

November Flowers

Bob Brown

***Allium thunbergii* 'Ozawa' AGM**

This is a neat plant with cheerful bright purple flowers. The neatness is not so extreme that it's of interest to alpinists but it needs not to be smothered by bossier border plants. Mine grows in a pot where I can defend it against the ingress of *Bergenia* and *Sedum* foliage and the terracotta pot sets off the colour well. It seems more or less impervious to early frosts and even early snow. Most alliums bloom in spring or early summer. This brings a breath of spring just when it's needed.

- * 20cm. x 20cm.
- * Japan and Korea.
- * Plant it in pots or borders where it will not be smothered.
- * October to December

***Chrysanthemum* 'Carmin Blush'**

The latest blooming chrysanths are very important for my psyche. If in mid-November I can still look forward to flowers that haven't opened, I will be helped to cross the winter chasm to January excitements. This has traditional pink flowers. The plant and its misleading name are mine. Plant enough to pick for the house and breathe in the sweet perfume followed some days (or even weeks) later by the more normal smell of chrysanthemums. Most hardy chrysanths are shapely and compact and require no support. This is no exception.

- * 65cm. x 65cm.
- * China and Japan.
- * My November journeys around Evesham are cheered by chrysanths planted in front gardens (and even on roadsides). Do your bit for the community! They need sun.
- * November to December.

***Galanthus elwesii* Hiemalis Group**

Snowdrops are effective, cheering and important. Ones that have better foliage, bigger flowers or extend the season are worth seeking out. This extends the season at the beginning (when there are fewer attractions) by starting to bloom in November (but sometimes in October or December). The blooms last a very long time and you should expect to still see them as the main body of snowdrops start to open. It's a toughie so will survive planted almost anywhere if it can get some winter sun. I plant it by the path amongst (dormant) agapanthus.

- * 12cm. x 15cm. from a single bulb after 3 to 5 years.
- * Turkey
- * Borders, deciduous shrubberies and light woodland, rockeries (does anyone have rockeries these days?). Heavier soils seem to suit them better than light sandy ones.
- * (October) November to January.

Grevillea victoriae

Australian plants tend to die in British gardens. Death is caused by the cold and the wet - but principally the cold. Grevilleas (at least the ones commonly grown in Britain) seem tougher than expected and this particular one with its nice broad grey foliage has survived -15C. It forms promising orange-red buds in August, which persist without opening till November and then (depending on the severity of the

weather) continue to open into early spring. The foliage is unusual for a *Grevillea* which normally have needle-like foliage. It complements the flowers wonderfully. Being cheered-up in November by red flowers makes the winter shorter.

* 1.5m x 2m.

* Mountainous parts of Victoria and southern New South Wales.

* Sunny well-drained sites. Late autumn and winter flowers need to be planted where they'll be seen without leaving the path - preferably on the way to the house door. Avoid very limy soils so the top of the Cotswolds is fine!

* September to February peaking in November.

***Hedera helix* 'Cavendishii Latina'**

Ivy is barely appreciated on its home turf. The rest of the world spends lots of money trying to grow what they call 'English Ivy'. OK. I've seen it fallen off the front of a cottage still rooted at its base complete with the rendering that was on the cottage wall. I have a roof space where it whitely meanders seeking light and it has an unjustified reputation for killing trees. But, it has colourful and shapely EVERGREEN foliage, grows in terrible places (like dry shade) and is a climber that requires no support. You'll appreciate it most if you grow only the non-climbing shrubby kinds created by rooting cuttings of top growth. 'Cavendishii Latina' is a darling.

* 1m x 1m.

* Europe although this form is believed to be the variegated form written about by Pliny the elder in about 70AD.

* Borders and shady places under trees.

* All year but the November flowers are particularly good.

***Jasminum nudiflorum* AGM**

OK. You all know this but its ubiquity doesn't lessen its charm. Can you imagine the wonder it induced when it first appeared in the mid nineteenth century? Its conspicuous long dark green stems make a wonderful background for the clear yellow flowers. I've observed that it's at its best in November. It needs an annual haircut. Do it in spring with shears and you'll get the shapeliest winter effect. Make a note in your new diary.

* 3m x 3m, or limitless with neglect.

* China.

* Up walls or down banks.

* Late October to December with smatterings of flower into January.

***Nerine* 'Zeal Giant' AGM**

The quality of hardiness in nerines depends on winter dormancy and leafing from spring to autumn (rather than overwinter). These characteristics are evident in *Nerine bowdenii* but whatever cultivar that is grown the flowers are samey. The late Terry Jones, working in mid-Devon, crossed *Nerine bowdenii* with the enriched colours of the winter-leafing and tender *Nerine sarniensis* aiming for richer colours and hardiness. He famously selected this large diploid or triploid hybrid which has the requisite hardiness and giant deep pink flowers on long stems that you can pick for the house.

* 75cm. x 15cm. from a single bulb but clumps up.

* *N.bowdenii* comes from high Drakensberg, *N.sarniensis* from warmer locations in

the Cape (South Africa).

* Nerines need elbow room. Plant them anywhere (in sun) where they will not be crowded.

* October to November.

***Rosa x odorata* 'Bengal Beauty'**

"Don't you know it?" No. "Here, (wielding secateurs) have some cuttings". - Helen Dillon, Dublin, November 1996 (and they all rooted). Subsequently I discovered its strange habits. It doesn't bloom continuously but repeat blooms - masses of flower with smatterings in between about five times in the year. In the Chelsea Physic Garden (which is very sheltered) the November and February bloomings are unbelievable. I don't get the February one. The other thing is that if it is planted against a wall it goes straight up and does its thing at the top (gutter level for me). It's airy and delicate - the foliage, the branching and the flowers, and has few thorns.

* 2m. x 1.75m., or taller against a wall.

* China.

* Sunny borders, shrubberies and walls. I grow it in gravelly loam and clay equally well.

* March to December or longer if very sheltered.

***Tibouchina urvilleana* 'Edwardsii'**

This is not hardy and it gets gawky after about a year of growth. But, both flowers and foliage more than compensate. The flowers (especially in this form) are large and very very intensively purple. Each leaf has three valleys with veins at the base and is covered in velvet-like hairs that catch the light. In the variegated form the foliage is cream and green with a special red flush. Prune it hard back just before it starts growing in spring to reduce the gawkiness. I'm afraid it needs cool winters without frost in well-lit places.

* 1-3m. x 75cm. (or well pruned 1m. x 1m.).

* Brazil

* Pots which can be stood outside May to November but require protection overwinter.

* Foliage all year, flowers July to December (to February with some heat).