

Van Hage Garden Article

BEAUTIFUL GARDENS - 'New Plants for 2008'

Looking for something new to brighten up your garden for the year ahead? Read on for some of the best new and recent introductions, destined to be sure-fire hits.

Primula 'Woodland Walk'

Nothing heralds the arrival of spring quite like a primula. This recently introduced clump-forming variety is no exception, with eye-catching rose pink buds that unfurl to reveal pink-rimmed heart shaped petals set against ravishing burgundy-green foliage. Reaching just 15cm in height, this is one for front of the border, shady rockeries or woodland areas, and as with all primulas, 'Woodland Walk' also looks great in patio pots, tubs and window boxes.

Daphne 'Rebecca'

First introduced to the gardening world last year, this superb new variety was an instant hit. With broad cream variegated evergreen leaves providing the perfect foil to delicately scented rose pink flowers, it's easy to see why. Deep pink buds open to soft pink flowers from early spring onwards, filling the air with pervasive scent, atop neatly domed 120-150cm mounds of evergreen foliage, making 'Rebecca' a fragrant border favourite.

Freesia 'Sunburst'

New for 2008, 'Sunburst' is the first introduction from a new strain of free-flowering freesias, featuring deep butter yellow flowers with familiar freesia fragrance. As a bonus, 'Sunburst' has proven hardy in most areas of the British Isles. Flowering from late spring to early summer, 'Sunburst' makes a wonderful patio pot plant for a sheltered position, where its delightful perfume can be enjoyed. As with all freesias, this is a first-rate cut flower for indoor arrangements – with more exciting colour introductions planned for later in the year.

Clematis 'Bijou'

A compact breakthrough in clematis breeding – 'Bijou' forms a low growing mound ideal for pots, front of the border or grown through other plants in small gardens. This hardy dwarf climber features large pale violet to mauve rosette-shaped flowers from early to mid-summer. Ideal for training over patio obelisks, adding summer colour to winter flowering heathers or a dazzling accompaniment to yellow flowering summer Sanolina.

Iris setosa 'Baby Blue'

Another miniature 'blue' for early summer. With interest reawakened greatly in the iris family after recent sales of Monet's Giverny paintings, this dwarf version is pretty as a picture and a must for art lovers. At only 30cm in height, 'Baby Blue' is the perfect perennial for front of the border, bog garden or rich moist soil in sun, where its purple-blue netted flowers can be fully admired each summer.

Nemisia 'Raspberries and Cream'

First launched in summer 2007, this scrumptious variety of nemisia proved to be an instant hit. Available for the first time this year in large five-litre pots, 'Raspberries and Cream' is smothered in masses of sweetly scented mauve and freckled violet flowers, with deep yellow centres all summer long. Perfect for summer containers, rockeries or the mixed border – and like all nemisia's, this variety enjoys a well-drained sunny position to thrive.

Clematis 'Rebecca'

A stunning new variety developed by renowned clematis breeder Raymond Evison. Dressed in a unique shade of scarlet red, velvety-textured petals are freely produced from late spring to late summer. Strictly speaking, this is an early variety (group 2), but 'Rebecca' repeats so freely when lightly pruned, that she appears to flower all summer long. Adaptable to any aspect of the garden, except deep shade, 'Rebecca' is a strong grower and particularly suited to being trained through other wall shrubs for added value planting.

Rose 'Burgundy Ice'

This recently introduced floribunda rose is a sport of the hugely popular white 'Iceberg', producing ravishingly beautiful dark plum-purple blooms, lightly fragrant and freely bourn throughout summer. Regular deadheading promotes a succession of blooms, making 'Burgundy Ice' a great all-rounder and ideal specimen plant for beds or large patio tubs, with light green bushy growth reaching 1m in height and spread.

Salpiglossis 'Royale'

New and dazzling for 2008, a dwarf form of the bushy annual known as 'painted tongue'. Perfect for summer containers, this richly coloured bedding plant looks spectacular in troughs and containers, or bedded out across garden borders. Showy funnel-shaped flowers open in a kaleidoscope of vividly painted shades throughout summer.

IN THE GARDEN THIS WEEK...

- If you didn't have your lawnmower serviced at the end of last year, make it top priority now, in readiness for the busy mowing season ahead.
- Sow hardy annuals where they are to flower. Pot Marigold (Calendula), Poppies (Papaver), Larkspur (Delphinium), Love-in-a-Mist (Nigella) and Sunflowers (Helianthus) will all germinate freely in well-prepared soil warmed by spring sunshine.
- Begin feeding your pot plants – both indoors and out – for abundant healthy growth and plentiful flowers.
- Fine French beans are always a popular summer vegetable, either served hot when lightly steamed or cold in salads. Make a sowing under glass now for a fresh supply come July. Protect from frost and harden-off prior to planting out at the end of May.