

Visiting the Gardens in spring and early summer



Late spring is a lovely time to visit the Gardens when the structure of the site is easy to see, and the views over to the racecourse are more in evidence. Walking round the different gardens, each with their own individuality but all with a mixture of grass, fruit, vegetables and flowers, it is easy to imagine how they were more than 100 years ago.

The stark silhouettes of the fruit trees soon become covered in blossom, first plums, then pears and finally the pinker shades of apple blossom. In particular 'Arthur Turner', a cooker, and 'Ellison's Orange' are known for their excellent blossom.



Ellison's Orange Blossom

The show of spring bulbs starts with the crocus, followed by the Victorian daffodils and concludes with pale blue camassias under the fruit trees. The formal bedding in front of the glasshouse is a riot of colour with wallflowers, primulas, daffodils and tulips.

Spring sees the start of the vegetable season and throughout the gardens, the first seeds are being sown: broad beans, possibly Bunyards Exhibition, lettuces, and potatoes including Pink Fir Apple, being planted. Two varieties of rhubarb, Victoria and Timperley Early will be ready for pulling this year.



Auricula Queen Alexandra

Throughout the gardens there are primroses, cowslips and oxlips including the old fashioned Wanda Primrose, many varieties of geums, and narcissus. In some gardens the air will be perfumed with the scent of the short lived perennial white stock *Matthiola incana f. alba*.

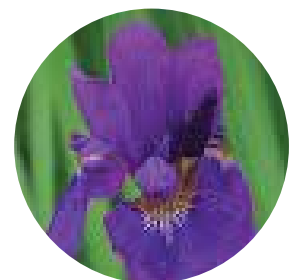
In April and May the main auricula theatre and a smaller one, on a wall near by, display a wide range of auriculas. When not on display, the auriculas are kept in the cold frames on the north side of the glasshouse. The *auricula* 'Queen Alexandra', a lovely hardy pale yellow, grows happily outside in the gardens. It is always a surprise that some auriculas have a very sweet scent.



Primrose wanda

After the Bank Holiday the gardens come into the glory of the early summer with the flowering of *Hemerocallis lilioasphodelus*, oriental poppies, irises including an exciting selection of *Iris sibericas*, and *Dianthus*, with *D.* 'Mrs Sinkins' looking fat and blousy. The graceful oenotheras especially *O. stricta* 'Sulphurea', penstemons and kniphofias mark the progression into high summer.

A walk through the Victorian styled glasshouse is the opportunity to see the tender decorative plants such as scented geraniums, heliotropes and the blue flowered Tibouchina. The glasshouse is used for propagation of dahlias such as the 'Bishop of Landaff' and there are early sowings of vegetables including the lovely pink and white flowered runner bean 'Painted Lady'. Spare plants are available for sale.



Iris sibericas

The nursery has been developed near the glass house and is stocked with plants, many of which grow in the Gardens. When fruit and vegetables are available, they are on sale when the Gardens are open.