Sun or part shade, any reasonable soil.

Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.

Origin Hybrid origin.

Season of interest June – October.

Lysimachia atropurpurea

Pewter-coloured leaves and serpentine stems support the small, deep-purple flowers. As they age the stems twist and turn, forming slight, grotesque parodies of ladies admiring themselves in a mirror. It's said to be perennial, but I have always found it biennial, never surviving its first real flowering. As I like the silvery rosette of leaves the first year and love the self-congratulatory arching flowering stems the second, I am willing to sow it every year. Oddly, for a biennial, it never self seeds. How on earth does it expect to survive?

Height 50-60cm.

Growing conditions Sunny, not too dry.

Hardiness USDA 4a-9b.

Origin Balkans, Turkey.

Season of interest June – August.



Aquilegia vulgaris var. *stellata*
white flowered

An aquilegia that is missing the spurs at the back, which subtly changes the shape of the whole flower. At one time it was called *Aquilegia clematiflora* 'Alba', which is possibly a much more appropriate name as the flowers do resemble small clematis flowers. Easy to grow in sun or shade, it tends to come true if not grown in close proximity with other aquilegias, and will sow itself. This form is an elegant, greenish white, very pure and cool, lovely in the dappled shade of deciduous trees.

Height 45-60cm.

Growing conditions Sun or shade.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

Origin Europe.

Season of interest June.



Hordeum jubatum

Squirrel tail grass, is extraordinary. Like a long, luxurious barley, the flower heads nod at right angles to the stem with a silky shimmer, first glowing pink and then gold. In the evening light they appear to catch fire. Breathtaking. If you cut them back they often re-flower. They're short-lived but will reseed in a sunny dry site. It took me a few years to recognise the seedlings and stop pulling them up thinking they were ordinary grass. Excess seeding can be a nuisance in hotter climates.

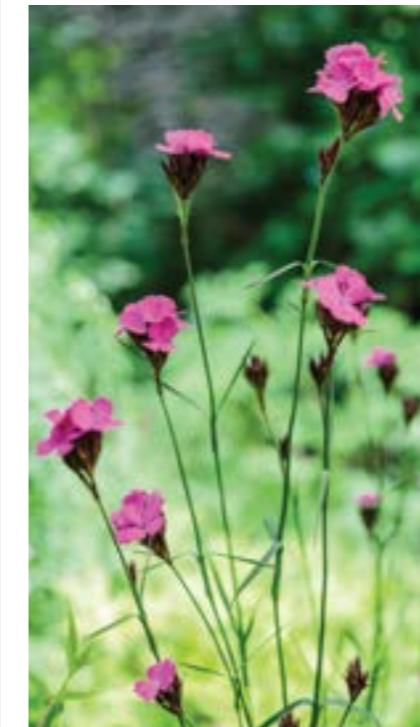
Height 30-50cm.

Growing conditions Sunny, well-drained, not too rich.

Hardiness USDA 5a-10b.

Origin North America.

Season of interest June – July.



Places to visit

Derry shares some of her favourite places to see plants at their best.

Sleightholmedale Lodge, on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors, is a spectacular three-acre garden that thrives despite its seemingly bleak and exposed location. Three generations of the same family have gardened on the side of this steep, wooded valley since 1910. Their delight in plants is evidenced by drifts of both ordinary and extraordinary



Sleightholmedale Lodge.

plants, rambling roses, *Meconopsis*, the rare *Tulipa sprengeri*, and a walk of enormous hollyhocks. Open occasionally for charity. Kirkbymoorside, York, North Yorkshire YO62 7JG. Tel 01751 431942.

Chelsea Physic Garden, which you enter through a small door in a long brick wall, is the most perfect secret garden; an oasis of calm just off one of

the busiest streets in London. Founded by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries in 1673 as a teaching garden for the study of medicinal plants, it retains an unusual seriousness of purpose and serenity. Many tender plants flourish outdoors here. Open April through October Tuesday – Friday and Sunday, 11am-6pm. 66 Royal Hospital Road,

Chelsea, London SW3 4HS. Tel 020 7352 5646, chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk.

Inverewe is probably the most famous garden in Scotland. In 1862 Osgood Mackenzie began to create his garden on a rocky outcrop lashed by salty winds. He planted 100 acres of shelterbelt trees and imported tons of soil, eventually making a spectacular botanic garden



Inverewe.

of 50 acres. You can get lost here among the lush plantings of rhododendrons, azaleas, cardiocrinums, primulas and many subtropical plants, which thrive in this northern valley thanks to the Gulf Stream. Open year round. Poolewe, Achnasheen, Ross-Shire IV22 2LG. Tel 0844 493 2100, nts.org.uk/ Property/Inverewe-Garden-and-Estate