

# From hoary plantain to harebell – wildflower favourites picked by Britain's leading plantspeople

Compiled by Zena Alkayat | Illustration Brie Harrison

**Sarah Wyndham Lewis** of Bermondsey Street Bees; author of *Planting for Honeybees*  
*Geranium pratense*, meadow cranesbill

**WHAT** Wild geraniums come in many forms, large and small, but share a robust nature and tendency to spread, which makes them extremely useful as a ground cover.

**WHY** These modest plants are so often underrated as the powerhouse for pollinators that they are. They flower strongly and need virtually no maintenance; they're as tough and as dependable as old boots and I've been encouraging our local park-keepers to tuck clumps in everywhere they can to help feed honeybees, bumblebees and other insects.



**Matt Collins** head gardener at The Garden Museum

*Plantago media*, hoary plantain

**WHAT** Smallish cylindrical flowers of pink and white, rising on a thin stem from flat, rosetted leaves.

**WHY** The discreet and often overlooked charm of Britain's wild plantains culminate in *Plantago media*, a wildflower scarcely seen yet worth seeking out. They are a little wonder, and I look for them every summer. A dweller in old churchyards and chalk grassland, they combine the broad leaves of greater plantain with the slender stem of ribwort, supplementing the latter's modest brown with a bright flash of pink and white.

**Katie Rushworth** gardener and presenter of *Love Your Garden*  
*Leucanthemum vulgare*, oxeye daisy

**WHAT** This daisy's white petals and bright yellow centre spread joy throughout summer.

**WHY** I love the innocence of this flower. Often overlooked, it turns up on mass and colonises the most drab areas, like motorway banking and railway lines. It's the flower we all learn to draw first as children, simple but effective.

**Dan Pearson** landscape designer  
*Paris quadrifolia*, herb paris

**WHAT** An unusual and rare native woodlander, herb paris grows in cool hollows and forms a tight colony when happy. Flowering with wood anemones and bluebells in April.

**WHY** It's one of our most sophisticated native plants. The architectural structure of green on green and the poise of the elegant flowers held above rosettes of glossy foliage make this one of my favourite spring flowers.

