

The Seasonal Gardener

Creative Planting Combinations



PHAIDON

Anna Pavord



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The Lenten rose, *Helleborus x hybridus*, is a particularly useful plant because although not strictly evergreen, it never leaves a bare patch. The flower buds push through in early winter, and by the time they begin to fade, new leaves have grown up round them – lasting, glossily splendid, until the cycle begins all over again the following winter. Any kind of *H. x hybridus* is worth having, either the pale ones, with flowers freckled in green, or the deep purple, almost black ones, sinister enough for a witch’s brew. The flowers droop on their

stems like languid aristocrats. To admire the full complexity of the markings, you must go down on your knees, entirely appropriate in front of this plant. This hellebore bewitching and mesmerizing enough to assume the key position in any plant group. Companions such as snowdrops and scillas will not get in the way of its extraordinary flowers. The chalk white snowdrop will look most dramatic planted between almost black hellebores. Blue scillas will complement white or pale pink hellebores.

Helleborus x hybridus

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Scilla siberica

Galanthus elwesii

① *Helleborus x hybridus* (Lenten rose)

HEIGHT: 45 cm (18 in)

SPREAD: 45 cm (18 in)

FLOWERING TIME: Late winter to early spring

STAR QUALITIES: Long-lasting flowers in a wide range of colours, from white to deepest slate purple, the pale ones often freckled and speckled inside with darker colours. Handsome, hand-shaped, evergreen leaves.

ALTERNATIVES: There are more than 250 different kinds of *H. x hybridus*, as well as other related hellebores such as ‘Anna’s Red’, which has handsome marbled leaves. Buy seedling varieties in flower, when you can choose those with the best markings.

② *Scilla siberica* (Iranian squill)

This species has flowers that are a much purer blue than *S. bifolia*. The variety *S. ‘Spring Beauty’* is magnificent, growing 10–15 cm (4–6 in) tall. Plant the bulbs 5–8 cm (2–3 in) deep and about 8–10 cm (3–4 in) apart. Each autumn give them a top dressing of sifted leaf mould. Where happy, they will self-seed liberally.

③ *Galanthus elwesii* (Snowdrop)

Eagerly watched for in the chilly days of mid-winter, the snowdrop is an accommodating flower. You can plant them as bulbs in late summer, but if you plant them ‘in the green’, with their leaves, just after they have flowered, they settle with little complaint. Single snowdrops, such as broad, grey-leaved *G. elwesii*, with pure white flowers swinging from elegant pedicels, are much prettier things than the bulbous doubles. The doubles look uncomfortable, their petals pulled in too tight at the top. You can almost hear them gasping.



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Irises, lupins and alliums intermingle in an early summer border at Gravetye Manor garden in Sussex, UK

Fuchsias are wonderfully long-flowering shrubs, excellent players in a late summer garden. Some varieties are wildly theatrical, pirouetting with many-skirted flowers in bright pinks and purples. *F. magellanica* is a species native to Chile and Argentina and has the loose grace typical of plants left as nature intended. Lax branches arch out from the base, bearing thin flowers of deep red that swing and sway on the stems. They will last until the first frosts. The tall-growing salvia with its

rich, deep blue flowers provides a fine contrast. Some plants can push up between the thin branches of the fuchsia, others reach up behind. The flowering spikes stand strongly upright, tapering gracefully to the tip. It is not absolutely hardy, but you can take cuttings as a precaution. The magenta gladiolus will flower in early summer and set the tone for the fuchsia, which follows later. All these plants will do best in a sunny, open situation.

Fuchsia magellanica

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Salvia 'Indigo Spires'

Gladiolus communis subsp. *byzantinus*

① *Fuchsia magellanica*

HEIGHT: 2–3 m (6–10 ft)

SPREAD: 2–3 m (6–10 ft)

FLOWERING TIME: High summer to autumn

STAR QUALITIES: Not as immediately showy as some garden varieties, but easier to use in a mixed planting. Exceptionally long period in flower. Elegant, relaxed growth habit. Blooms of rich, deep red.

ALTERNATIVES: *F.* 'Alice Hoffman' has bronze foliage and semi-double flowers in pink and white; 'Dollar Prinzessin' is upright in growth, with double flowers in cerise and purple; 'Mrs Lovell Swisher', with red and white flowers, is more tender, but very vigorous and free-flowering.

② *Salvia* 'Indigo Spires'

This handsome hybrid between *Salvia farinacea* and *S. longispicata* arose in the Huntington Botanical Gardens in California. In cooler climates it is not reliably hardy, but it can be kept going if you take cuttings in late summer. It grows to about 1.5 m (5 ft), the dark, purplish-blue flowers borne on stems suffused with the same dark colouring. Growth is vigorous, and the plants make imposingly leafy clumps.

③ *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus*

This wild gladiolus, a native of Spain and northwest Africa, is a world away from the top-heavy gladioli of the show bench. It grows like a herbaceous plant, self-supporting and strongly upright in growth. It is lovely in bud, when the whole flowerhead turns over in an elegant curve. Most gladioli produce their flowers on one side of the spike only; this one has flowers that face sideways as well as forward. There may be up to twenty of them on a spike, appearing from early summer onwards.

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Few good perennials are as easy going as Japanese anemones. They are stayers, too: in old, abandoned gardens where brambles and couch grass have smothered all other plants, you still see them flowering profusely (often alongside old fashioned double red peonies), repelling all boarders, defending their territory. The foliage, tough vine-like leaves of a dull matt green, is quite late to appear, but from late summer onwards there is an astonishing succession of flowers, charmingly simple

in outline, the petals gathered round a central, greenish knob. The cosmos will probably beat the anemones into flower (it depends on when they were planted out and how warm the summer has been). If sowing seed does not appeal, buy plug plants and grow them on. 'Rubenza' is a rich, dark red, wonderful to pick and incredibly generous with its flowers. The tall coppery spires of the eremurus will come before the anemone and the cosmos, an eye-catching prelude to the late summer display.

Anemone x hybrida
'Honorine Jobert'

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Eremurus x isabellinus 'Cleopatra'
Cosmos bipinnatus 'Rubenza'

① *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' (Japanese anemone)

HEIGHT: 1.2–1.5 m (4–5 ft)

SPREAD: 45 cm (18 in)

FLOWERING TIME: Late summer to mid-autumn

STAR QUALITIES: Strong stems do not need staking. Pure white flowers carried over a long season.

ALTERNATIVES: *A.* 'Geante des Blanches' has semi-double flowers, washed over with green on the reverse; 'Konigin Charlotte' has large, semi-double, pink flowers; *A. hupehensis* 'Hadspen Abundance' is shorter (90 cm / 3 ft) and has single flowers of dark pink.

② *Eremurus x isabellinus* 'Cleopatra' (Foxtail lily)

The fleshy roots of this magnificent plant radiate out from the crown like the spokes of a wheel. They need to be planted carefully in well-drained ground. Lax clumps of strap-shaped leaves die away in early summer as the huge flowering stems are produced. The spires are thickly set with hundreds of small, star-shaped flowers that open from the bottom of the spike upwards to make eye-catching columns. 'Cleopatra' is a beautiful coppery-orange, but there are white, pink, yellow and apricot forms as well.

③ *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Rubenza'

The cosmos take time to build up to full flowering strength, so are often at their best in an early autumn garden. 'Rubenza' stops at about 60 cm (2 ft), so should not need staking. If you want something taller in that same deep, rich red, try 'Dazzler' (90 cm / 3 ft); either will be a good match for the anemone. Avoid plain white varieties, which will not provide enough of a contrast. Annual cosmos plants have become great favourites because they are so profligate with their flowers – superb for cutting. There is a charming type called 'Double Click Cranberries', with petals rolled round like ice cream cones.

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Flowering in this group starts with a sprinkle of sweet-smelling white blooms on the variegated myrtle (*Luma*), which can be clipped to make a handsome cone against which the nerines and the verbena will shine. The variegation is gentle, the tiny leaves of greyish-green irregularly edged with cream. This shrub is a charming, slow-growing delight, though best suited to a reasonably sheltered site. A harsh frost may burn some of the foliage, but it quickly repairs itself when the weather warms up. The verbena has scarcely any foliage and thinks only of flowering, producing little bunches of them, scattered

at the ends of tall, immensely thin branching stems. Although it is sometimes too enthusiastic in its self-seeding, you rarely tire of it because it is so delicate. The effect is like looking through a bead curtain at whatever lies beyond. The nerine will be the last plant to come into flower in this group and, like the luma, is not fully hardy (this species comes from South Africa). Plant them shallowly, so that the noses of the bulbs are just above ground. Like colchicums, they flower without their leaves. The strappy foliage follows later and does not die down until the following summer.

Luma apiculata 'Glanleam Gold'+

Nerine bowdenii

Verbena bonariensis

① *Luma apiculata* 'Glanleam Gold'

HEIGHT: 3 m (10 ft)

SPREAD: 3 m (10 ft)

FLOWERING TIME: Summer to early autumn

STAR QUALITIES: Charming evergreen foliage, neatly and unaggressively variegated. A slow-growing shrub that can be left to grow freely or is easily clipped to a topiary shape. Small white flowers with showy powder puffs of stamens at their centres.

ALTERNATIVES: The common myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) is similar, but the leaves are plain dark green, and the white flowers start slightly later in the summer.

② *Nerine bowdenii*

On stems about 45 cm (18 in) tall, the nerine produces rounded heads of pink trumpet flowers, each like a small lily. They are late coming into flower, a rather luscious and extravagant treat when so many other garden plants are finishing. A good summer baking encourages plenty of flowers through autumn. In cold areas, mulch clumps when they have finished flowering to give extra protection against frost. They make excellent cut flowers, if you can spare them from the garden.

③ *Verbena bonariensis*

Most perennials fuss about too long with their leaves before they even think of flowering, but *V. bonariensis* gets straight on with the job. Most of its leaves are clustered in a smallish basal rosette. From this rises the tall, thin branching stem with a constant succession of little purple flowers, pushing out from clumps at the ends of the stems. They are devoted self-seeders.

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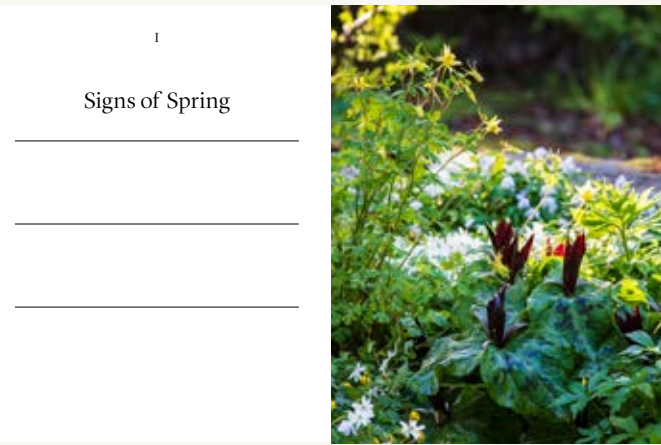


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A glorious jostle of plants – foxgloves, verbascum and roses – line a stone-flagged path through the garden at Gravetye Manor, Sussex, UK



Signs of Spring

Like many of the seedling plants, this is a good year to start. The plants are small and easy to handle, and they will grow well in a pot or in a garden bed. The plants are also very hardy and will survive the winter months.

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Spring should be great, and the plants are also very hardy and will survive the winter months. The plants are also very hardy and will survive the winter months.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

First published in 2004, this classic book by acclaimed writer, Anna Pavord, is about ways of grouping plants in a garden to create a year-long display. Now revised and updated for a new readership, Pavord selects 60 star plants and their perfect partners: shrubs, herbaceous perennials, bulbs and annuals that no garden should be without. Ranging from hydrangeas and spurge to tulips and snowdrops, each star plant is presented with two partners, offering gardeners creative plant combinations and solving, season by season, what to plant with what for best effect.

- Features over 150 plants, including both popular garden favourites and lesser known selections
- An inspirational resource and essential reference on the best plants and what to plant them with for all gardeners and plant lovers
- Diverse range of plants, from shrubs and perennials to bulbs and annuals, all featured with stunning photography
- Easy-to-use, with seasonal combinations, for year-round impact and generous display in the garden
- Beautifully written by one of today's most highly regarded garden writers – Pavord is the author of over 10 books on plants and gardening, and her work has been published in numerous magazines, newspapers and journals

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Pavord is a prolific writer on gardens and planting, and her books include her bestselling *The Tulip* and *The Naming of Names*. Her gardening column in the Independent newspaper ran for 30 years from the paper's launch in 1986 until the last print edition. Today she writes for the *Sunday Times* and is an Associate Editor of *Gardens Illustrated* magazine. Pavord was awarded the Gold Veitch medal from the Royal Horticultural Society in 2001. She lives in West Dorset, where she gardens on a steep sunny slope among poppies, arisaemas and magnolias.

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