



Top 50 Unusual Plants for Pollinators

Unusual or Exotic Plants to add a unique twist to your garden

List Curated by Thomas McBride

From research data collected and collated at the
National Botanic Garden of Wales

NB: Butterflies and Moths are not studied at the NBGW so any data on nectar plants beneficial for them is taken from Butterfly Conservation



Guide to using these pages:

Map

Maps depict the native area of the plant (in green)
They also show areas the plant is naturalised (in purple)

All maps shown are derived from 'Plants of the World Online'; courtesy of Kew Gardens

Flowering Period (this is when it is good for pollinators!)

Plant Family

Growing habit and mature size of the plant

Latin Binomial Name

Ribes speciosum

Common English Name

Fuchsia-flowered Currant

Photograph of the plant in flower



Insect groups known to favour the nectar of this plant



- Species -

Mid Spring - Early Summer

Grossulariaceae
Currant Family

Small Shrub

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

* This plant will not survive below -10°C night temperatures, protect from very harsh winter nights

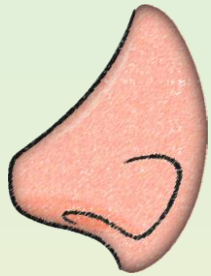
44

Useful knowledge or warnings about the plant

RHS AGM cultivars of this species (or a related species occasionally)

Key to these Pages

Additional information on these garden plants



The flowers and/or leaves have a Pleasant scent

This plant would only be suitable for meadow-style planting



Plant is often used in traditional Herbal Remedies



The plant has edible parts that are commonly eaten or used in cooking



Warnings



Plant tissue is highly toxic if ingested



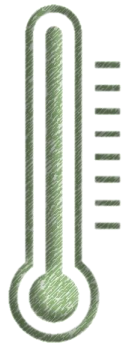
Sap may cause irritation (Wash hands after touching or avoid touching)

Temperature

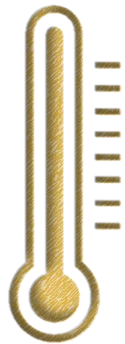
Some of the plants listed in our Top 200 are not fully hardy in all or some parts of the United Kingdom.

Plants without a thermometer symbol are fully hardy in the severest UK Winter; equating to **H5** or hardier.

Plants with a coloured thermometer symbol are hardy to varying degrees as follows:



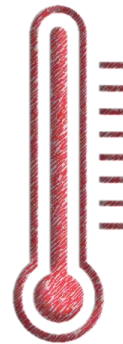
Almost Hardy
(H4)



Half-Hardy
(H3)



Not Frost Hardy
(H2)



Not Hardy
(H1)

RHS Hardiness Scale

H1a	-	Above 15°C
H1b	-	Minimum 10°C
H1c	-	Minimum 5°C
H2	-	Minimum 1°C
H3	-	Minimum -5°C
H4	-	Minimum -10°C
H5	-	Minimum -15°C

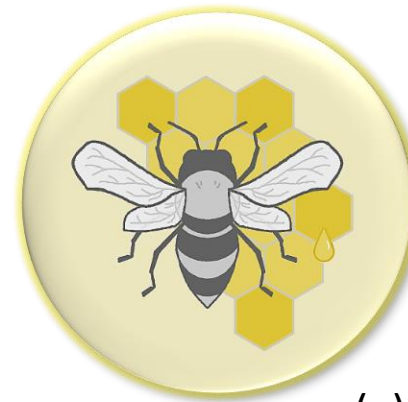
Pollinators

Our data on pollinators has been collected from studies spanning over a decade. Pollinator symbols appear when plants are proven to be good nectar plants for certain insects.

It should be noted that all bee and hoverfly data is ours but lepidoptera data is taken from Butterfly Conservation.

Our data spans a wide range of different insect species. For simplicity, these species have been condensed into six easy icons to represent them:

- | | | |
|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| a) Honeybees | c) Bumblebees | e) Moths |
| b) Hoverflies | d) Butterflies
(Includes Moths) | f) Solitary Bees |



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

Actinidia tetramera

Rosy Crab-Apple Kiwi



Var. maloides



Spring 

Actinidiaceae
Kiwi Family

12ft Climber

Alstroemeria x hybrida

Garden Peruvian-lily

Complex group of hybrids of unknown parentage



'Apollo' 'Sirius'
'Spitfire' 'Tessa'

Late Summer
- Mid Autumn

Alstroemeriaceae
Peruvian-lily Family

3ft Tuberos



Amaranthus caudatus

Love-lies-bleeding



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Alwyn Ladell



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

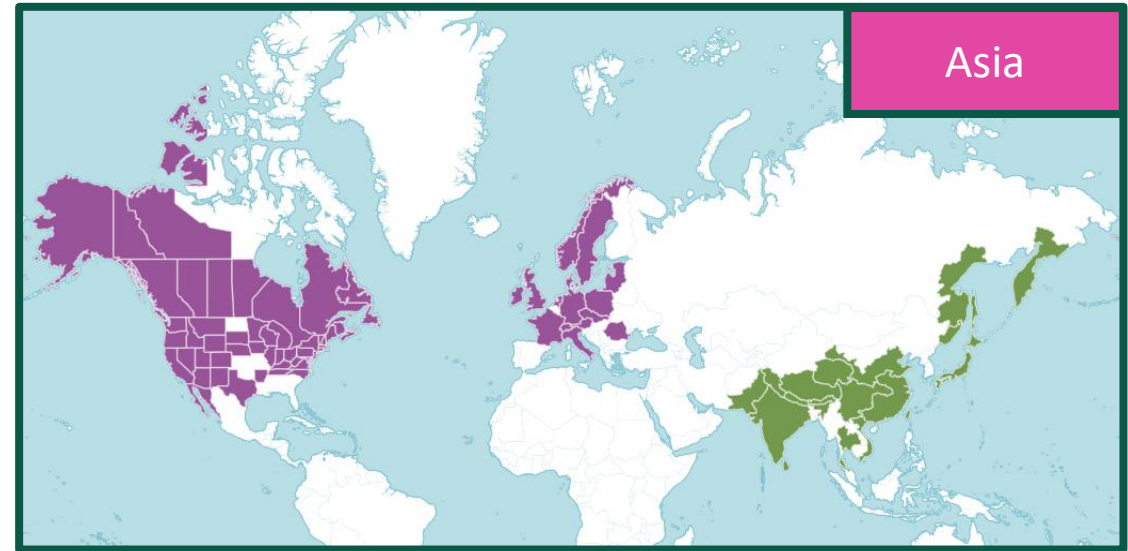
Amaranthaceae
Amaranth Family

2ft Annual

* Will not survive a frost, only half-hardy

Anaphalis margaritacea

Pearly Everlasting



Related species: *Anaphalis triplinervis*

'Sommerschnee'



Summer ☀

Asteraceae
Daisy Family

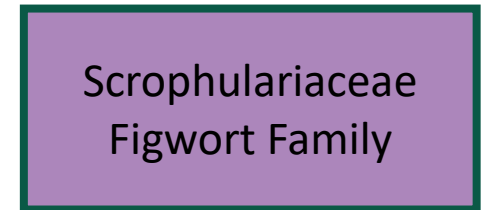
2ft Perennial

Buddleja globosa

Orange-ball Butterfly Bush

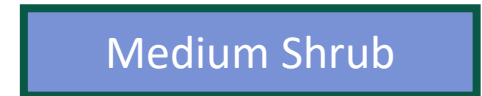
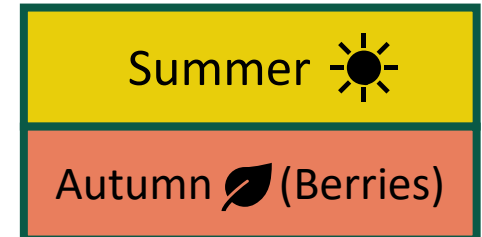


Photograph from Flickr (CC) Margrit



Callicarpa bodinieri

Bodinier's Beautyberry

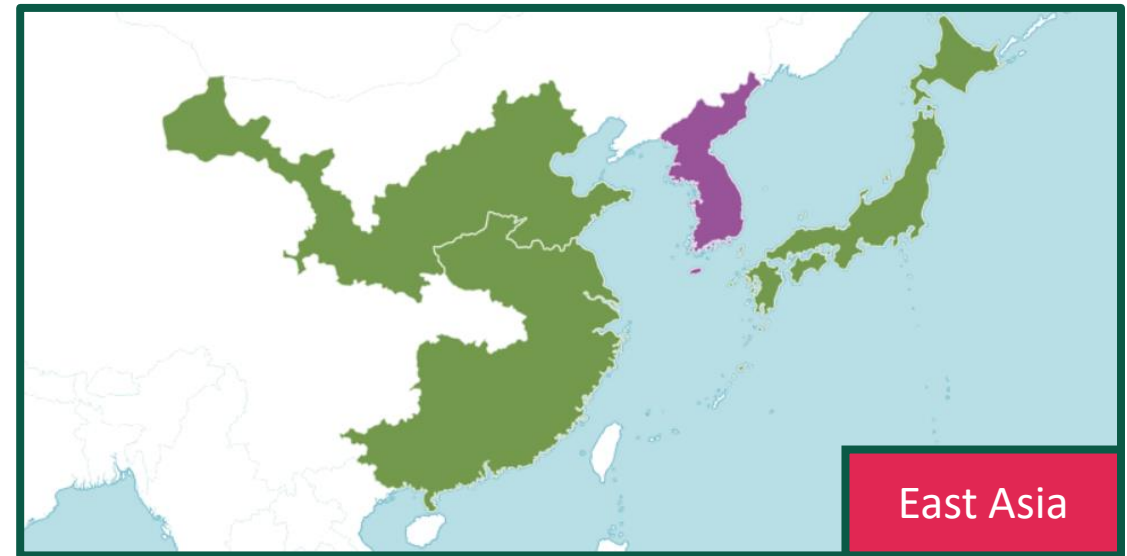


Campsis grandiflora

Chinese Trumpet Vine



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Philip Chang



Related Hybrid:
(*C. Radicans* x *C. grandiflora*)
Campsis x *tagliabuana*
'Madame Galen'

Summer ☀️

Bignoniaceae
Trumpet Vine Family

10ft+ Climber

* This plant will not survive below -10°C night temperatures, protect from very harsh winter nights

Capparis spinosa

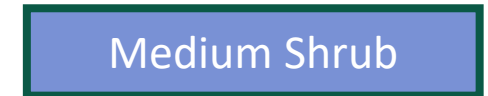
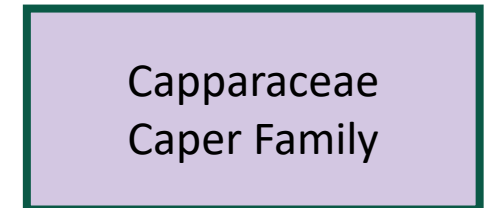
Caper Bush



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Tracie Hall



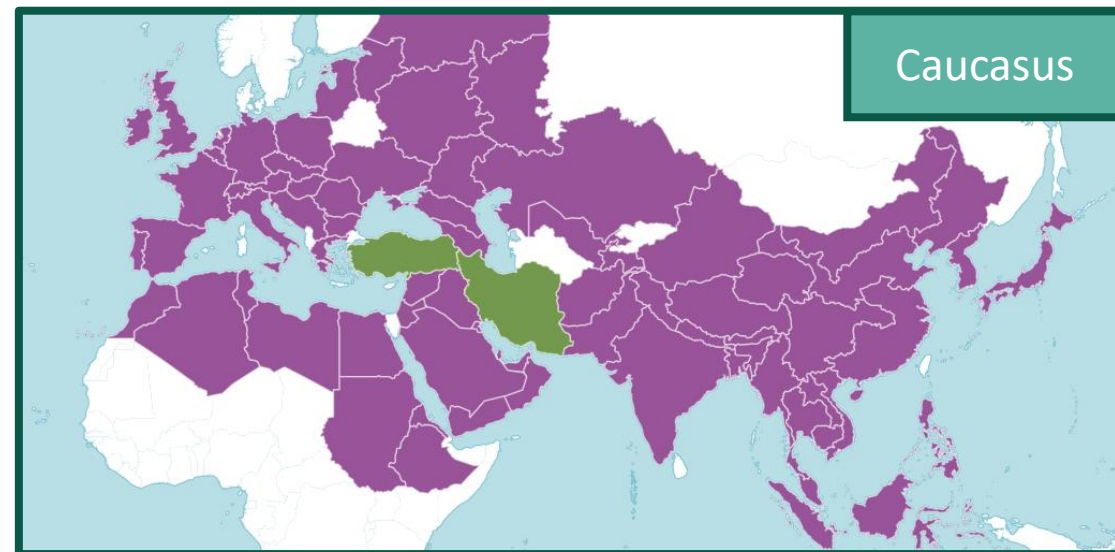
None



* This plant will not survive below -10°C night temperatures, protect from very harsh winter nights

Carthamus tinctorius

Safflower



Ceratostigma plumbaginoides

Hardy Blue Leadwort



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) David J Stang



-Species-

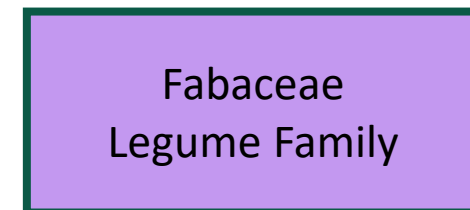
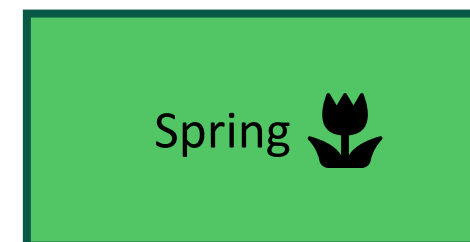
Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Plumbaginaceae
Leadwort Family

2ft Perennial

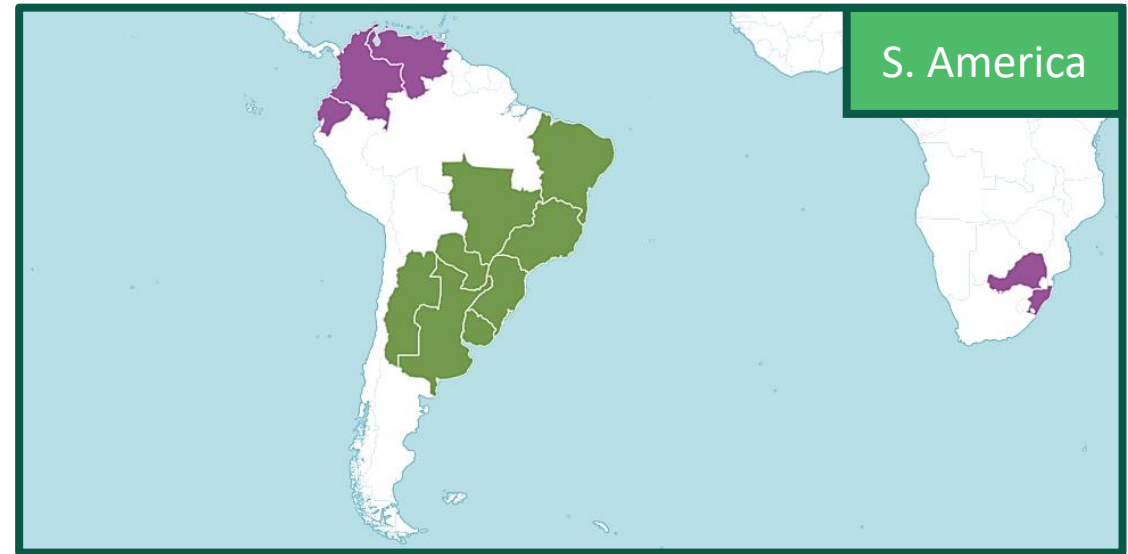
Cercis siliquastrum

Judas Tree



Cleome hassleriana

Common Spiderflower



S. America

'Helen Campbell'

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Cleomaceae
Spiderflower Family

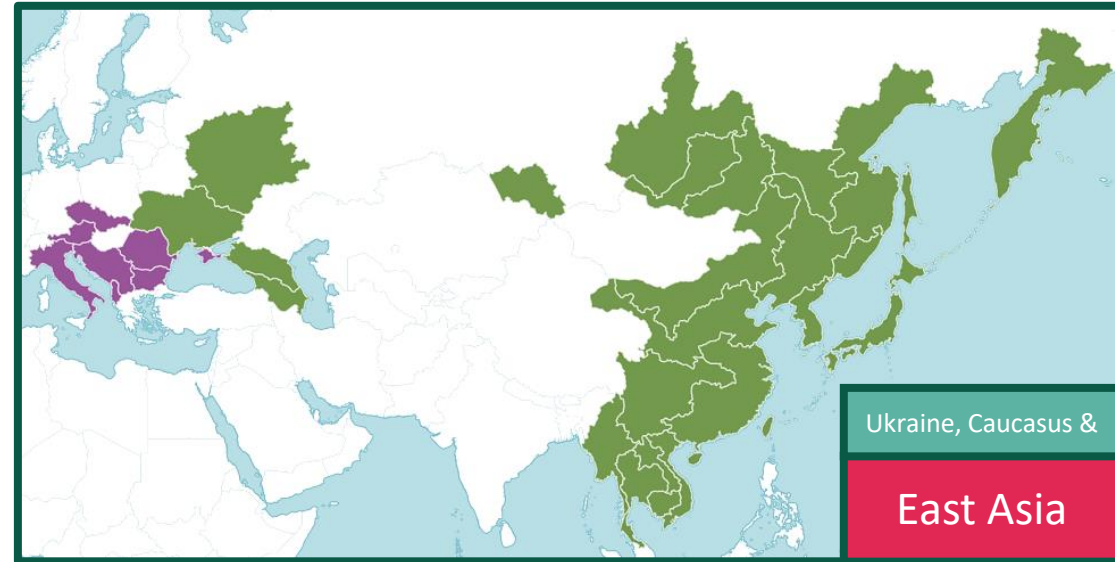
5ft Annual

Commelina communis

Asiatic Dayflower



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) Reinhold Möller



None



Dahlia imperialis


Tree Dahlia



Photograph from Flickr (CC) James Gaither



None



Summer ☀

Asteraceae
Daisy Family

6ft Tuberos Perennial

* This plant will struggle to survive below -5°C night temperatures so plant in a sheltered spot and wrap the stems/mulch the base during the winter period.

Delosperma lavisiae

Drakensberg Ice Plant



- Species -

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

Summer ☀

Aizoaceae
Ice Plant Family

1ft Perennial

Dierama pulcherrimum

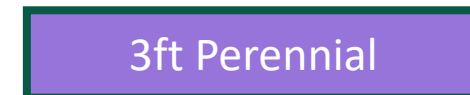
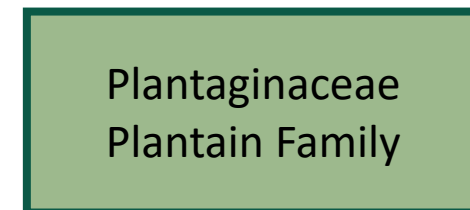
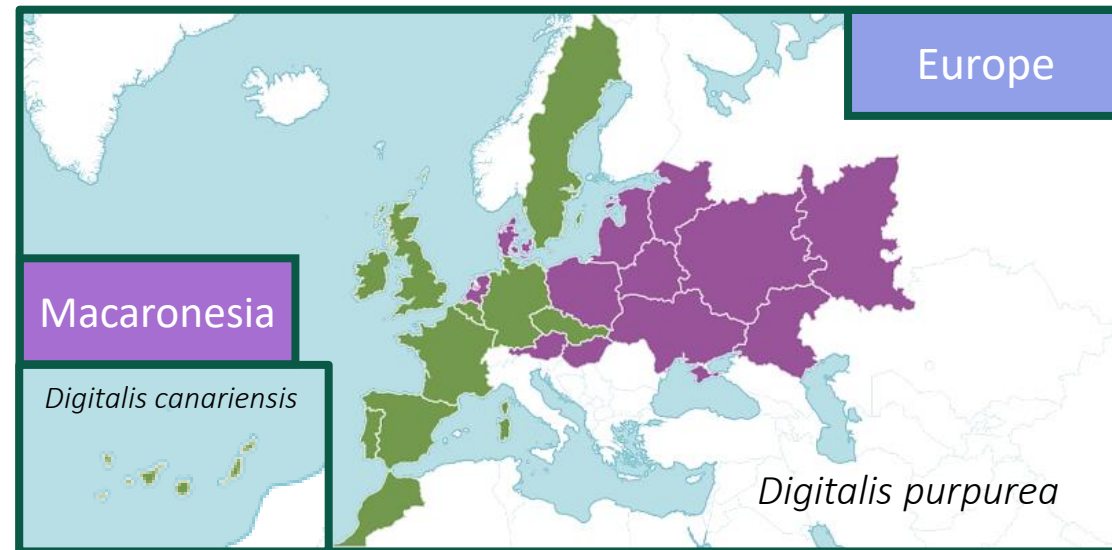
Angel's Fishing Rod



Digitalis x valinii

Illumination Foxglove

Digitalis purpurea x *Digitalis canariensis* (syn. *Isoplexis canariensis*)



Echium candicans

Pride of Madeira



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Christian Arballo

© Christian Arballo
www.flickr.com/photos/aballosimages



Late Spring
- Midsummer

Boraginaceae
Borage Family

6ft Biennial

* This plant can only be grown outside during the summer (above 5°C night temperatures) 18

Eucomis comosa

Common Pineapple-lily



'Sparkling Burgundy'



Early Summer
- Early Autumn

Asparagaceae
Asparagus Family

2ft Bulbous

Ferula communis

Giant Fennel



None

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

Summer ☀

Apiaceae
Carrot Family

10ft Perennial

* This plant should be grown in a sheltered location
(cannot survive below -5°C night temperatures)

Francoa sonchifolia

Common Bridalwreath



Potentially

'Pink Bouquet'

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

Summer ☀️

Francoaceae
Bridalwreath Family

3ft Perennial

Fritillaria imperialis

Crown Imperial



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Emma Patsie



- Species -

'Maxima Lutea'



Spring 

Liliaceae
Lily Family

3ft Bulbous

Gardenia jasminoides

Cape Jasmine, Gardenia



- Species - 'Daisy'
'Kleim's Hardy'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Rubiaceae
Madder Family

Small Shrub

The two varieties listed are almost hardy but may not survive below -5°C winter nights. Other varieties may be much less hardy so be careful to select cold-hardy varieties if you wish to grow them outdoors.

Grevillea rosmarinifolia

Rosemary-leaved Grevillea



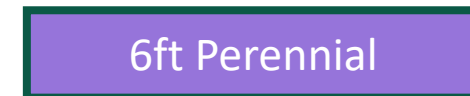
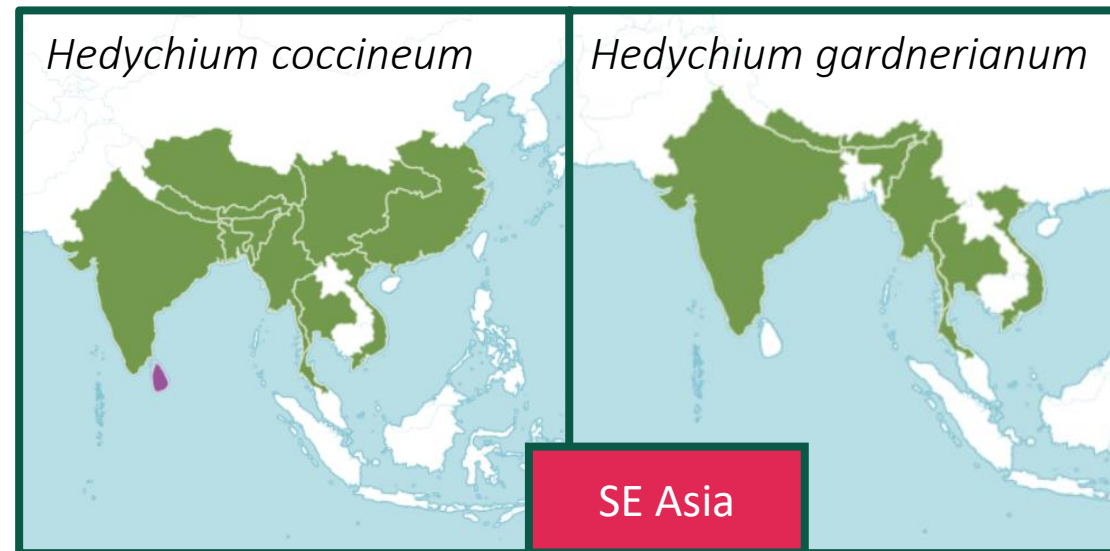
Hedychium x moorei

Hardy Ginger-lily

Hedychium coccineum x *Hedychium gardnerianum* (Probable)



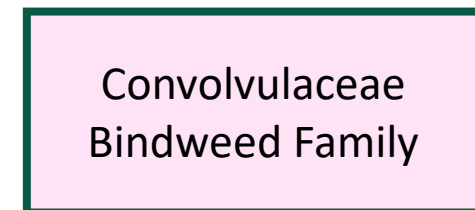
Photograph from Flickr (CC) Esin Üstün



* This plant will not survive below -10°C night temperatures, protect from very harsh winter nights

Ipomoea tricolor

Morning Glory



* This plant can only be grown outside during the summer (above 5°C night temperatures) 26

Kalmia latifolia

Mountain-laurel



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Nicholas A. Torelli



'Freckles'
'Pink Charm'



Mid Spring
- Early Summer

Ericaceae
Heather Family

Medium Shrub

Lamprocapnos spectabilis

Bleeding Heart



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Mark Wordy



- Species -
'Alba' 'Valentine'

Mid Spring
- Early Summer

Papaveraceae
Poppy Family

2ft Perennial

Leucadendron salignum

Common Sunshine Conebush



* This plant should be grown in a sheltered location
(cannot survive below -5°C night temperatures)

Lilium lancifolium

Tiger Lily



Related sp:
L. pardalinum

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

Summer ☀️

Liliaceae
Lily Family

4ft Bulbous

Limnanthes douglasii

Poached Egg Plant



Photograph from Flickr (CC) James Gaither



-Species-



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Limnanthaceae
Meadowfoam Family

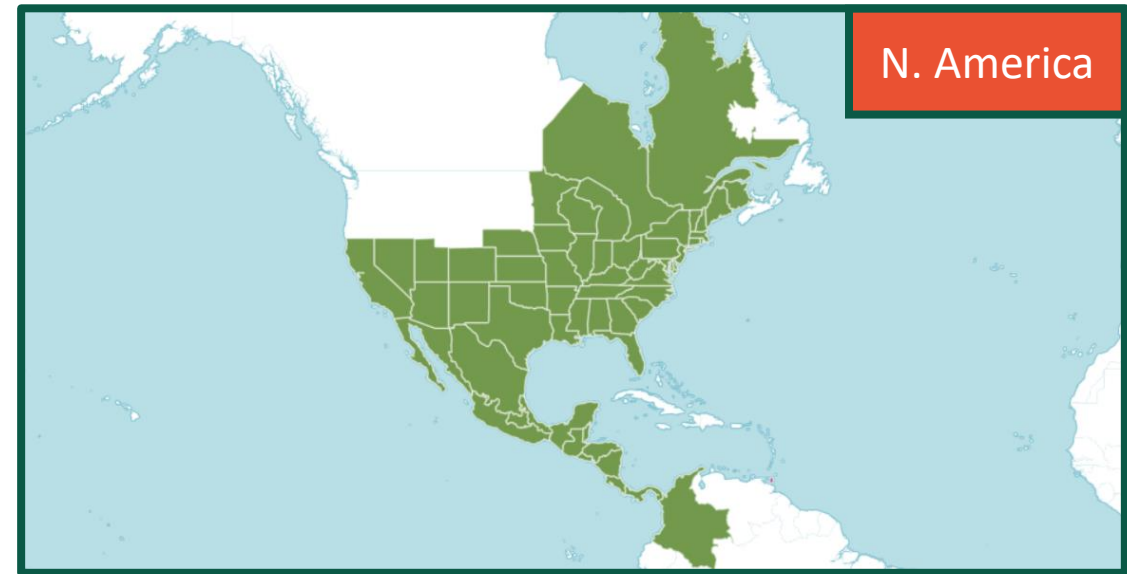
1ft Annual

Lobelia cardinalis

Red Cardinal Flower



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Kerry Woods



- Species -
'Queen Victoria'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Campanulaceae
Bellflower Family

3ft Annual*

Marshlands

*Or short-lived
32 half-hardy
perennial

Magnolia acuminata

Blue Magnolia, Cucumber tree



Related Hybrids:

‘Elizabeth’
‘Gold Star’*



Spring 

Magnoliaceae
Magnolia Family

Medium Tree

*The species can vary between very blue (such as cultivar ‘Blue Opal’) or very yellow (such as the hybrids listed).

Meconopsis betonicifolia

Himalayan Blue Poppy *Syn. M. baileyi*



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Tim Waters

- Species -
'Mop Head'



Summer ☀

Papaveraceae
Poppy Family

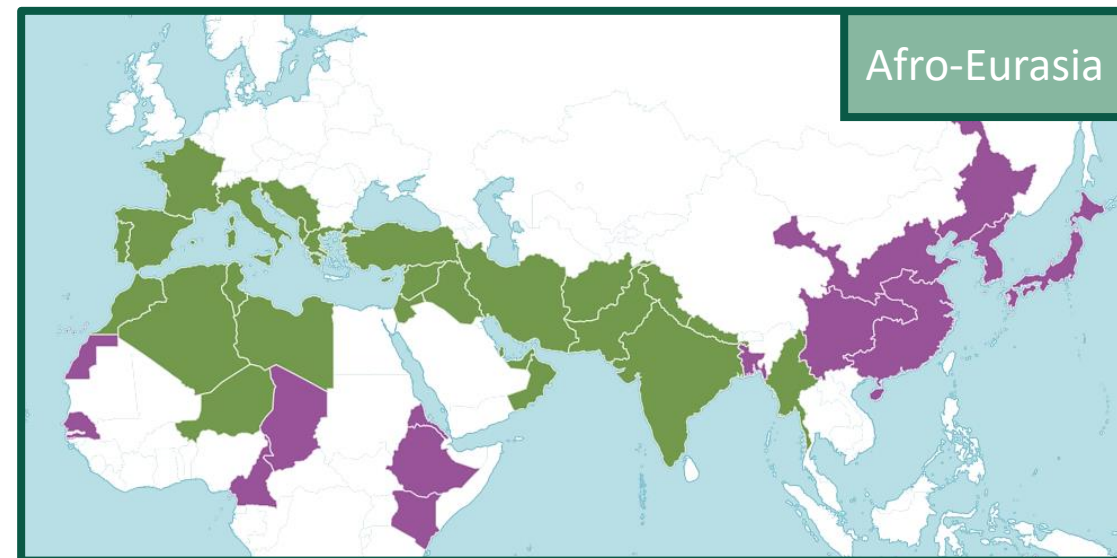
3ft Perennial

Nerium oleander

Oleander



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Himanshu Sarpotdar



Afro-Eurasia

'Petite series'
'Variegatum' **



Summer ☀

Apocynaceae
Milkweed Family

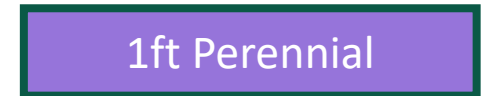
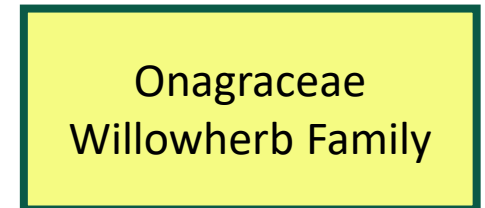
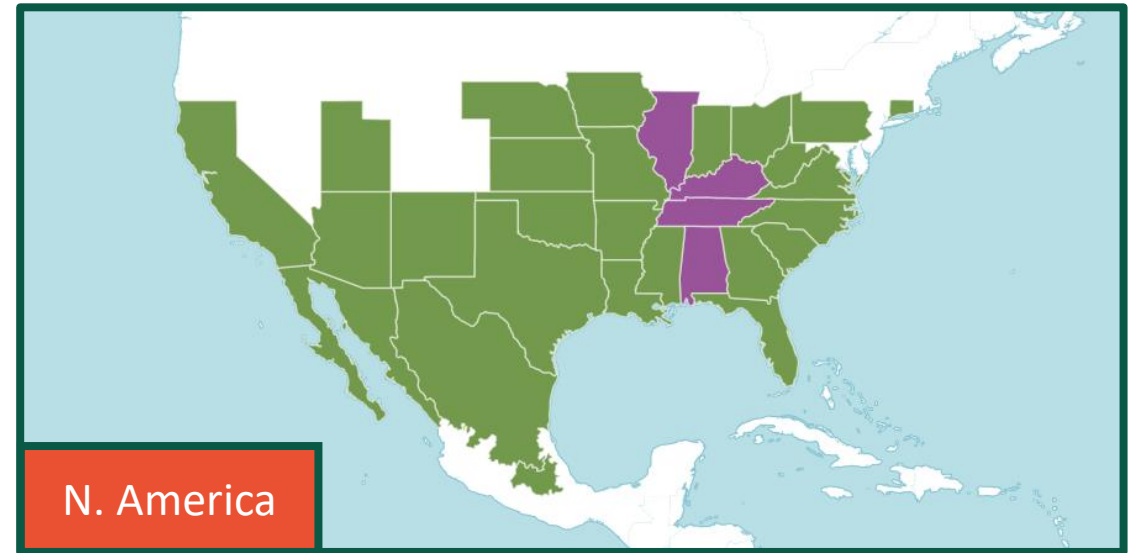
Medium Shrub

** Double flowered cultivars are not good for most pollinating insects so try to buy single flowers when possible

* This plant should be kept under glass during the winter (cannot survive below -5°C night temperatures)

Oenothera speciosa

Pink Evening-Primrose



Ornithogalum dubium

Orange Star-of-Bethlehem



Midwinter
- Mid Spring

Asparagaceae
Asparagus Family

1ft Bulbous

* This plant will cannot survive below -2°c night temperatures so grow in a pot, bring outside during warmer days and keep in a sheltered, sunny position

Oxalis versicolor

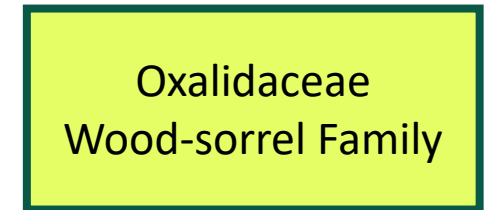
Candy-cane Sorrel



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) NZFauna



- Species -



* This plant will cannot survive below -5°c night temperatures so bring indoors during the winter period.

Paeonia ludlowii

Tibetan Tree Paeony



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Julia Halle



None



Spring 

Paeoniaceae
Paeony Family

Medium Shrub

Passiflora caerulea

Blue Passionflower



Photograph from Flickr (CC) bvi4092



- Species -
'Constance Elliott'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

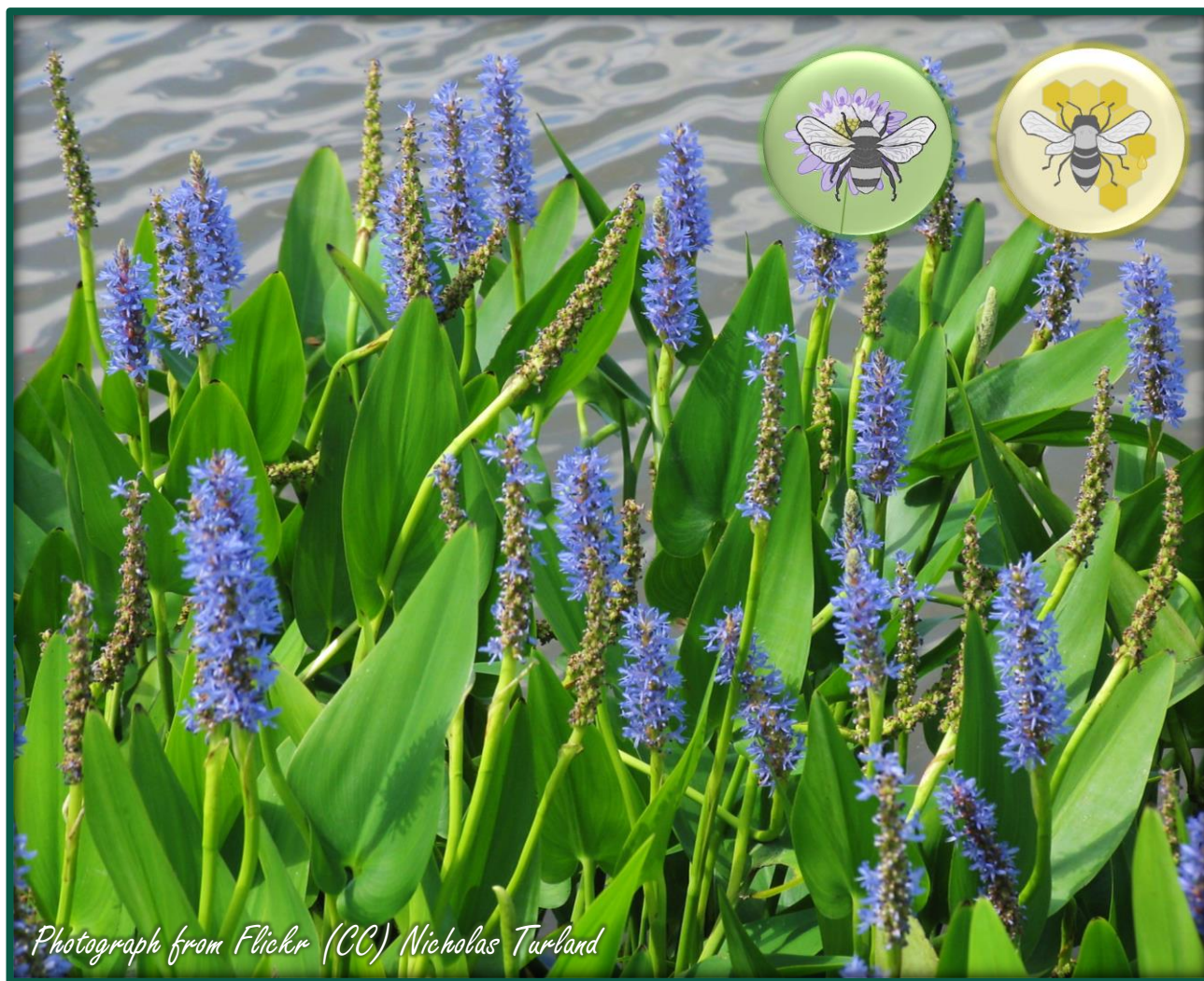
Passifloraceae
Passion Fruit Family

10ft+ Vine

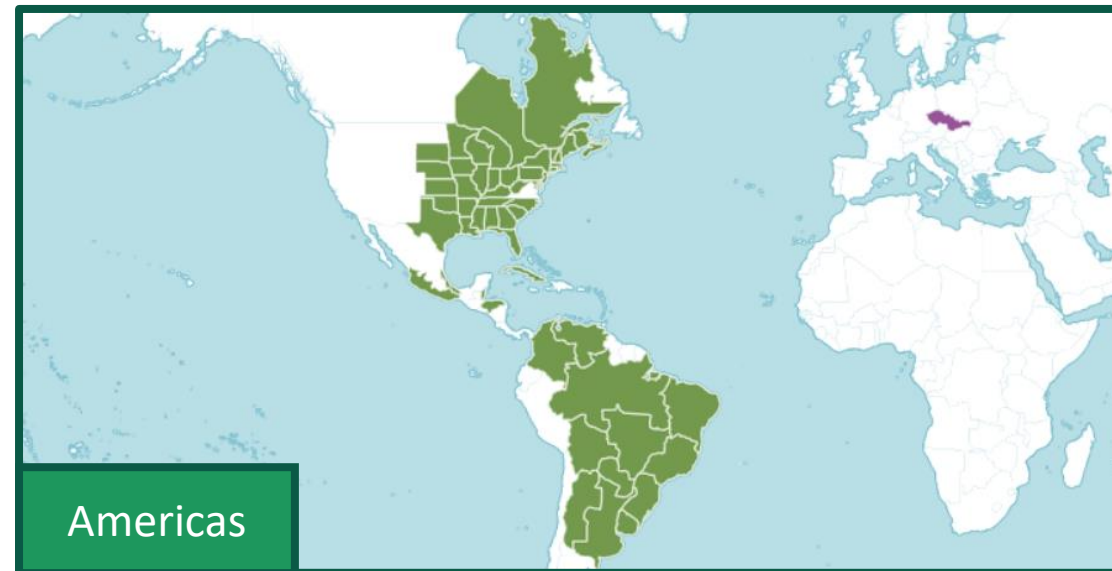
* This plant will not survive below -10°C night temperatures, protect from very harsh winter nights
** The fruit and flowers are edible but not commonly consumed. The leaves are poisonous when raw; containing cyanide.

Pontederia cordata

Pickerel Weed



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Nicholas Turland



- Species -



Summer ☀

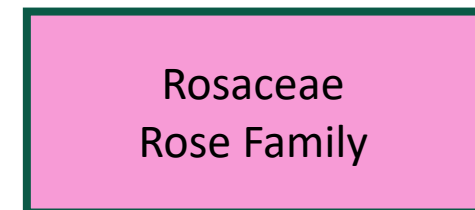
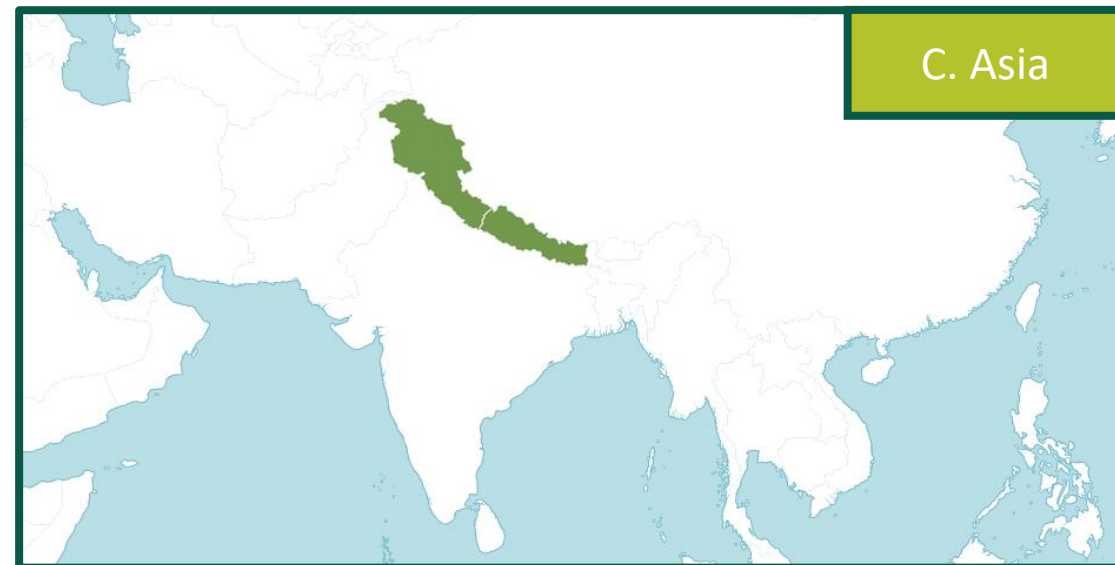
Pontederiaceae
Pickerel Weed Family

4ft Aquatic Perennial

Semi-aquatic

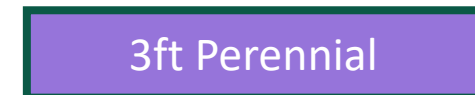
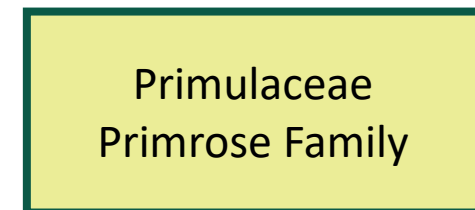
Potentilla nepalensis

Nepalese Cinquefoil



Primula secundiflora

Chinese Pink Cowslip



Ribes speciosum

Fuchsia-flowered Currant



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Steve Law



- Species -



Mid Spring
- Early Summer

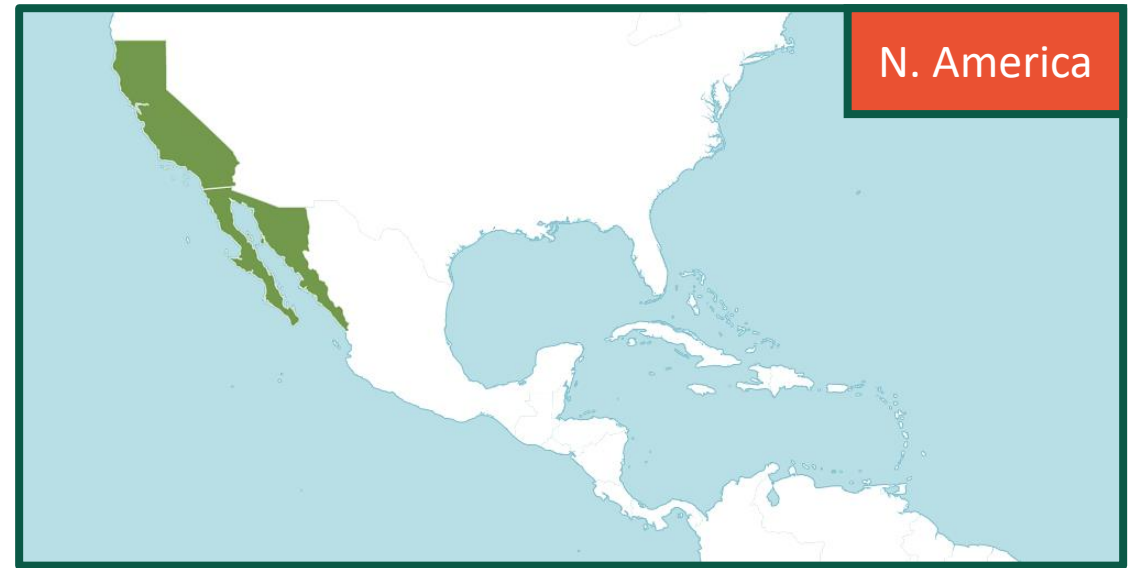
Grossulariaceae
Currant Family

Small Shrub

* This plant will not survive below -10°C night temperatures, protect from very harsh winter nights

Romneya coulteri

Californian Tree-Poppy



- Species -
'White Cloud'



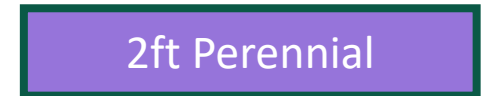
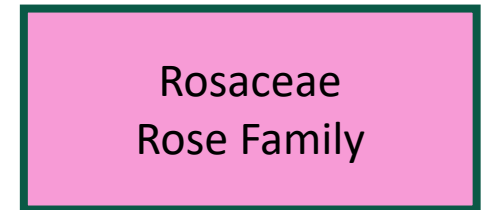
Summer ☀

Papaveraceae
Poppy Family

6ft Perennial

Sanguisorba hakusanensis

Lilac Squirrel Flower

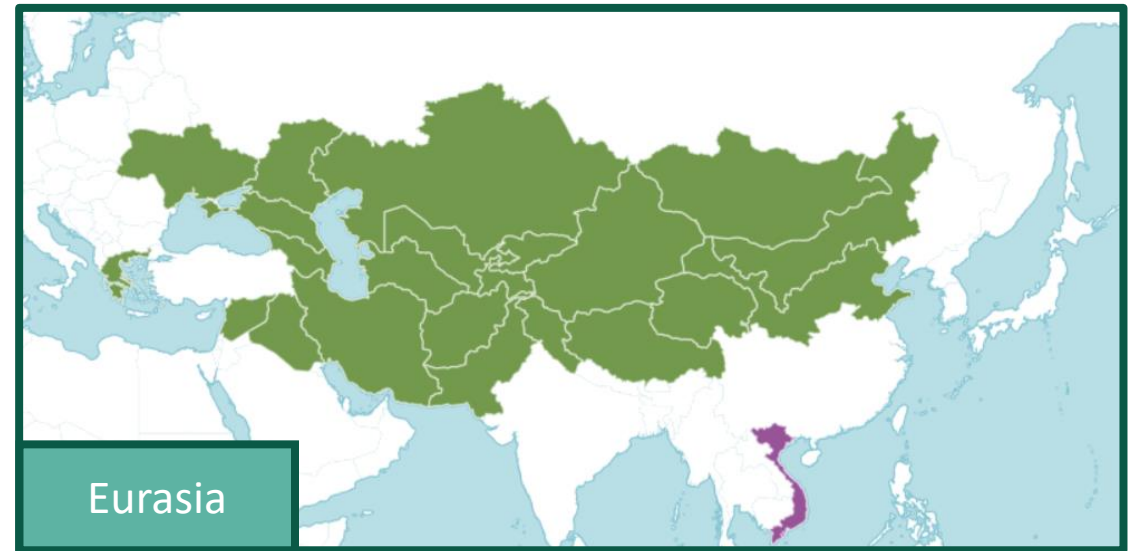


Tamarix ramosissima

Saltcedar Tamarisk



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Andrey Zharkikh



Eurasia

'Pink Cascade'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

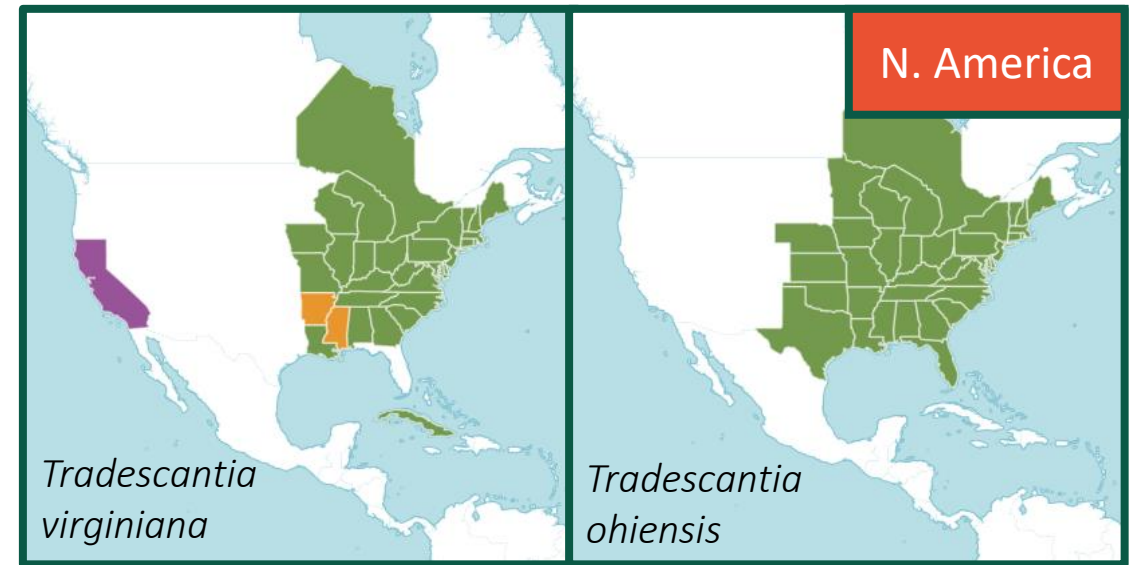
Tamaricaceae
Tamarisk Family

Medium Shrub

Tradescantia x andersoniana

Anderson's Spiderwort

Tradescantia virginiana x *Tradescantia ohiensis*



'Concord Grape'

Summer ☀



Commelinaceae
Dayflower Family

2ft Perennial

Tricyrtis formosana

Taiwanese Toad Lily



Tropaeolum speciosum

Flame Nasturtium



- Species -



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Tropaeolaceae
Nasturtium Family

9ft Climber