

Home & Garden

Try some different flowers in your garden this summer

In the mood to try something new and different in your summer garden?

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The following four plants are, perhaps, less well known, but definitely not less beautiful. Be prepared, however, to answer some questions about them as their striking appearance is bound to elicit questions from envious guests and neighbours.

Acidanthera (Ethiopian gladioli)

This tuberous plant originated in Ethiopia and produces leaves which look like those of the gladioli, hence its name.

Planted in a sunny location, the flower stems grow to be 75 cm in height with clusters of delightfully scented, somewhat pendant flowers which bloom from August to September.

Its white flower, with a diameter of about five to seven cm, has a beautifully marked reddish purple centre.

The leaves and flowers of the *Acidanthera* are a wonderful addition to border plantings of grey-leaved foliage plants and white- and pink-flowered perennials.

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For example, an interesting border could be grey-leaved, low-growing *Artemisia schmidtiana*, *Nana* with soft pink-flowered *Geranium endressii* in front, *Ethiopian gladioli* in the middle and the soft pink mallow or *Sidalcea Elsie Heugh* in the background.

Acidanthera will also create a beautiful touch of colour in a border containing soft blue and purple tints as these colours occur in the centre of the flower.

If this colour combination is your desire, use *Meadow rue* (*Thalictrum*), *Acanthus*, purple and lilac phlox and *Monarda*.

Eucomis (Pineapple plant)

At first glance, the *Eucomis* is a curious plant.

It's for good reason that its common name is Pineapple plant as it grows an inverted cone-like cluster of greenish flowers topped by a tuft of little green leaves looking altogether rather like a pineapple.

If you take a close look at the individual flowers, you'll see that they are charmingly marked with a delicate purple-red stripe along the borders.

The *Eucomis bicolor* is the most well-known of this variety, however there is also a white-flowering cultivar, *Alba*.

Eucomis comosa (often named *E. punctata*) is usually sold as a mix in which the flower colours include white, greenish-white and pink, all with a little lilac centre.

The Pineapple plant is best displayed when it has plenty of room to grow and is therefore better suited to planting in the front of a border, surrounded by ground covers such as soft orange *Potentilla tongol*, grey-leaved creeping thyme, *Xanthium*, or low-growing *Lady's mantle*.

All that being said, the most common way of using this stunning plant is in pots and containers where it can stand alone in all its glory.

Galtonia (Cape hyacinth)

The Cape hyacinth is a bulb plant with white, delightfully scented, bell-shaped flowers clustered on a one-metre stem.

Flowering occurs from July to August and it prefers to grow in full sun or light shade in fertile, well-drained soil.

Place the Cape hyacinth among and behind perennials which do not get taller than 45 cm so as not to obstruct the view of its pretty flowers.

Appropriate plants include *Geranium*, *Lady's mantle*, *Coreopsis*, the soft yellow *Achillea tagetea*, or the *Tradescantia*.

One can also show off the beauty of the Cape hyacinth's flowers by combining them with contrasting flower shapes such as phlox, mallow and daisy-like flowers such as the summer-flowering aster, *Echinacea* or *Helenium*.

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