



IRIS 'JANE PHILLIPS'

I use 'Jane Phillips' a lot. Its large and scented, pale-blue flowers appear profusely in early summer, making it perfect for cutting. To maintain your display, make sure that the rhizomes are exposed to the sun and look to divide your clumps every three to four years after flowering. Deservedly popular, this tall-bearded cultivar grows to around one metre in height, making it perfect for use as an accent of early colour in a border or gravelled area. Make sure it doesn't get any competition or shade in high summer. AGM.

Height 1m.

Origin Eastern Mediterranean and southern Europe.

Conditions Free-draining soil; full sun.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 3a-10b.

Season of interest Late spring and early summer.

EREMURUS HIMALAICUS

Originating from areas with semi desert-like conditions, foxtail lilies are, to say the least, pretty tough. The fleshy rooted perennials thrive in free-draining, sun-baked positions, and in early summer their stately, leafless white stems tower above other plants in a majestic fashion. They dislike disturbance and competition, and shade from other plants, so to prevent accidentally lifting their shallow, octopus-like root systems, while they're dormant, which can be very frustrating, I mulch them with gravel to highlight their position in a border.

Height 2m.

Origin Afghanistan, northwestern Himalayas.

Conditions Free-draining soil; full sun.

Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

Season of interest May and June.



GERANIUM PHAEUM 'ALBUM'

I started to use this geranium mainly to capitalise on its robust nature and vigour (especially its reliable repeat flowering), but I was soon won over by its grace and elegance. With pendent, pure-white flowers that hang above lime-green foliage in early summer and beyond, it illuminates dark, shady areas under trees and dusky, north-facing positions. As the flowers appear early in the season, position near the back of the border, so that, as the blooms fade, other plants can then be grown in front, to disguise the geranium as it dies down.

Height 1.5m.

Origin Southern and central Europe.

Conditions Moist, well-drained soil; partial shade.

Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 5a-7b.

Season of interest Flowering from May until August.



PLACES TO VISIT

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best both in Europe and the UK

Not far from Lausanne in the Swiss canton of Vaud, the impressive **Château de Vullierens** has been owned by the same family for more than 700 years. In late spring one of the highlights of the château's 100 or so acres is the jardin d'Iris, which is home to a stunning collection of almost 50,000 irises, that features more than 400 different species and

cultivars, including dwarf irises, tall bearded irises and Siberian irises, offering colour from late April to July. Created in the 1950s by the current owner's mother, Doreen Bovet, the garden is divided into seven themed areas and also features collections of rhododendrons, peonies, roses and daylilies. Les Jardins du Château de

Vullierens. CH-1115 Vullieren, Switzerland. Tel +41 (0)79 274 79 64, chateauvullierens.ch/en

Another European plant collection worth visiting in May is the extensive selection of epimediums at **Tuingoed Foltz** in the Netherlands. Owners Bob Foltz and Andries Bierling specialise in these and other unusual woodland plants, and hold

the Dutch equivalent of National Collections of both *Salvia* and *Echinacea* and other genus. Hereweg 346, 9651 AT Meeden, the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0)598 635 000, tuingoedfoltz.nl

At this time of year one of the real treats at **Great Dixter** in East Sussex is the Front Meadow, the two grassed areas that greet visitors when

