

**My top ten:**

1. **Gaura lindheimeri** Gaura from the Greek gauros meaning superb! Sometimes called whirling butterflies due to flower shape, common American name is Bee Balm. A native of Texas and Mexico, essentially a prairie plant which associates well with taller ornamental grasses. Available in white (The Bride which is tall, Sparkle White which is more compact, pink (crimson butterflies) and mixtures Rosy Jane. Does not need dead heading, many white plants are damaged by bad weather but not this one. Very easy to propagate by seed or cutting – my favourite herbaceous perennial. I have heard people say it is not long-lived in their garden and from experience the two things it doesn't like are winter wet and crowding out so plant it when it is well established in its pot and has no competition closeby. Height to 1m
2. **Calamintha nepeta blue cloud** – from the Greek kalos meaning beautiful and minta meaning mint. Mounds of shiny green foliage with white or very pale blue flowers makes it a great 'front of border' or edging plant. A member of the labiatae family, many of which are very good insect attractants, this one is very good for bees. Cut off the first flush of flowers and it just keeps going Height to 30cm
3. **Scabiosa ochroleuca Moon Dance** – From the latin scabies meaning itch (which the plant is supposed to cure) Neat mound forming plant, with the flowers held above the foliage. Very good insect plant. Pale creamy yellow flowers which blend well with many other colours. Needs dead-heading to prolong flowering. If you know cephalaria gigantean the flowers are very similar although that is around 6' tall! Height to 40cm
4. **Salvia microphylla Cerro Potosi** – salvus meaning safe and well in latin, microphylla meaning small leaved, Cerro Potosi, the range of mountains in Mexico where the plant was discovered. Shrubby Salvia with scented foliage reminiscent of blackcurrants. So shrubby not truly a perennial although it does die down in winter outside, persists if taken indoors. Good colour to lift pastel shades. Previously thought not to be hardy in our climate but, providing it is not wet at the roots over winter it will live happily outside all year round. Also makes a good specimen in a pot on the patio. Easily propagated from cuttings Height to 1m

5. **Geranium x magnificentum** - beautiful clear blue flowers. Greek geranos meaning crane, hence cranesbill. Magnificum due to large flower size. A cross between [Geranium platypetalum](#) and [Geranium ibericum](#) Good ground cover without being overly invasive and will give a second flush of flowers if cut back after the first flush. Notice the veins in the petals and darker centre of the flower which helps pollinating insects find the nectaries. Height to 35cm
6. **Veronicastrum virginicum** – veronica after St Veronica and astrum indicating incomplete resemblance, presumably to veronica! Beautiful slender spires of white (alba) or lavender blue flowers. Nice tall addition to the border. Again a good insect attractant. Height to 1.2m
7. **Aquilegia Woodside Gold** – from the latin Aquila meaning eagle, presumably to do with the shape of the flowers. Flowers early and whilst breaks the long flowering rule above, the variegated foliage is very good and looks tidy for a very long period. Great for partial shade/woodland conditions, lifts dark colours and looks very good with Millium effusum aureum Height around 30cm
8. **Salvia nemorosa Caradonna** – Herbaceous salvia native to the Balkans. Beautiful dark stems make it more attractive to me than other salvias in the nemorosa group such as East Friesland, Snow Hill etc also it is slightly taller at around 50cm. Needs dead-heading regularly to keep flowering but repays any effort put in.
9. **Sedum telephium Purple Emperor** – sedum a latin name for many succulents sedums and sempervivens Purple Emperor after a rare butterfly. Whilst many sedums fit the top 10 criteria, I have chosen this one as it gives a good contrasting leaf colour and is not susceptible to the small ermine moth that some are (Jose Aubergine). Flowers later in the season but stands well over winter and the new emerging buds are very attractive. To 45cm
10. **Eucomis comosa Sparkling Burgundy** – Now for something a bit different. Eucomis comosa are bulbous perennials which bulk up quickly and provide a striking statement in a border. May not fit well into a cottage or formal English garden but a stunner for either a tropical style border or a pot. Beautiful dark burgundy leaves then in late summer tall spires of pale pink pineapple like flowers

emerge. These attract a myriad of insects. I bought one bulb about 12 years ago at Hampton Court for £10 – the most I had ever spent on a plant at the time and for years thought it was tender and kept it in a pot. It bulked up very well, similar to the way cannas do. Then I attended a talk by Derry Watkins of Special Plants who said it was hardy with the usual proviso of not letting it sit in wet over winter. It is a real showstopper and easy to grow. Propagate from seeds of which it produces many or by leaf cutting (just done this and v successful) Height to 1m