

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. Throughout the autumn there is a superb range of less unusual dry bulbs from around the world – plant them now for flowers from winter to summer. 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.

‘Shady Characters’

Sometimes I think that plants are rather like us humans.

When the summer finally arrives and the sun rises high in the sky, many of us run for the shade where we can enjoy the warm weather without baking. Well, many garden plants feel the same way and enjoy the shade, particularly over the summer months.

A number of these shade loving plants are bulbs and they shelter under trees and shrubs that act as nature's own parasols. They tend to flower earlier in the year making good use of the early-spring light, before the trees and shrubs come into full leaf. Every garden has either trees or shrubs that lose their leaves during winter and planting a selection of these shade loving bulbs underneath will brighten up a border that would otherwise be lifeless until later in the year.

Shade falls into differing degrees from part or dappled shade (mostly under deciduous plants), to deep shade (mostly under evergreens and conifers). The bulbs I have mentioned here are definitely at most at home in the part-shade camp. Likewise, the soil can be either on the moist or dry side and there are bulbs that will cope with both.

Below is a list of a few bulbs and fleshy-rooted plants to consider for your shady corners, many of which can be planted as dry bulbs or root sections over the autumn months, or as growing clumps during the spring. It can be cheaper to plant the dry bulbs in the Autumn but I have found that these are often best planted into pots, which can then be planted into the ground once they are in growth. Like all plants, nurture them whilst they establish,

watering in dry periods and keeping weeds and other plants at bay. Once established, most of these bulbs will naturalise and produce an increasingly better display, year after year.

Bulbs for average to moist soil

***Anemone nemerosa* (Wood Anemone)**

This lovely plant forms a network of creeping rhizomes that produce ferny leaves and dainty daisy-like flowers in early spring. *Anemone nemerosa* is the native wild form with pure white blooms, but there are also lilacs and blue to choose from such as the pretty *A.nemerosa* 'Robinsoniana'.

***Eranthis* (Winter Aconite)**

The winter aconites take quite a high degree of shade and can be obstinate to get established with the tiny tubers often taking more than a year to shoot. They form clumps of ferny leaves - the flowers are golden-yellow and cup-shaped. Only buy fresh tubers and start them in pots. Add an occasional sprinkling of lime in acid soils.

***Erythronium* (Dogs Tooth Violet)**

These grow from soft bulbs that are shaped in the form of dogs' canine tooth and should be planted fresh. In spring they produce fleshy strap-like leaves that are often well marked. The pretty flowers are held above the leaves and are pendant with recurved petals. Colours range from white to rich-yellow, or pink. One of the nicest is *E. 'Pagoda'* with sulphur-yellow flowers 10" high.

***Galanthus* (Snowdrops)**

There are lots of lovely forms of snowdrops and they love a shady spot where the soil does not fully dry out. Only choose fresh bulbs that have been stored in cool conditions. Alternatively plant growing clumps from December to March.

***Leucojum* (Snowflakes)**

There should always be a place in the garden for a clump of these snowdrop relatives. The Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*) is the normal form, flowering at around 2ft high in mid spring with white, chocolate-scented flowers. Rarer and shorter forms will flower in late winter and mid-summer. Good alongside a shady stream or pond.

Narcissus

There are many different forms of narcissus that grow in a shadier place but if I were pushed to choose just two, I would select our native wild narcissus (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus* - 6" to 12" high with cream and pale yellow flowers in mid-spring) and

the Pheasants Eye Narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus recurvus* – Very fragrant, 12-14” high with pure white petals and a tiny red-orange cup in late spring)

Scilla or Hyacinthoides (Bluebells)

Lovely scented flowers in mid to late-spring, great under trees and taller, open shrubs. If they like your garden, they will spread to fill all corners so plan the position carefully. Only ever plant the true English Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) with its’ nodding heads. Avoid the upright spikes of the Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) as it will invade and take-over local bluebell woods.

Bulbs for average to dry soil

Anemone blanda

Pretty daisy-like flowers that ripple in the wind, in shades of blue, pink and white. An easy and rewarding plant that increases over the years to form a carpet of early flowers. 4-6” high.

Cyclamen

There are both autumn-flowering and spring-flowering forms of cyclamen and the saucer-like tubers sit only just below the soil. The flowers range from white to pink/purple and the leaves on each plant are exquisitely veined, no two plants are quite the same.

Happy Gardening!

Mark Wash