

Garden design solutions: a blaze of colour



By Ian McBain

Of all the months of the year, June is arguably the most colourful for our gardens. With typically warmer temperatures, long days of bright sunshine (hopefully), and still plenty of moisture in

the soil from the spring, the conditions are particularly advantageous for many of our favourite plants.

We have countless different options for adding colour to our gardens in early summer, but here are seven of my favourites:

- 1. Rosa 'Zephirine Drouhin' (pictured):** no summer garden is complete without a rose, and this climbing beauty is one of my absolute favourites. With deliciously scented large cerise pink flowers it never fails to catch the eye (and nose). Essentially thornless, it is perfect for an arbour, archway or pergola.
- 2. Paeonia 'Chocolate Soldier':** herbaceous peonies are a great addition to all but the driest of sunny borders. With a proliferation of large blooms, they can be a little 'top heavy' and so benefit from some support (either from neighbouring plants or via a few twigs or canes). Paeonia 'Chocolate Soldier' is a lovely variety, with dark red petals and bright yellow stamens.
- 3. Hemerocallis 'Stella de Oro':** a gloriously bright yellow day lily, H. 'Stella de Oro' is a justifiably popular plant. As the common name suggests, the flowers typically only last for 24 hours or so, but they are quickly replaced by plenty more throughout the summer. Best planted in clumps or drifts for maximum impact.
- 4. Wisteria sinensis:** a vigorous and enthusiastic climber, a wisteria in full bloom is a resplendent sight. Coming into flower in May (but still wonderful in June), it needs a tall structure to climb against, but the long clusters of deep lilac flowers cascade in a particularly pleasing manner.
- 5. Nepeta 'Walker's Low':** an obligingly compact form of catmint, N. 'Walker's Low' is the smaller cousin of N. 'Sixhills Giant'. With spires of tiny violet flowers from early summer through to mid-autumn, it is a very useful groundcover perennial that will sit



happily alongside a wide variety of other perennials. Delicately aromatic, it is a good addition to any sunny border.

- 6. Salvia 'Caradonna':** a particularly attractive perennial salvia, with intensely violet-blue flowers and dark stems. Offering long-lasting colour and interest, this is a very useful plant for a sunny mixed planting border, and is much loved by bees and many other pollinators.
- 7. Cotinus 'Royal Purple':** this purple-leaved smoke bush is a large shrub with deep red/purple foliage. I've included it here for the colour it provides via its leaves rather than through its flowers (which don't appear until later in the summer), but it is no less worthy. I am firmly of the view that too much purple foliage in a garden is not a good idea, but occasional 'pops' of colour can add wonderful contrast and texture.

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