

Ann-Marie Powell Garden Designer

Ann-Marie is an award-winning garden designer, television presenter, journalist and author. She divides her time between designing innovative gardens for private clients, companies and charities, and enthusing people about gardening. We talked to her about her passion for colour and what she thinks about when starting to choose which flowers to grow.

Where do you get your inspiration?
Head gardeners, fashion, nature, Instagram, the Chiltern seeds website!

What colours are you focussing on for 2025?
Plums, burgundy, maroons, faded pinks, all livened up with the dirtier shades of gold and burnt umber. My favourite colour combination is orange and purple. No question!

Are you influenced by trends in colour or do you just go with what you like?
Never trends. In my own garden I always go with my heart and choose what jumps off the page (or screen!) and gets me excited! I confess, with clients' gardens, I'm much more considered and think about what will work well with their existing garden's tones.

Do you have favourite flowers you grow every year?
I couldn't be without *Lathyrus 'Matucana'* (amongst a host of other sweet pea varieties!) *Daucus carota 'Dara'*, *Tithonia 'Torch'*, *Tagetes 'Burning Embers'*, *Cobaea scandens*, the *Zinnia, 'Queen' Series* and *Papaver 'Lauren's Grape'*. To be absolutely transparent, if we're talking favourites, I could go on, and on, and on...

Suggestions of flowers that look good planted in large groups?
I can't get over a marigold field I saw last year, absolutely breathtaking. *Tagetes* not only look fantastic in a group, but they're garden powerhouses – attracting pollinators, deterring aphids, suppressing weeds, and helping soil health too. Brilliant plants.



Papaver somniferum, 'Lauren's Grape' 954F
Crisp, velvety, deep plum-purple petals and attractive grey-blue-green foliage. 90cm HA £2.25



Tagetes patula, 'Burning Embers' 1222K
Single blooms of deep orange with each petal delicately outlined in a paler orange. 45cm HHA £2.50



Cobaea scandens 372
A beautiful and vigorous climber from Mexico with large flowers. 600cm HHA/HHP(Cl) £2.85



Tithonia rotundifolia, 'Torch' 1250
A cultivated form of the Mexican Sunflower, producing single, Dahlia-like, orange-scarlet flowers freely all summer. 120cm HHA £2.25



Lathyrus odoratus, 'Matucana' 764F
Maroon standard, deep mauve wings. 240cm HA(Cl) £2.45



Daucus carota, 'Dara' 437Y
Dark flowered wild carrot with flowers in an attractive mix from white and pink to dark purple. 120cm HB £2.25

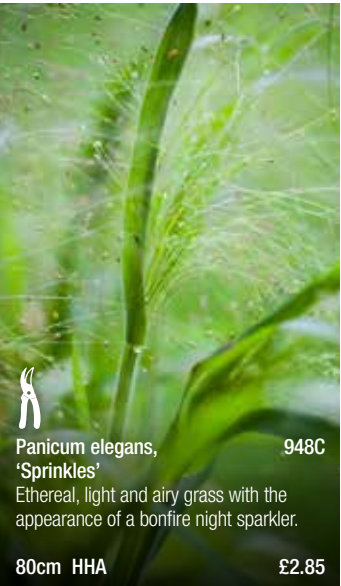


Salvia farinacea, 'Evolution' 1136L
Very fine variety with numerous spikes of a unique deep violet flower colour over a very long period. 45cm HHA £3.45



Stipa tenuissima, 'Pony Tails' 1202E
Graceful and beautiful ornamental grass - bright green leaves with a profusion of long, narrow, softly feathery plumes. 60cm HP £2.45

How do you choose which colours each year?
I make a shopping list of plants I'm drawn to and then mix and match using screenshots, looking not just at colour, but complementary or contrasting form and texture too. This year I'm beyond excited about *Salvia 'Evolution'* with its dramatic purple spires, and thought the feathery waves of *Stipa 'Pony Tails'* would make the perfect backdrop, offering secret hideaways for beneficial insects too. I couldn't resist adding *Rudbeckia 'Cherry Brandy'* into the mix with its warm-red, voluptuous horizontal blooms – a gorgeous textural contrast that both complements the colour scheme and benefits pollinators too.



Panicum elegans, 'Sprinkles' 948C
Ethereal, light and airy grass with the appearance of a bonfire night sparkler. 80cm HHA £2.85



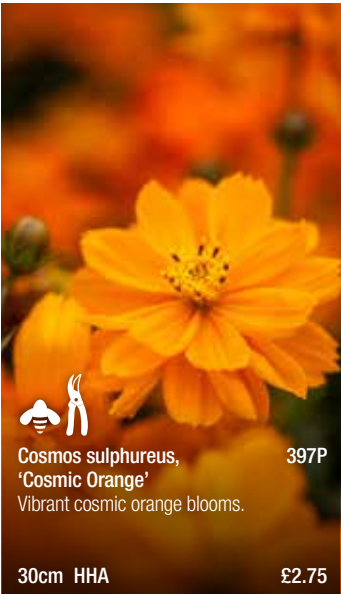
Ratibida columnifera f. pulcherrima, 'Red Midget' 1085M
Delightful prairie coneflower. Very easy to grow with plentiful yellow-tipped, red-brown flowers. 45cm HA/HP £2.25

Top picks for easy to grow bright colours from seed?
Cosmos practically grow themselves! I adore their feathery foliage which looks great both in the garden and in vases. I grow *'Fandango'*, *'Rubenza'*, *'Xsenia'* and *'Cosmic Orange'* every year. I'm also delighted to have taken a chance on *Papaver rupifragum 'Orange Feathers'* – sown direct last year, it flowered non-stop all summer, is perennial, and its leaves are evergreen too. I'm looking at them creeping across my decks border as I type!



Rudbeckia hirta, 'Cherry Brandy' 1130G
With flowers of the deepest crimson, this lovely variety is very easy and a wonderful, long lasting cut flower. 60cm HA/HHP £3.65

Do you use a combination of annuals and perennials?
A mixture of both, and happily sometimes plants I think of as annual become perennial in my garden (here's looking at you *Ratibida 'Red Midget'*) or by self-seeding (hurray for *Panicum 'Sprinkles'*).



Cosmos sulphureus, 'Cosmic Orange' 397P
Vibrant cosmic orange blooms. 30cm HHA £2.75



Cosmos bipinnatus, 'Rubenza' 399Q
Exceptionally coloured, early flowering blooms of dark, rich ruby red, fading to antique-rose as they age. 80cm HHA £2.25





Papaver rupifragum, 'Orange Feathers'

Rarely seen double-flowered Spanish poppy variety with multi-petalled, brilliant orange flowers all summer long. **60cm HP**

951H

£2.45





Cosmos bipinnatus, 'Xsenia' 399W

A striking Cosmos; rosy-pink which is overlaid with an orangey, shimmering glow. **60cm HHA**

£2.95





Cosmos bipinnatus, 'Fandango' 401K

Fleuroselect winning variety with lovely double flowers of the deepest, most vibrant dark red-pink with wispy central petals. **75cm HHA**

£2.65

Are you trying anything new this year? Yes, PLENTY. Callistephus 'Tower Violet', Gomphrena 'Purple', Penstemon 'Twizzle Purple' and Rudbeckia 'Green Wizard'. Then there's a host of unusual grasses too, Muhlenbergia capillaris, Setaria 'Red Jewel' and Ptilotus 'Matilda' which isn't a grass, but to my mind is definitely masquerading as one! It's all about experimenting, isn't it?

Which comes first when you decide what to grow? To my mind, flowers are a catalyst for good things to happen both in the garden and in life, and to maximise their impact I think first about those that will attract pollinators, every time. The singles and large open flowers work hard for the garden, and their colour excites me while giving me the gift of bee and butterfly watching too.





Setaria italica, 'Red Jewel' 1174N

Splendid and robust ornamental grass with dark red brush-like heads. Great for drying, cutting and feeding the birds. **90cm HA**

£2.45





Rudbeckia occidentalis, 'Green Wizard' 1129K

An absolute gift to flower arrangers, this is a noble plant for the back of the border **180cm HP**

£2.95





Dipsacus fullonum 470

With wonderful seed heads, this is an attractive (particularly to bees and butterflies) and easily grown plant. **180cm HB**

£2.45





Chasmanthium latifolium 1267

A wonderfully versatile ornamental grass with upright stems of dangling spikelets. A fabulous cut flower, fresh or dried. **120cm HP**

£2.25





Nicotiana langsdorfii, 'Bronze Queen' 899A

Unusual, bronze-brown blooms adorn this interesting variety, perfect for cutting. **120cm HHA**

£2.65

New





Gomphrena globosa, 'Purple' 646R

Unusual spherical heads of papery petals in darkest purply-pink. Last ages in a vase and brilliant for drying. **50cm HHA**

£2.25

New





Callistephus chinensis, 'Tower Violet' 241G

Very uniform Peony-type blooms in a sumptuous, rich plum colour. Elegant and beautiful yet easy to grow. **75cm HA/HHA**

£2.95





Penstemon barbatus, 'Twizzle Purple' 967N

Rich and vibrant, very dark pink-purple. Very eye-catching. 15 seeds. **80cm HP**

£2.95

New





Muhlenbergia capillaris 885A

Striking, clump-forming, ornamental grass bearing beautiful glistening pink plumes above blue-green foliage. **90cm HP**

£2.75

New





Ptilotus exaltatus, 'Matilda' 1071D

Beautiful, unique and very interesting fluffy upright flowers in a lovely shade of smoky rose-pink, resembling foxes' tails. 10 seeds. **60cm TP/HHA**

£4.65

If they have attractive seedheads, even better, especially as this year I'm trying to grow more that will have winter presence for birds to feast on their beautiful skeletal outlines. Teasels (*Dipsacus fullonum*) are perfect for this, though I know many find their self-seeding propensity a menace. Me? I simply hoe seedlings off or pull them up when they get a bit overwhelming. For another wildlife-friendly planting this year, I'm looking at a shade combo. I'm going to sow *Chasmanthium latifolium* with its drooping, oat-like flower spikelets whose seedheads will not only add winter interest but provide valuable food for birds. I think this ornamental oat will look amazing planted with chocolate-hued *Nicotiana langsdorfii* 'Bronze Queen', so am sowing that too. Shade, scent and snacks for pollinators and birds too. Perfect.

I also want plants that keep pumping out flowers for an absolute age, ensuring flowers and so nectar and pollen are freely available for months. It's a win-win!

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See the following pages for flowers with a long season, flowering into September and October; great for the garden but even better for pollinators and diversity.

