

Hampton's purple reign

Despite poor growing weather, this year's RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show was packed with a wealth of new and interesting plants



PHOTOGRAPHY: RHS / TIM SANDALL

▲ *Streptocarpus* 'Harlequin Purple' was one of three new bicoloured selections from Dibleys Nurseries, North Wales (01978 790677). Plants £6.50.

➤ *Tacca chantrieri* 'Green Mystery' is an unusually coloured bat flower, for a warm room or conservatory. Shown by Naieus Exotics (07871 315312). Plants £25.



▲ *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Olympia' from Downderry Nursery, Kent (01732 810081), is the product of targeted breeding to obtain a late-flowering, compact plant. Flowers in July-August have a strong, sweet scent. Plants (9cm/3½in pot) £3.

➤ *Chrysanthemum* 'Star Mist' can be grown outdoors in pots in summer, but should be brought indoors before it starts flowering in November. From Chrysanthemums Direct of Cheshire (0800 046 7443). Plug plants £2.30.



▲ *Clematis Alaina* ('Evipo 056') flowers May to September and grows in any aspect, even in large pots, reaching 1.2-1.8m (4-6ft). Shown by Taylors Clematis, South Yorkshire (01302 700716). Plants £15.



▲ Unusual *Acanthus* 'Whitewater', shown by Big Plant Nursery, West Sussex (01903 891466). A North American cultivar, it features vibrant variegated foliage and flowers. Plants £7.50.



▲ Avon Bulbs of Somerset displayed a startling but as yet unnamed *Gladiolus*, suitable for the garden and similar to popular G. 'Ruby' but with purple-tinged flowers. Plants are not currently available.

Creating a buzz



A second list, this time of more than 200 wild flowers attractive to pollinating insects, has been produced by the RHS. This new Perfect for Pollinators list adds to the information for cultivated plants (which now stands at more than 400) published by the Society last year. Many nurseries are now using the RHS logo (above) on plant labels so customers can identify insect-beneficial plants. For plant lists, and more information visit: www.rhs.org.uk/Plants-for-pollinators



Spectators will reach the sporting venues by walking through a range of colourful, diverse plantings. Inset: *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *deamii*.

MAIN: OPA; INSET: TIM SANDALL

Taking the Olympics home

Plants used in the Olympic Park will guide public planting in future, and many are ideal for gardens

Author: **Anisa Gress**, News Editor, *The Garden*

The scale of horticultural achievement at the Olympic Park in Stratford, East London, is undeniably impressive. The plan of turning 101 ha (250 acres) into a first-class sporting venue that will later become a public park (the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park) had trees, plants and environmental issues at its heart from the outset. As well as helping organisers achieve their 'legacy' commitments, creating the Olympic Park has been an exercise in developing rich, diverse plantings for modern urban open spaces.

The 10ha (25 acres) of perennial and annual meadows could prove viable alternatives to traditional bedding in public parks. Nigel Dunnett and James Hitchmough from the University of Sheffield, working with LDA Design and Hargreaves Associates, have selected plants for

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Next to the Olympic Stadium, the 'RHS Olympic Park Great British Garden' has an English oak at its centre. It was grown from an acorn of a tree originally planted in Much Wenlock, Shropshire in 1890 by Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic movement. He was visiting William Brookes, who had organised 'Olympian' games there as early as 1850. To form a link between the new Olympic Park and Much Wenlock, 40 descendants of the Much Wenlock oak have been planted.

many of the areas. For the meadows, this means long-flowering species not needing deadheading or irrigation.

'For me,' Nigel said, 'the star annuals in the Olympic Park meadows are *Coreopsis tinctoria* (tickseed), which flowers from July to October, and jewel-like *Dimorphotheca sinuata* (star of the veldt).'

Garden worthy

On a smaller scale, home gardeners too can draw on experience gained at Stratford. Many of the planted areas are wide and sweeping, but the half-mile long, riverside 'London 2012 Gardens', designed by Sarah Price, with James and Nigel, using planting from four temperate regions (Europe, the Americas, Asia and parts of the southern hemisphere) is narrower, making it easier to visualise in a private garden. Highlights for Nigel and Sarah here include:

❖ *Leucanthemum x superbum*

'T.E. Killin' is long flowering from June, and an excellent partner for grasses *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldschleier' and *Stipa calamagrostis*, as is blue-flowered UK native *Succisa pratensis* (devil's bit scabious).

❖ *Callirhoe bushii* is a member of the mallow family. 'It appears to weightlessly scramble over companion plants and has shockingly vibrant, magenta blooms,' said Sarah.

❖ *Oenothera macrocarpa* subsp. *incana* makes low hummocks that scramble over border edges, studded with lemon yellow flowers.

❖ *Andropogon gerardii* is an ornamental grass rarely used in the UK. 'It stands proudly upright over winter, glowing amber,' said Sarah.

❖ *Allium lusitanicum* has bulked up quickly and flowers profusely. At around 40cm (16in), it is a useful height, creating a lower visual break in the plantings.

❖ *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *deamii* is the most dependable of the park's rudbeckias. Qualities include a long flowering period, soft green foliage and ornamental winter seedheads. ●

Beautiful bioswales

Not often considered for their ornamental value are 'bioswales'. Used to hold rainwater runoff, they slow down water speed therefore reducing the amount of silt and pollution going into drains and streams.

'These are going to be much more common, and could be an integral part of parks and gardens,' said Nigel. In the Olympic Park, native *Lythrum salicaria* (purple loosestrife) and *Lychnis flos-cuculi* (ragged robin) are performing particularly well.



RHS / SARAH CUTTLE