

Tips From Trecanna



Trecanna Nursery is a family-run plant nursery owned by Mark & Karen Wash and set on the Cornish slopes of the Tamar Valley, specialising in unusual bulbs & perennials, Crocosmias and other South African plants. Each month Mark will write a feature on some of his very favourite plants.

Trecanna Nursery is now open from Wednesday to Saturday throughout the year, from 10am to 5pm, (or phone to arrange a visit at other times). There is a wide range of unusual bulbs, herbaceous plants and hardy South African plants including the largest selection of Crocosmia in the South. We are located approx. 2 miles north of Gunnislake. Follow the brown tourist signs from the A390, Callington to Gunnislake road. Tel: 01822 834680. Email: mark@trecanna.com Talks to garden clubs and societies.

‘South African Summer’

We’ve had a real blast of heat over the past two weeks and even events such as the Royal Cornwall Show basked in the sun. Whilst we are soaking up the sunshine, those areas of the world south of the equator are currently in their winter period, including South Africa.

Luckily for us gardeners, a great many plants have been gathered from South Africa and introduced into our gardens where they come into their own over our summer months just when the rest of the garden takes its summer snooze. Plants that *start* to flower in July and August can really help to bring a garden back to life at this time of the year.

The list of perennials and bulbs that originate in South Africa is enormous and surprising, as many of them are now regarded as cottage garden plants, without really ever thinking about where they come from. Examples include Agapanthus, Eucomis (Pineapple Lilies), Galtonia, Kniphofia (Red Hot Pokers), Tulbaghia, Nerines and, of course, Crocosmia. We grow all of these at the nursery and with the right treatment, all of them are hardy. I usually write an update at this time of the year about the latest news in Crocosmia just ahead of their flowering period so here goes again!

CROCOSMIAS

Crocosmias usually start flowering from late June/early July with later forms starting around mid-August. The first ones to flower for us are usually ‘Rowallane Orange’ or ‘Mistral’ which tend to show colour in their flower buds every year the day AFTER the Royal Cornwall Show!

Crocasmias are a herbaceous plant that grows from a corm to flower again year after year. When in flower, you will not fail to notice them due to their *'hot'* colours ranging from lemon-yellow, apricot, orange and salmon through to red. Some grow no taller than 2 ft (when in flower), whilst others tower around 5 to 6 feet. Different varieties have upright or arching stems that are tough and wind-resistant - the flowers can be arranged upward facing or horizontal. On many varieties the flower-buds and seeds-heads can be just as attractive as the flowers.

The large sword-shaped leaves on many varieties can also add huge impact to a border well before the flowers start to appear. They vary in shades from apple-green to olive-green and even bronze or copper. Some are richly pleated to add extra texture. Crocasmias are generally hardy throughout the South-West, particularly if you take a little care when planting (see below).

MONTBRETIA

The common name for one particularly vigorous form of Crocosmia (*Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*) is *Montbretia* – a variety that runs riot in many a West Country border. Yes, I know that it spreads like mad and swamps other plants but please don't be put off – most Crocasmias are clump-forming and not nearly as vigorous as this attractive but invasive form. Here at the nursery we concentrate on the well-behaved forms!

HOW TO GROW THEM

Crocasmias really seem to like the weather down here in the South-West – hence the reason that they grow so well. They are also happy in both windy and coastal locations.

Grow Crocasmias in a sunny border, in moist but well-drained soil. Keep well watered in the spring but don't worry if they become drier over the summer. Plant dry corms 5-6" deep in March/April but better still plant ready-grown clumps at any time of year, a little deeper than the level of the compost. They need very little care – a sprinkling of organic feed in early spring, and again after flowering is a good idea. In winter the corms can be left in the ground in all but the coldest of areas (hardy to -5°C). Leave the withered leaves in place and mulch the surface of the soil with a good 3" layer of bark or compost. Remove old leaves in the spring once new growth appears and split clumps every few years in Feb/March.

They are also great in pots, and make superb cut flowers – lasting for a long time.

COLOURS OF THE SUN

Here are some of our favourite varieties at Trecanna listed according to colour:

SOME OF THE YELLOWS

Citronella (lemon-yellow flowers)
Eastern Promise (large warm orange/yellow flowers)
George Davison (excellent canary-yellow)
Gerbe D'Or (soft apricot yellow with bronze leaves)
Lady Hamilton (warm yellow with good markings)
Solfatare AGM (apricot yellow with bronze leaves)

SOME OF THE ORANGES

Carmin Brilliant AGM (small flowers with brush-strokes of red)
Constance (large rounded petals of clear yellow-orange with a yellow base)
Dusky Maiden (beautiful brown-orange with yellow centres)
Emily McKenzie (large orange flowers with mahogany markings)
Nimbus (Open orange flowers with a halo of red)
Orangeade (large open blooms of day-glow orange)
Star Of The East (huge downward-facing orange flowers)

SOME OF THE REDS

Babylon (dusky red/orange flowers with darker markings & a yellow throat)
Bressingham Blaze (narrow red flowers & pleated leaves)
Emberglow (red to deep crimson flowers held in horizontal herringbones)
Gloria (short red form with cream feathered edges)
Lucifer AGM (tall 5ft high variety with fiery red flowers on arching stems)

SOME OF THE OTHERS!

His Majesty (large yellow blooms with burnt-orange edges)
Mistral (arching stems, red flowers with a distinct shimmer of magenta)
Mullard Pink (small tubular pink/orange flowers)
Severn Sunrise (shades of salmon, apricot and yellow)

SEE THEM ALL THIS SUMMER

Visit Trecanna over July & August to see a large number of unusual varieties of Crocosmia in flower in our display gardens. Also, we are holding a special South African Weekend at the nursery on 6th/7th August when we will have a very large number in flower alongside many other South African Plants. Entry to the nursery will be £1 per person over this weekend – all of which goes to the charity 'Perennial' – The Gardeners' Benevolent Trust. In addition there will be David Fenwick, the National Collection holder, and John Dyer, the resident artist from the Eden Project. Larger parties should book ahead if possible. Why not come along - You'll become hooked!

Happy Gardening!