



Echinacea 'Summer Cocktail'

**CELEBRATING LATE COLOUR
SHOW-STOPPING PERENNIALS TO PLANT NOW**

**SEPTEMBER/
OCTOBER
2014 ISSUE**

**WHAT'S
INSIDE**

Celebrating the apple, Supper with Santa, Five minutes with former Blue Peter Gardener Chris Collins, Christmas food, Wall culture, Top 10 tasks for September/October and much more...

Well, that was a summer and a half! Who would have thought it after what was the wettest winter on record. As the seasons change so our priorities do so as well and this is certainly true in our gardens. Gardening isn't always about planting, transplanting and sowing, its a time to stand back and reflect whilst there's greenery to be seen and then to begin planning for the next growing season. What better way than starting with the busy bulb planting season? Bulbs are always fantastic value for money, so get cracking to create displays to impress before they sell out!

If you are thinking planting fruit in the garden this autumn, then our Apple Weekend will be perfect for you to get all the information you may need. Monty Don and the rest of the *Gardeners' World* team have really covered fruit and veggie growing well this season, which is encouraging and even raised beds featured in Alan Titchmarsh's *Love Your Garden* series too. Grow your own continues to grow from strength to strength and I wish you well as you embrace it this season. Happy Gardening to you all!

Chris



CELEBRATE THE APPLE IN ALL ITS GUISES



Buckingham Garden Centre's Apple Weekend - 27th & 28th September, 10am-4pm each day.

Top fruit specialist Gerry Edwards (pictured left), garden writer and Royal Horticultural Society judge, is our special expert guest over Apple Weekend. So, if you are looking for advice or have an apple tree you want to find the variety name for, then Gerry is your man! All we ask is to bring along no more than two apple idents per person and two fruits of each variety and a young shoot with foliage with each of the fruits.

We'll also be staging a fantastic display of apple and crab apple fruits from around the local community, including the Orchard at Stowe Landscape Gardens and the Wolverton Road Allotments in Stony Stratford.

On the practical front, our popular fruit expert Fritz De Zutter (right) will be able to help with your questions, especially growing, training, choosing the right rootstocks and selecting the best varieties.





Young local chef Christopher Wright (pictured left) will be returning with a couple of culinary delights – a sweet and a savoury apple dish.

Chris will be demonstrating these over both days of the weekend.

APPLE WEEKEND TALKS TIMETABLE (SATURDAY 27TH AND SUNDAY 28TH)

Time *	Talk
11:00am	Christopher Wright's Cookery Talk: The pork dish - Roast pork, Bramley apple, pork and apple jus with pork crisps (pictured below)
2.00pm	Medical Detection Dogs Presentation (subject to availability)
2:30pm	Christopher Wright's Cookery Talk: The dessert - Green apple foam, strawberries, apple and mint jelly, apple and lime dice (pictured below)

*All times quoted are subject to change

Pork dish



The dessert

The Buckingham and District Beekeepers Association will be on hand to answer honey and bee-related questions. We are also hoping to run a talk on the great work carried out by the Medical Detection Dogs, based in Great Horwood. We'll have Cheese from Hertfordshire based Wobbly Bottom Farm, home produced Evershed's Cider from Odell in Bedfordfordshire, local apple fruits from New Creation Farm orchards, local wine from Chafor Wine Estate, who are based in Gawcott, Caramba Oils (Padbury), Taste samplings of the Cottage Delight range on the Sunday and much more.

There will be a tombola to help raise money for our chosen Charity, Breast Cancer Care, together with plenty of entertainment for the children – a magician, balloon sculpting and face painting.

**breast
cancer
care**
the breast cancer
support charity

**Medical
Detection Dogs**
(also known as Cancer and Bio-detection Dogs)



WOBBLY BOTTOM FARM

PLANTS OF THE MOMENT

In September the ever popular Michealmas daisies (Asters) are given the thumbs up by top photographer Jason Ingram (pictured right with Japanese anemones also superb at this time of the year). Jason is a photographer for *Gardeners' World Magazine*.



In October Team GB Olympic gold medal rower Alex Gregory (left) champions the ever versatile conifers in all their fantastic guises. Whether it's for hedging or screening, a year-round evergreen garden, adding height to a rockery or purely popping into a pot for evergreen interest by your front door, there's definitely a conifer for you!



Look out for our in-store conifer deals throughout October!

CHRISTMAS ARRIVES IN THE FOOD HALL

We know how many like to be prepared for Christmas well in advance, so it comes as no surprise that we can announce our new range of food, wines, beers, savouries and tasty chocolate and sweet treats in the build up to the Festive Season.

Our ever-developing Food Hall will feature a great selection of Olives (including Kalamata Olives, Mixed Green, Green Olives with Almonds or Piri-Piri or Garlic & Red Peppers) and Oils, together with bottled Apricots perfect with Creamy Cheese and Pears perfect with Strong Cheese.

For a great Christmas gift how about a grinder with either Lemon Pepper or Chilli Rock Salt?



Or for those with a sweet tooth we have various Christmas sweets, Truffles, Caramelised Almonds and Festive Fudges as well as a range of Cassis Liqueur chocolates – yummy! It doesn't stop there as these can be found with a range of All Butter Christmas Trees (yes, you read that right!), Gingerbread assortments and Chocolate Florentines.



To go along with our range of local beers, wines and ciders, we'll be offering a selection of dipping oils to run with the popular selling Vegetable Crackers as well as flavoursome Dipping Crackers – these are all perfect for when you are Christmas entertaining - playing traditional parlour games or watching some television. The savory theme continues with a collection of cheese stars, nibbles, crackers and straws.

A treat for Christmas, whether a deliciously indulgence for yourself

or as a gift, is the range of beautiful jars filled with your favourite fruits together with the addition of a dash of alcohol – these include Tropical Fruits in Light Syrup and Rum, Apricots Fruits in Light Syrup and Amaretto, Peaches in Light Syrup and Brandy and Cherries in Light Syrup & Kirsch, boozy fruit doesn't come much better than this!

To complement our regular range of wines and beers, we are offering four sensational seasonal beers – Snowmans Meltdown Beer (a smooth dark stout), Rockin Robin Beer (a strong ruby beer), Cold Turkey (golden premium beer) and Elf Service Beer (a light hoppy beer).



Our normal choice of Mrs Bridges' products expands to include a wealth of gift ideas including Six Jar Tasting Sets featuring Marmalade & Preserves, and a Condiment Tasting Set. Triple Jar Tasting Sets include a Christmas range of Preserves, Marmalade and Chutney whilst Eight Jar Set includes these plus Strawberry Preserve (with Champagne), Orange Marmalade (with whisky), Cranberry Sauce (with port), Redcurrant Jelly and Celebration Marmalade (with Champagne).

Mrs Bridges also have some food hampers, tasty collections all neatly presented in a fully reusable jute shopping bag. You'll find other delicious treats neatly wrapped in jute this Christmas - it's a definite theme!

As you would expect from Mrs Bridges there's a fine selection of preserves, both individual and neat gift packs, to choose from.

As well as hampers, you'll also see a range of gift trays and luxury gift boxes, featuring popular products, all beautifully presented and they make great pressies too!

Elsewhere, we'll have some themed cookware displays featuring traditional Christmas puddings complete with the bowls and spoons that go with them. So, if you are looking for a one-stop shop of delicious gift ideas do come along and see for yourself. One of our suppliers, Cottage Delight, will be joining us for a Tasting Event on Sunday 28th September (Apple Weekend) and again later in the year, on Sunday 7th December (10am-4pm, both Sundays).



WATERING NEAR WALLS AND FENCES

We have always emphasised to our customers that it is important to apply water to plants which are adjacent to walls, but this was really brought home to me one Saturday, writes Pauline Brown. I wanted to get out to do work in the garden – the usual state of things in the garden – jobs crying out to be done in the vegetable garden, weeds sprouting up in the borders due to the rain and relatively warm conditions and the lawn looking as if one can almost see it growing.



However, it was raining 'cats and dogs' so I completed all the pricking out and potting on which was needed and could be done in the dry, then went in and did some baking whilst listening to the rain. After about three hours it started to abate, so I donned waterproofs and went out, starting by working on the patio sorting out containers, pulling out weeds from between the bricks and then to plant out some begonias in a narrow bed right against the house. The bed is only about one foot (30cm) wide, so the rear is under the eaves of the house, and despite several hours of torrential rain the rear of the bed was dry and the front only just damp. Had the rain been driving against the wall the bed would have been wet, but there was little wind so it had been sheltered from the deluge.



This was a real proof that as gardeners we must be very vigilant to check the water level of plants which are planted against a wall as, without artificial watering, they can so easily fail due to drying out, especially when newly planted. After they have become established they will extend their roots outwards to the damper areas and get moisture and goodness that way, but if there is a near watertight patio adjacent to the planting area they will

need extra care even when they have been planted for some time.

Planting alongside a fence can equally cause a problem with shortage of water, but it is not usually so severe. However, extra care should be exercised until the plants are well established. I fear from the number of failures or unhappy looking plants we hear of which are planted against a wall or fence, that many people do not remember to water their plants enough.

KEEP SOWING YOUR FLANDERS POPPIES

Poppies look set to embrace the wonderful and spirited commemoration of 100th anniversary of the start of WW1. Our poppies at the Garden Centre have provided a strong and emotional reminder, so please bear in mind sowing a few Flanders Poppies in September and October will produce flowers early spring. These are true hardy annuals so autumn sowings usually provide flowers 2-3 weeks earlier than those seeds sown in early spring. Typically the Flanders poppy continues to flower from June through into late summer.



Each Thompson & Morgan Poppy Flanders packet sells at £2.69 and for every packet sold a donation of 10p is made to the Royal British Legion to help them in their work with and support of War Veterans.

FIVE MINUTES WITH CHRIS COLLINS

Former *Blue Peter* Gardener Chris Collins joined us back in July for our special family weekend. BGC's Chris Day caught up with him to pose a few questions!

Where do you live and perhaps describe your garden?

I live in North London; my garden is a long, thin town garden that has lots of bedding so is usually very colourful. The garden also has lots of Roses together with many containers and hanging baskets.

We know this is going to be a difficult one, but if you were stranded on that castaway island, which plant would you like to take with you?

I'd take a Banana plant, my favourite fruit (pictured above with Chris). I would live on fish and Bananas, my two favourites.

And least favourite and why?

I think that would be the Mimosa with the sensitive leaves, everybody thinks it's cute because when you touch it, its leaves contract, but if you come across this plant in an undisturbed forest in Africa it has huge thorns and caused me a lot of pain.

Your favourite gardening activity and why?



I love digging; I can dig for hours and be perfectly content. It keeps me fit and I find it releases my mind from what is quite a complex human world.

Your favourite edible and why?

I love Parsnips - Parsnips in butter mmmmm! No Sunday dinner is complete without them.

What do you love about your job?

Everything, even weeding. Have done since the day I started.

Do you have a gardening tip you would like to share with us?

With bedding plants and container plants the secret is liquid foliar feeding with Seaweed extract (such as Maxicrop). Ideally, apply it once a month, early morning on a still windless day. The stomata on the leaves will absorb all that nutrient and then it will be transported throughout the whole plant. You'll have healthier plants by far!



If you could have one Super Power what would it be?

To put back all the forests we've destroyed in the last 50 years.

Facebook or Twitter?

Twitter - @cmcollins_hort and your welcome to follow me! You can also find out more about Chris on his website

www.chriscollins.org.uk



10 TASKS FOR SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

YOUR planters and baskets will need changing over from summer to winter plantings shortly. Replace the used compost with a multi-purpose compost and add bulbs to pots in layers starting with Tulips at the bottom followed by Daffodils and Narcissus and then finally Crocus and Muscari (Grape Hyacinths) nearest the top. Leave at least 3in (7cm) at the top clear of bulbs enabling you to plant the top of the pot with a selection from winter-flowering Pansies, Violas and Hedera (Ivy) as well as Ajuga, Creeping Jenny, Thymes and ornamental grasses such as Festuca, Stipa and Carex thus providing useful hardy foliage colour. Do water regularly as autumnal winds can dry the compost out.



COMPOST TIMES If you haven't already done so, start your compost going by purchasing a bin or follow *Gardeners' World* presenter Monty Don's example and build a partially enclosed area for a heap. In gardening terms it is vital to replace the goodness in soil after a hefty growing season, and as autumn produces masses of garden waste that when composted down, will put invaluable organic richness back into the ground for next spring. Add a variety of different materials; spent vegetable and bedding plants, herbaceous leftovers, thatch, moss and cuttings from the lawn, annual weeds, hedge clippings, vacuum cleaner contents, kitchen peelings and tea bags are ideal ingredients. However, never add diseased or pest-ridden material to your compost bin. Turn the compost heap contents once a week.

ROUTINE The weather is the key to gardening in September, as it will determine how much work you need to do. Some Septembers can be very mild, like an extension of summer (think 2011 and 2013), while others can be poor with cold and even have frosty nights. Keep a close watch on the daily weather forecast and protect tender plants if frost threatens. This can be done by putting cloches or horticultural fleece over tender vegetables, harvesting others, bringing in half-hardy and tender perennials and giving temporary cover to any established but vulnerable plants left in the ground. Container grown plants should be given first priority, as their roots are more vulnerable than those grown in the open soil. Also keep a close eye on any newly germinated seedlings... and of course for slugs. Any hardy annuals that were not sown last month should go in now, or they will be unlikely to make large enough plants to withstand a hard winter.

BOX blight continues to take its toll. Here are a few suggestions for replacement plants where Dwarf Box has sadly succumbed.

Japanese Holly *Ilex crenata* Dark Green - a small leaved thorn free Holly that can be clipped in the same way as Box. Lavender, Rosemary and Hyssop can also be used as long as they are clipped properly.

The two evergreen honeysuckles, the golden form *Lonicera nitida* 'Twiggy' and dark green *Lonicera nitida* 'Elegant' are other possibilities. Their tiny leaves form on wiry and robust stems. You can keep



them compact and low at 45-60cm (18-24 inches) but it is fast growing so would need to be trimmed two or three times in the growing season (March-September) to keep it neat and tidy. However, there is another good contender which might be worth considering. When HRH Princes Charles lost dwarf box to blight in his walled garden at Highgrove he replaced it with *Teucrium x lucidrys*, the so called Hedge Germander. It has attractive small deep glossy leaves and produces sprays of pink-purple flowers through the summer. If kept regularly clipped this makes a marvellous replacement to traditional Buxus. This appears as a new line in our 2014/15 catalogue.



OCTOBER is the last chance for planting out Japanese onion sets. These are hardy, short-daylight onions so will bulb up about a month earlier next year than the normal onions but they don't store as well, so go for a smaller quantity rather than larger. Elsewhere on the veggie plot, keeping weeds in check with the established crops is a must.

FROST protect vulnerable tender plants such as Cannas, Fuchsias, Pelargoniums, Bananas and Dahlias (pictured above blackened by early frosts) as we go into autumn. We've already had some cold nights, so depending on what the plant is and how delicate, do make sure they can be suitably protected/fleeced or returned into warmer climes in the house or frost-free greenhouse or conservatory. If you are simply bringing indoors, do watch for slugs and snails, earwigs and vine weevils – many of which can cause considerable problems once inside. Both Cannas and Dahlias will eventually be placed in store, so these plants must be gradually allowed to dry out so the roots/tubers can be stored successfully. Green and Yellow Sulphur are often recommended as good preventative fungicide treatments for overwintering roots and tubers.

LAWNS Any lawns that were sown last month or earlier this month can be expected to germinate and start showing green after around 10 to 14 days, provided that the ground has been kept moist. Any stones that appear should be removed without delay. Once this is done and the new grass has grown to about 2-3cm (1 inch) high, it can be given a light rolling to settle the surface so that grass seedlings are bedded-in. Do not do any heavy rolling, especially when the soil is wet, as this will cause compaction. Most of the weeds appearing at this time of year will be annuals and are usually killed after a few mowings.

FRUIT The soft fruit season is drawing to a close now. Keep picking the remaining fruits as they become ready. If the weather is changeable, try to gather them when it's dry. Wet fruits are always more likely to attract diseases. Tackle the likes of Blight (Potato and Tomato), Rusts on Blackcurrant and Gooseberry and Apple Canker with Vitax Bordeaux Mixture. Autumn Raspberries and perpetual Strawberries should now be in fruiting in abundance. They can be kept going longer by covering the Strawberries with cloches or tunnels, and Raspberries with polythene sheeting at night, and during cold or wet days. Any remaining summer fruiting Raspberries, Blackberries or hybrid cane fruits that have finished fruiting, but still haven't been pruned and trained, should be pruned now without delay. Apples, Pears, Plums and Figs will need picking frequently and regularly so that they are not spoiled by the cooling weather. The greatest danger for tree fruits is autumn



gales that can easily knock fruit to the ground, thus bruising them and rendering them unsuitable for storage, so pick as many as you can if a gale is forecast.

QUICK FIXES Continue spraying roses against Mildew, Rust and Blackspot. Prune rambling roses and weeping standards taking them back by around one-third, this may promote a final flush of blooms on repeat-flowering varieties. Continue deadheading. Weed shrubs and perennial beds and spot treat pernicky perennials weeds with Roundup Weedkiller Gel. Most weed killers work best in reasonable temperatures when the plants are still in good active growth.

BIRDS The cooler days means birds will be out and about foraging those valuable autumn crops of berries, nuts and fruits, so a top up from us is welcome. There's plenty of selection available, however we have a couple of new products worth noting. We are now selling larger, better-value sacks of Peanuts (12.75kg) at £24.99. As the new season approaches we are also stocking 100% Wheat Free All Seasons Blend of Wildlife Food from The Ernest Charles Company in two different sizes 2kg, £5.99 and the larger 12.55kg bag at £19.99. The mix is a nutritious treat and contains a blend of energy-rich ingredients, including 70% whole striped, black sunflower seeds and hearts, sunflower hearts, canary seed and crushed maize. It is perfect for feeding in seed feeders, on bird tables and on the ground. It attracts blue tit, coal tit, great tit, greenfinch and, siskin.

MAKE A DATE WITH SANTA THIS DECEMBER



BOOK NOW! Supper with Santa and his Little Elf Helpers Mon- Fri (15th-19th December) at 4:00pm.

New to the Garden Centre this December a very special event throughout the third week of December - Supper with Santa and his Little Elf Helpers.

Our Supper with Santa events offer each child a Festive Food Box as part of the event. Please let us

know of any dietary requirements at time of booking.

The experience includes seasonal storytelling for all the girls and boys with the Christmas Fairy. A little later Santa then makes his entrance and takes his seat on his grand throne with an opportunity for all the children to speak to him as each of the boys and girls receive a special gift.

Early booking is advisable to avoid disappointment. Please note, a maximum of 2 adults per child attending is allowed. We have space for 12 children per session. If you would like a photograph with Santa we can arrange this for £2 per photo. Please provide an e-mail address and we can send it over to you.

The cost is £9.99 per child and includes a special gift. To book, please contact our Customer Service Desk for a booking form.

Time *	Activity
4:00pm	Meet and Greet with our Cheeky Elf Helpers
4:30pm	Storytelling with the Christmas Fairy
4:45pm	Santa arrives
5:25pm	Time to wave Santa goodbye

"SCATTER LOOK" VERSUS "BAKE OFF" METHOD

The days may well be drawing in, but it's never too early to think about spring bulbs, writes Chris Day.



Thinking about it bulb planting should carry a health warning you know. I remember in my college days planting huge bags of narcissi in the college grounds and we were given strict instructions by the tutor to toss the bulbs over our shoulder. That's right, great big handfuls thrown at force to create a natural drift effect. Basically where they eventually fell would be where they were planted using a bulb planter tool. Well, that's all well and good if you are doing this by yourself, however get a dozen eager students and it can quickly turn into bedlam! Still, apart from bruising to the head, knee and shoulder blade I survived. But return to the area the following spring and wow, its worth all the effort and the plasters.

Naturalising is a process to replicate the natural drifts that

would or should happen if Mother Nature had had her hand in it.

So, when it comes to creating wonderful displays in pots and hanging baskets do we resort to the same rule? Well, no. The method we employ is actually more akin to the Great British Bake Off than pure horticulture. Confused? I'll explain.

If you plant a few Tulips or Crocus in a pot they look attractive however the display is relatively short lived, but if you employ the layering method (think Victoria Sponge with multi layers of jam and butter cream) and plant bulbs in layers starting with the later to flower bulbs first (at the bottom) and then moving through the second, third or even fourth layer until you reach a few inches from the top of the pot. Do this and you'll find the layered display will bloom from February onwards starting with Crocus, Iris reticulata, early February Gold, Muscari (Grape Hyacinths) King Alfred daffodils and finally add some large-flowered Tulips or a few Hyacinths.

From practical experience not only does the process of layering bulbs provide heaps more colour, fragrance and interest, it also greatly extends the display time from a few weeks to 2-3 months!



So, regimented layers of bulbs versus randomly planted bulbs, both poles apart in method yet both providing a simple solution to ensuring you get the best from the bulbs, the location and the garden location. I think we know which of the two methods Mary Berry would prefer!

Look out for plenty of special in-store offers on Spring Bulbs this autumn, including Classic Combination Packs, £4.99 each or any 3 for £12. These include Tulips and a rather attractive Narcissi and Grape Hyacinths combo. On our larger XL packs, you can Mix and Match the likes of Anemones, Alliums, Daffodils and Tulips. £5.99 per pack or any 3 for £15. All offers are subject to availability.

WHAT'S ON

Don't miss our final Gardening Talk of the season on Wednesday 8th October, 4:30pm in the Talks Room in the Restaurant. BGC's Chris Day looks at the tasks and routines of Putting Your Garden To Bed. The Talk runs for approximately 45 minutes with time for questions. To book please go to the Customer Service Desk if you are visiting us or by telephone on 01280 822133. Entry is FREE to Garden Centre Discount Card Holders, £3 for non-members, but there may be seats available on the day – please ask.

Come and join us in our Restaurant to help celebrate and fundraise for this year's Wear It Pink Day on Friday 24th October.



Looking at the best gardens to visit in 2015.....

We've had some great garden visits through 2014 – RHS Wisley, Highgrove, Steane Park and Frogmore & The Savill Gardens amongst others. We are preparing our programme for 2015 and we need to know where YOU would like to visit? Suggestions so far include returning to Beth Chatto's Garden in Essex (spring), a visit to Oxford Botanic Gardens, to Barnsdale in Rutland as well as venturing across to Kew Botanic Gardens and Hidcote Manor. For visits to be viable we need around 28 interested parties so usually we set up a wish-list which we will do again towards the end of the year once all the suggestions have come through. Please let us know by sending your visit ideas over to chris@hedging.co.uk and we'll see what garden suggestions we receive.

POTATO CHALLENGE WINNERS REVEALED

Nine schools took part in Buckingham Garden Centre's Potato Challenge this year, despite being one of the most challenging growing seasons in years.

The heaviest crop weighed in at a staggering 7.55kg and was grown by pupils (years 4, 5 and 6) at the Grendon Underwood Combined School. Coming in at a very respectable second place was Great Horwood Church of England Combined School at 4.76kg.

Chris Day, the Garden Centre's Publicity Manager said: "Every year local schools really get behind our Potato Challenge and although the number of entries was slightly down, the weights were good and the enthusiasm of the teachers and pupils remained wonderfully strong. Best of all, the children were able to understand the process of growing and using the potatoes in the kitchen with the new potatoes reportedly being enjoyed by all the schools."

The two prize winners received Buckingham Garden Centre Vouchers to spend on their school garden projects.



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