

JANUARY 2024

TAKE ME
I'M FREE

velvet*

The
**POSITIVE
THINKING**
Issue

HOMES | FOOD | CULTURE | PEOPLE | WELLBEING | STYLE

Perfect Planting

Midwinter in the garden is anything but bleak. Frosted seedheads glisten in the wintry sunshine, birds feast on berries – and the magic of spring flowers bursting into life brings genuine joy. Newmarket garden designer Melanie Taylor selects her top five flowering plants to herald spring

WINTER JASMINE

JASMINUM NUDIFLORUM AGM

An arching, medium-sized, deciduous shrub, the winter jasmine's jubilant flowers appear on bare, bright green stems from January to March. Originally native to China, it is said to symbolise good fortune. This fully hardy, scrambling climber will reach an eventual height and spread of 2.5m x 2.5m, but regular pruning will keep it in check.

Preferring full sun but tolerant of partial shade, it suits any type of soil and PH. Despite not being fragrant like other jasmines, its bright yellow flowers are a magnet for early pollinators. Tried and tested, it has an RHS Award of Garden Merit (AGM) and so will provide reliable results in your garden.



ARROWWOOD

VIBURNUM X BODNANTENSE 'DAWN' AGM

Another prestigious RHS AGM holder, the *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn' is a winter favourite with many gardeners. A tremendous deciduous shrub for year-round interest, its flowers burst forth onto bare stems in November, and last until March before forming summer purple berries. Swathes of yellow and orange leaves give it one last autumnal hurrah.

Happy in full sun or partial shade, plant it close to pathways and entrances where the honey-like scent of its candy-pink clustered flowers can be fully appreciated. It grows to a height of 3m x 2m and again the berries must not be eaten.



PRIMROSE

PRIMULA VULGARIS 'RASPBERRY ROSE'

'Raspberry Rose' is a hardy primrose whose striking magenta flowers and golden centres rise from leafy rosettes from January to March. It looks lovely alongside daffodils and will thrive if planted in a sheltered position in partial shade. It flowers earlier than the wild yellow version and is popular with pollinators and provides food for the caterpillars of many species of moths. To propagate, divide clumps in late spring or early summer after flowering.

This fully hardy perennial dies back below ground in autumn with new growth appearing again in spring. Please note primula vulgaris can be toxic to dogs and cats if ingested.

LENTEN ROSE

HELLEBORUS X HYBRIDUS 'HARVINGTON DOUBLE PINK SPECKLED'

Hellebores bring luminosity and colour to even the shadiest corners of your garden. The 'Harvington double pink speckled' is renowned for its beautiful double pink blooms which are peppered with tiny maroon speckles. Preferring heavy, neutral-to-alkaline soil, it grows up to 60cm high, flowering from February to April. Hellebores work well in pots or in shady borders alongside ferns and other woodland plants. Please note hellebores are harmful to humans and pets if eaten and can irritate the skin, so wear gloves when handling them.

To best see the nodding flowers as they emerge, cut old leaves down to the ground in January and February. This also helps prevent the spread of hellebore blackspot. It's frost-hardy, but might need some additional winter protection.



FLOWERING QUINCE

CHAENOMELES X SUPERBA 'PINK LADY' AGM

This early-flowering ornamental quince really does live up to its name, producing superb early spring colour from March to May. Equally happy in sun or partial shade, it's ideal for training against fences and walls and reaches a height and spread of 1.5m x 2m.

A woody, deciduous shrub, its dainty bubblegum-pink flowers will brighten any border. Another AGM holder, it's loved by pollinators and small garden birds who nest in its maze of spiky branches.

So, if you're wanting wildlife-friendly, early spring colour for your outdoor space, these choices, when planted alongside spring-flowering bulbs, will delight year after year.

Melanie is the founder of Hazelwood Plantscapes. Reach out to her via email: melanie.taylor@hazelwoodplantscapes.co.uk or use the contact form on her website: hazelwoodplantscapes.co.uk