

PLANT FACTS: DROUGHT RESILIENT PLANTS

Given the severely hot weather we have had recently, and ahead of our talk on 29 October entitled “*Living with too much or too little water*”, I have been looking at what plants may be more suitable for the garden assuming our weather is likely to remain hotter than in the past.

Below are suggestions for drought resilient plants for south England – specifically plants that will survive if they are not watered and actually prefer dryer soils and require very little fuss or maintenance:

Nepeta – also known as Cat Mint, these dependable perennials produce a profusion of usually lavender blue flowers over a long season from late spring to late summer stop. The tough plants are easy to grow and low maintenance, use them in borders, with other perennials or as an informal edging as an alternative to lavender stop. Trim after flowering to neaten and encourage further flower production. They are loved by all pollinators too!



Echinacea – also known as Coneflowers, Echinacea are erect rhizomatous perennials with simple or pinnately lobed leaves and solitary, long-stalked daisies with prominent conical central disks and often drooping ray florets. They are attractive to butterflies. They may not produce much in year one but will then start to form a clump. Attractive to pollinators.



Stipa gigantea – also known as Golden Oats, this robust, tufted evergreen grass grows to 2m, with arching linear green leaves and large panicles of oat-like airy purplish flowers in summer which turn to gold in autumn.



Echinops – also known as Hungarian Globe Thistle, Echinops is a clump forming perennial with upright, grey, woolly stems and spiny, hairy, grey-green divided leaves. Spherical blue-grey flowerheads, up to 5cm across are produced in mid and late summer and are loved by bees.



Knautia Macedonia - a clump-forming perennial to 80cm in height, with dark green basal leaves to 8cm long, and simple or lobed stem leaves, with a succession of deep crimson pincushion-like flowerheads 3-4cm across, from mid to late summer. Attractive to pollinators.



Eryngium – also known as Sea Holly, these architectural, spiny, almost sculptural perennials, some looking superficially like thistles, can make a dramatic statement in a summer border. Let them rise above low-growing plants or mingle them amongst roses and taller perennials to provide contrast in form and texture. Long lasting flowers and attractive to pollinators.



Stachys Byzantina – also knowns as Lambs ears, this plant this a carpeting, evergreen perennial, with thick, soft, furry, silvery foliage and stems. Basal leaves are to 10cm long, in rosettes, flowering stems erect to 50cm in height. Flowers are purplish or pink, sometimes

appearing striped, arranged in many-flowered whorls in an interrupted spike in summer. Several selections with varying leaf and flower colour are available. A valuable foliage plant and a tough herbaceous perennial that can withstand both drought and freezing winters.



Osteospermum Jucundum – also known as African Daisy, this is a bushy perennial native to South Africa, with narrow foliage and from late spring to autumn, produces daily like flower heads up to 6cm across. Liked by pollinators and happy in dry conditions.

