

Melianthus major*Hosta 'Halcyon'*

feel of the garden. Blue and blue-green foliage create a cooler atmosphere and a gentle, calming feel. You can even use them in sunny spots — *Melianthus major* (which is slightly tender), is one of my favourites, with its handsome glaucous hand-like leaves, as well as most varieties of euphorbia. For shady areas, try *Hosta 'Halcyon'* and *Dicentra 'Stuart Boothman'*.

It all depends on what picture you would like to conjure up. Purple and burgundy foliage, for example, will give a border depth and solidity but mixing blue-green with purple leaves can give a dark, heavy feel. If silver, grey or white-variegated leaves are added, not forgetting some straight greens, the spirit of the garden will be lifted.

Deep reds and purples will help to show off lighter foliage to great effect. My favourites are *Phormium tenax* 'Nanum Purpureum', *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' and *Eupatorium rugosum* 'Chocolate'.

Yellow and golden tones will create a warm and uplifting effect. This is valuable in areas dominated by cloudy skies and low light levels. Gold-leaved plants will help to replace the missing sunshine and will lighten shady areas; grey and silver foliage reflect the light. Variegated leaves (those with two colours) also lighten and refresh a border. The most common variegations come in cream, white, yellow and green foliage. In a shady corner, white variegated plants will provide balance and continuity; use greys and silvers in sunny spots.

Here is some of my favourite greenery.

Blue/blue-green

Melianthus major: attractive, toothed, waxy and deeply divided leaves provide great texture, form and colour. This tender evergreen perennial requires well-drained soil and sun. *Hosta 'Halcyon'*: perennial with wonderful cooling, compact, deep blue heart-shaped leaves. Needs moist fertile soil and part- to full shade. *Dicentra 'Stuart Boothman'*: perennial with ferny, delicate, deeply divided, finely cut leaves. Perennial requiring moist, fertile soil and part shade. *Pinus wallichiana*: large, weeping tree with graceful, long, pendulous needles. Requires well-drained soil and sun.

Purple/burgundy
Phormium tenax 'Nana Purpureum':

rich purple-red evergreen with sword-shaped leaves. Great vertical accent. Well-drained soil and sun.

Cotinus coggygia 'Royal Purple': shrub with rounded, dark burgundy leaves, great autumn colour. Well-drained soil and sun.

Eupatorium rugosum 'Chocolate': tall perennial with stiff, dark stems and dark purple foliage. Moist soil in part shade to sun.

Yellow/golden

Humulus lupulus 'Aureus': perennial climber with vigorous twining habit and soft yellow foliage. Moist, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade. *Filipendula ulmaria* 'Aurea': palmate perennial with bright green foliage. Moist soil in part shade.

Carex elata 'Bowles' Golden Sedge': perennial grass with clump-forming, arched, bright grassy leaves. Moist, fertile soil in part shade to sun.

Grey/silver grey

Eleagnus 'Quicksilver': drought-tolerant shrub with small, narrow leaves and inconspicuous flowers with incredible scent in June. Well-drained soil and sun.

Teucrium fruticans: evergreen shrub with elegant arching white stems and grey leaves. Well-drained soil and sun. *Stachys byzantina* 'Silver Carpet':

perennial with evergreen carpet of dense furry foliage. Well-drained soil and sun.

Green

Libertia grandiflora: evergreen perennial with a fountain of elegant, linear foliage. Fertile soil in sun.

Grisebina litoralis: shrub or small tree with evergreen, bright, rounded leaves, great for hedges. Well-drained soil and sun to part shade.

Phyllostachys 'Aurea': well-behaved, graceful bamboo with fine, fresh leaves. Fertile, moist soil in sun or shade.

Variegated

Brunnera 'Jack Frost': perennial with dramatic, large, heart-shaped, silver leaves, finely veined with green. Fertile, moist soil and part to full shade.

Pulmonaria 'Roy Davidson': perennial, clump-forming ground cover of silvery, spotted markings on narrow, slightly hairy green leaves. Fertile, moist soil and full to part shade.

Carex oshimensis 'Evergold': bright green evergreen sedge with golden margins. Fertile, moist, well-drained soil in sun or part shade.

Call of the prairie

Joanna Gough will be talking about the Gardens and Plants of the Western Cape on Wednesday — she has introduced many prairie plants at Geilston, a National Trust for Scotland property near Helensburgh, where she is head gardener. The lecture begins at 7pm at the NTS headquarters, 28 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. Entry £5. Call 0131 243 9578 or visit www.nts.org.uk for details

Bulb watch

The Spring Festival at Kew Gardens, west London, with 5m bulbs on display, starts on Saturday. Call 020 8332 5555 for information, or visit www.kew.org/bulbwatch to find out what will be in flower when you visit

Caroline Donald

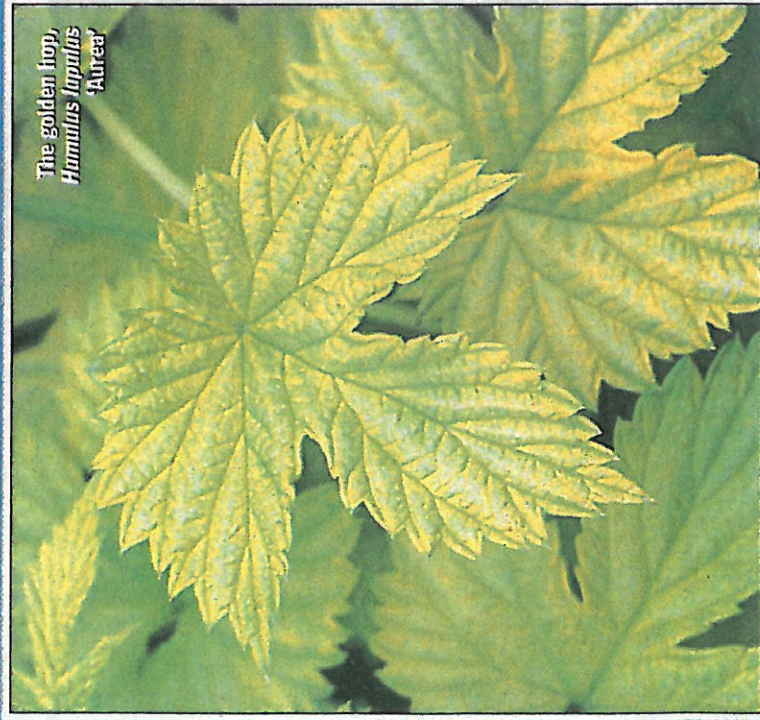
cuttings@sunday-times.co.uk

What to do this week

- Start pruning bush roses
- The seeds of hardy annuals, such as *Limnanthes douglasii* (poached egg flower) can be sown directly in garden borders now
- To prevent slug damage, surround the emerging shoots of hostas with circles of coarse grit
- Use a half-moon edger to redefine any damaged lawn edges
- Sow the seeds of aubergines and leave them to germinate in a heated propagator

Neil Wormald

The golden hop,
Humulus lupulus
'Aureus'



Jerry Harpur/Marianne Meijer/Marcus Harpur