

DWARF BULBS FOR GARDEN AND GREENHOUSE

ND means Not Dry-bulbs that dislike drying out and are better planted in growth.

Garden hybrids are usually more vigorous and cheaper than wild species.

Anemone A. blanda blue or white forms is reliable followed later by forms of A. nemerosa the native white wood anemone –soak corms well before planting. A. ranunculoides is a nice small yellow one.

Arisaema Cobra Lilies are remarkable rather than beautiful for leafy soil in light shade. Some are quite large!

Chionodoxa Glory of the Snows – blue with white centres C. forbesii has lots of small blue flowers, C sardensis is also small but richer blue–C luciliae is bigger-a white form is OK-pink less so!

Colchicum is not an autumn crocus. The big autumn flowering ones e.g. autumnale or speciosum are most often sold usually lilac or white-Waterlily is double – they can flop over so grow among shrubs to hide the big leaves in spring– for smaller flowers try C agrippinum-some flower in spring but are less available.

Corydalis ND early spring flowers then they go dormant so mark the spot – well drained but not too dry C. solida is purple, Beth Evans pink, George Baker red, malkensis white. Later are electric blue forms of C. flexuosa and cashmeriana –they too often disappear in summer so mark. They like leafy soil and some shade.

Crocus can be had in flower from September to April –they like well drained soil and sun-watch for mice. Spring C. tommasinianus will naturalise in grass, followed by forms of C. chrysanthus e.g. Cream Beauty, Blue Pearl, Ard Schenk (white) Ladykiller (white & purple) then the big Dutch hybrids. C. sieberi forms are nice esp. tricolor which has 3 contrasting colours. Autumn try C. speciosus, C. sativus (the saffron crocus).

Cyclamen ND C. coum is hardy usually flowering from January onwards with round leaves. C. hederifolium has ivy shaped leaves flowering in late August through to October. Grey leaved forms are available but all cyclamen have attractive leaves. Miniature versions of florists' cyclamen are now available each autumn and surprisingly hardy in tubs. Other species are available but some are not frost hardy.

Dicentra ND related to Corydalis the bleeding heart D. spectabile in pink or white is easy in leafy soil – it too dies down by summer. More compact forms include the excellent red D. King of Hearts and white Ivory Heart.

Eranthis ND E. hyemalis is the well-known yellow winter aconite – much dearer is its hybrid Guinea Gold.

Erythronium ND E. dens canis is the mauve dogs tooth violet. Later come the larger yellow E. Pagoda and Kondo. Also good are White Beauty and E. revolutum. Plant all these in leafy soil and light shade –in pots they try to get out of the bottom!

Fritillaria Easy ones include the native snakeshead F. meleagris which likes damp meadow conditions. Most others need gritty soil and sun. One of the earliest is F. michailovskyi with short stems and gold and brown bells then uva-vulpis with brown bells. F. pudica and aurea are yellow but more expensive and best in pots. Later is the taller F. acmopetala with green/brown bells. Late spring sees the almost black F. camschatscensis. Crown imperials are not dwarf and smell-plant on their sides in light soil and sun.

Galanthus ND the single snowdrop G. nivalis planted en masse is hard to beat – the double form will also naturalise – if you want a bigger snowdrop try S Arnott. Enthusiasts pay large sums for unusual snowdrops. There are 2 autumn snowdrops both expensive.

Hyacinthoides non-scripta is the English bluebell/ British wild hyacinth which carpets suitable woodland in May. H. hispanicus is the Spanish species which interbreeds and is common on local coasts-it is bigger and the one that can have white or pink forms.

Ipheion like sun and free drained soil. Rolf Fiedler is a good blue, Charlotte Bishop is pink and Alberto Costello white.

Iris only some types grow from bulbs. I danfordiae is an early yellow but like many blue Reticulatas short lived. Alida, Clairette, Cantab, Harmony are all nice blues, Pauline a bit darker. George is almost purple and perennial as are the good blue Lady Beatrix Stanley, the yellow winogradowii and the pale blue hybrids such

as Katharine Hodgkin. *I. bucharica* is an easy Juno iris in sun and light soil. The taller Dutch, English and Spanish Iris flower later and are often used as cut flowers.

Leucojum *vernum* the spring snowflake is later than snowdrops and likes damp soil. In autumn what was *L. autumnale* is now called *Acis*.

Muscari the well known blue grape hyacinth *M. armeniacum* can be invasive so try the paler blue *M. Val Finnis*, *M. azureum* or the two-toned *M. latifolium*. There are white forms and a yellow species *M. macrocarpum*.

Narcissus-all daffodils are *Narcissus*. The very early hoop petticoats or bulbocodiums like *N. romieuxii* need protection so best in a frame or cold glass. The Daffodil Society splits these bulbs into 13 sections. Good inexpensive dwarf ones: trumpets- Midget or a bit bigger Topolino, WP Milner and the native *N. pseudonarcissus*. Dwarf doubles include Rip van Winkle and Pencrebar. Hybrids from *N. cyclamineus* often flower around late March and include the popular Tete a Tete and Jetfire with an orange cup. Some show the swept back petals of the wild parent e.g. Mite, Snipe. Later types are often multi headed such as the Triandrus Hawera and Ice Wings. Both Tazettas e.g. Minnow and Jonquills e.g. *N. jonquilla*, Baby Moon are often scented. Golden Bells is a vigorous bulbocodium in April. Last of all is *N. poeticus* the pheasant's eye.

Orchids Pleoinies are fairly easy but not entirely hardy so keep them in a pot with an open compost and dry over winter. *P. formosanum* is one of the most common; Tongariro is a very reliable hybrid.

Cypripediums are hardy but most growers are reluctant to put expensive plants out for the slugs. Hybrids are much easier than species.

Ornithogalum there are several forms of the Star of Bethlehem, all white and easy to grow.

Oxalis occur in great variety many with attractive fern like leaves – among the nicest are the mauve *O. adenophylla* and the hybrid Lone Hecker in late spring. Also the native white wood sorrel. Others flower in autumn some with yellow or orange flowers such as Centrino.

Puschkinia libanotica is related to the Scillas, easy to grow and has lots of white/blue flowers in early spring.

Rhodohypoxis are small South African bulbs and vulnerable to frost –like sun and good drainage - red, pink and white shades from late spring into summer.

Scilla the squills. In spring there are the small, solid blue *S. siberica* and *bifolia* and the paler *S. mischtschenkoana*. Later is the bigger *S. peruviana* which actually comes from Spain. A few species flower in autumn.

Sternbergia lutea looks like a yellow crocus but is more demanding -it needs a pot or a south wall.

Tecophilaea the Chilean blue crocus is stunning but expensive and needs to stay in a pot as it is not frost hardy.

Trillium ND are slow to establish and like leafy soil.

Tulipa a huge variety most from Turkey, Iran or central Asia so they do not like to be too wet. In spring start with forms of *T. humilis* esp. Lilliput then the white multi headed *turkestanica*, the many forms of *T. kaufmaniana* and *gregii* e.g. Red Riding Hood, Water Lily and the bright red *T. praestans*. Other inexpensive ones to try include *batalanii*, *linifolia*, *bakeri* Lilac Wonder, *urumiensis* and *clusiana* which can be yellow and red or purple and white. The yellow *T. sylvestris* is naturalised in parts of the UK.

Useful websites/catalogues are the Scottish Rock Garden Club, Broadleigh Bulbs. Miniature Bulbs, Pottertons Nursery (also alpines). Macplants usually have some in pots.