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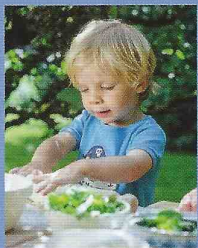
## 5 summer gardens CONTEMPORARY, COASTAL CLASSIC & ORGANIC PLOTS

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## DESIGNER PLANTS

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# TOP 20 *designer* PLANTS

We asked our pick of the UK's top designers for their tried-and-tested recommendations of must-have plants, and they each gave us their favourite five

WORDS JACKIE BENNETT

## THE DESIGNERS

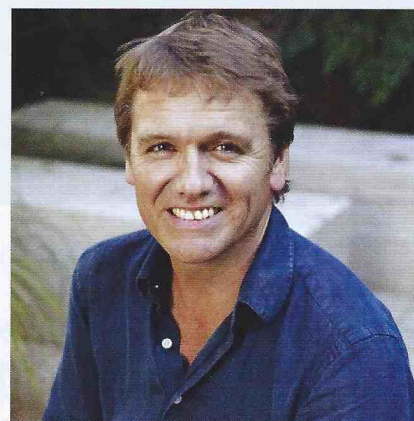
**W**e asked four of our top designers, all members of the Society of Garden Designers to share their all-time favourite plants, specifically which five they would not want to be without - the plants that they consider to be their 'signature' plants. There's nothing common or garden about their choices, but these perennials, shrubs and trees are tried and tested by designers who create gardens for demanding clients in the UK and abroad, not to mention the eagle-eyed public who come to see their show gardens.

Good designers will consider their plant choice right at the beginning of a scheme. Does the garden owner want a garden that looks good all the time? Or are they happy with 'rolling highlights' - certain plants or groups of plants that shine at different points in the year, so that there is always something to look forward to? How the plants are actually planted - in blocks, waves or more random planting schemes - will vary with the style of the garden. But most designers agree that, for impact, repeated use of a few signature plants is what makes a garden look coherent. Far from being monotonous, this 'designer trick' gives rhythm to a planting scheme and is actually really easy for us all to follow. ▶



AMANDA PATTON MSGD

**Amanda's style combines a gentle, contemporary feel with strong architecture and naturalistic planting. She has won awards at both RHS Chelsea and Hampton Court Palace Flower Shows.**



ANDY STURGEON FSGD

**Voted one of the UK's top 10 landscape designers by the *Sunday Times* and *House & Garden* magazine, Andy has won six Gold Medals at the prestigious RHS Chelsea Flower Show and also 'Best in Show' in 2010.**



THOMAS HOBLYN MSGD

**Thomas trained at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and has gone on to receive numerous awards at RHS shows including three Gold Medals and the RHS People's Choice Award in 2012.**



CHARLOTTE ROWE MSGD

**Based in London, Charlotte and her small team work on landscaping and design projects in the UK and overseas, including a range of styles from contemporary roof terraces to country gardens.**



## *Nandina domestica*

Known as heavenly bamboo, this shrub has everything going for it: an

evergreen with tinges of colour on the leaves in autumn, salmon-pink new growth, white flowers in autumn, red berries and plenty of elegance. It manages to work in almost any planting scheme or style.

Evergreen shrub for borders and as a specimen plant. Height: 1.5m; spread: 1.5m. Flowers: summer. Tip: Excellent for low-maintenance planting schemes.



## *Lavandula x intermedia*

'GROSSO'

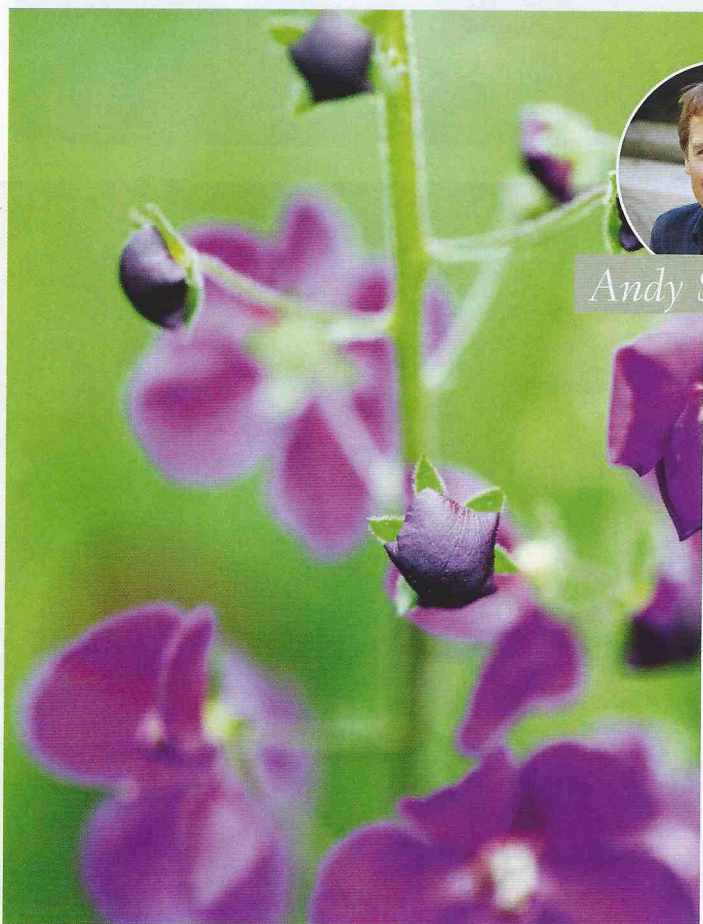
I've only recently latched onto this lavender. It has a good strong purple flower and silvery foliage, which, unlike many lavenders, stays unusually neat and tidy over winter.

Evergreen shrub - good for hedges and edging.

Height: 75cm; spread: 1m. Flowers: summer. Tip: The highly perfumed flowers are good for cutting and drying.



Andy Sturgeon



## *Verbascum phoeniceum*

'VIOLETTA'

The rich purple flowers are widely spaced, making it beautiful and elegant and not at all brutish like many of its relatives. This is a plant I will always find an excuse to use in my gardens.

Evergreen perennial. Height: 90cm; spread: 45cm. Flowers: Late spring - early summer. Tip: Self-seeds freely and being shorter than most varieties means it's ideal for smaller gardens.

## *Salvia nemerosa*

'CARADONNA'

Another plant from the purple spectrum. I can't resist the striking dark-purple stems, which somehow manage to be eye-catching without being obvious, and it's great that the violet-blue flowers stay for a good few months.

Upright perennial. Height: 76cm; spread: 50cm. Flowers: summer to autumn. Tip: Great for butterflies and bees.



## *Trachystemon orientalis*

The perfect plant if you have a lot of ground that needs covering. Starry-blue flowers appear in early spring followed by huge heart-shaped green leaves. Looks good planted en masse.

Spreading perennial. Height: 1m; spread: 50cm. Flowers: early spring. Tip: Good for difficult situations such as banks or dry shade. ▶