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Garden design solutions: BRILLIANT PLANTS FOR MAY

by Ian McBain

OK, I'm going to stick my neck out and say that May is my favourite month for our gardens. It's such a wonderfully optimistic time, the weather is usually pretty good and lots of amazing plants are taking their moment to shine.

Here are five of my 'must have' plants for a May garden:

1. Aquilegia

A favourite perennial for any cottage garden, Aquilegia (also known as columbine or granny's bonnet) are beautifully graceful plants. With dainty flowers in a range of different colours, they are usually better suited to semi-shaded positions and moist (but not waterlogged) soils.

2. Geum

Another mainstay of a cottage garden-style planting scheme, Geums usually bloom from late spring through to late summer. With simple flowers on slender mid-height stems, they work beautifully alongside other perennials and some of the shorter ornamental grasses. Geum 'Mrs Bradshaw' (pictured below) is a great option for a punch of colour.

3. Geranium

Perennial geraniums are essential for any mixed planting scheme in my opinion, providing long-lasting colour and interest as well as superb groundcover. Happy in most soils and most locations (many can tolerate quite deep shade), they are versatile, resilient and low-maintenance.

4. Polygonatum

Also going by the common name of Solomon's Seal, Polygonatum is an incredibly useful plant for a shady corner of the garden (but is also often happy in more sun if the soil doesn't dry out). With large mid-green foliage, and clusters of tubular white flowers hanging from arching stems, this is a versatile perennial for woodland garden.



5. Wisteria

Few people can resist the sight of a Wisteria in full bloom. A vigorous climber with large clusters of lilac or white flowers, this is a show-stopping plant for the front of a house or pergola. It does require regular maintenance to prevent it getting too unruly, but it is absolutely worth it.



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