

Garden



Photography: Alamy, GAP, Getty, Keith Lovegrove

Plant of the week *Daphne bholua*

Put *Daphne bholua* 'Jaqueline Postill' next to the path leading to your front door, and I guarantee everyone who visits will stop in their tracks as they pass it. The flowers, which appear throughout January and February, may be small, but their powerful punch of lemons and a hint of cinnamon is one of the loveliest garden scents you'll find.

The flowers start off as deep pink buds and open to pale pink. In autumn they're followed by dark purple, round berries. In a sheltered position this is an evergreen and is very slow-growing, so it's great for

front gardens where there's often not a lot of space for bigger shrubs. It needs moderately fertile, well-drained soil, and is happy in full sun or partial shade. It will be fine in a large pot, too, so long as you protect the pot itself from frost.

Daphne bholua needs very little aftercare and resents much pruning. It has a naturally tidy, relatively upright growing habit, but you can lightly trim it after flowering to remove misplaced branches.

Daphne odora

'Aureomarginata' has a similarly delicious scent, and its lance-shaped leaves are attractively variegated. Later flowering is *Daphne* 'Sweet Amethyst', with its pointed, purple-pink buds opening to soft pink flowers with a sweet perfume.

If you prefer white flowers, try *Daphne* × *transatlantica* 'Eternal Fragrance', which keeps pumping out scent from April through to October.

Find all the plants mentioned at waitrosegarden.com



With Alan Titchmarsh

Good companions

These three would all look good planted with daphnes



PACHYSANDRA TERMINALIS
This Japanese spurge has rosettes of glossy, evergreen leaves that form a dense mat of groundcover - perfect for carpeting bare soil under a daphne.



HELLEBORUS × HYBRIDUS 'HARVINGTON WHITE SPECKLED'
This hellebore has saucer-shaped white flowers with red speckles that will beautifully echo the pink of *Daphne bholua*.



SARCOCOCCA HOOKERIANA VAR. DIGYNA
For a border that's full of winter scent from December onwards, add this sweet box alongside a daphne or two.

GOOD FOR WOODS

A training scheme that helps both people and trees



There's a serious skills shortage when it comes to woodland management, so I was interested to hear recently about the Kent Woodland Employment Scheme (KWES). It's a charity that provides three-year paid apprenticeships leading towards internationally recognised qualifications for people who are finding it difficult to get a job, such as ex-offenders and young people with no formal qualifications, but with a willingness to learn and a desire to work outside in the open air. By all accounts, the scheme is a great success.

A lot of the training is carried out in ancient woodland (defined as having been in existence since 1600AD), and as well as benefiting the apprentices, it's also good for the trees. Ancient woodland is the UK's equivalent of the rain forest, with unique communities of plants and animals, but it needs careful management to thrive.

At this time of year, the apprentices are learning the art of coppicing - felling trees, then allowing new sprouts to grow from the cut stumps. This process can be carried out many times, and is sustainable over hundreds of years. It's been traced to Neolithic times, and is an ideal way of keeping woodland healthy and vigorous.

For more information or to donate to the charity, visit kwes.org.uk

In store now!

Look out for pretty *Anemone blanda* - the wood anemone - at the in-store garden pods, **3 FOR £10** or £4/each (offer ends 21 Feb). In blue, white, or pink, they'll grow happily in a border around the base of deciduous shrubs, in partial shade.

