

Plants suitable for chalky soils



Care & Advice Sheet

No. 4

Inspiration for your Home & Garden

Kerria japonica: A graceful shrub with thin arching stems that grow to 1.8m. Bright yellow flowers in early April to May.

Kolkwitzia amabilis: Beauty bush. Medium to large sized deciduous shrub with drooping branches covered in masses of bell shaped pink flowers in May and June.

Lavendula species: Fragrant French or English lavender with white or purple flowers in early summer and grey-silver foliage.

Mahonia species: Evergreen shrubs grown for their yellow flowers in winter and spring.

Myrtus species, 'Myrtle': Aromatic evergreen dense shrub with small white flowers.

Olearia species: Evergreen, tough medium sized shrubs with daisy shaped white flowers in summer.

Paeonia species, 'Peony': Herbaceous perennial with large showy flowers in early summer. Many colours available white, pink, yellow, red, deep magenta.

Philadelphus species, Mock Orange: Large to medium sized deciduous shrubs with masses of fragrant white flowers in summer.

Pittosporum species: Evergreen shrubs with small fairly insignificant purple flowers. Grown for their interesting foliage, many are variegated, some spotted pink others are deep purple turning green as they mature.

Potentilla fruticosa: Dwarf to medium sized shrubs with flowers like small single roses from May to Autumn. Many colours available

Prunus lusitanica, 'Portuguese Laurel': Evergreen large shrub or small tree with small white flowers in June. Can be pruned so it is good for a dense hedge.

Pyracantha species, 'Firethorn': Semi-evergreen wall shrubs with thorny branches. Grown for their white flowers in summer followed by red, yellow or orange berries.

Ribes sanguineum: Flowering currants. Tall with rose pink or white flowers in April.

Rosmarinus species, 'Rosemary': Aromatic grey-green leaved shrub used in cooking. Small blue or white flowers in May

Sambucus nigra, 'Elder': Large shrub or small tree with finely divided leaves and flattened heads of creamy white flowers in June, followed by shiny black fruit. 'Black Lace' has dark purple leaves.

Syringa species, 'Lilac': Tall deciduous shrubs or small trees with scented flowers in May and June. Many varieties available.

Vinca species, 'Periwinkle': Low growing, spreading evergreen shrubs ideal as ground cover with white or mauve flowers

Weigela species: Large deciduous shrubs with trumpet shaped flowers in summer

If you require any further information, please ask our outdoor plant advisors who will be very happy to help.

Opening Times

Monday – Saturday: 9am – 6pm

Sunday: 9.30am – 4pm

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Chalky soils, also known as lime-rich or alkaline soils can be a harsh environment for plants to grow in. The chalk makes the soil very alkaline with a pH greater than 7. Soil pH is an index that describes how acid or alkaline your soil is. A neutral soil has a pH of 7.0, an alkaline soil has a pH of between 7 and 8. If you are unsure of the pH of your soil then it is best to test it with an easy to use soil testing kit available from our shop.

The chemical characteristics of chalky soil means that nutrients can be locked up and unavailable to plants for growth. In addition the soil tends to be thin and very free draining making it prone to dryness.

Some plants have successfully adapted to survive in these kinds of conditions. Many others may be grown particularly if plenty of organic matter is added to the soil prior to planting.

Improving your Soil

Chalky soil will greatly benefit from the addition of bulky organic matter such as composted manure, homemade composted garden waste or New Horizon peat free multipurpose compost. The organic content helps to retain moisture and nutrients. Use as a mulch in autumn and spring by spreading it over the surface of the soil and lightly fork-in.

Planting

When planting we recommend that you add plenty of peat free compost into the planting hole.

Care

Spread a balanced slow release fertiliser over the soil in spring and feed with a liquid feed such as **Miracle-Gro** throughout the summer. This is taken up by the leaves as well as the roots so can be used to drench the leaves, use in the evening to prevent the leaves from being scorched in bright sunlight.

Arbutus unedo, 'Strawberry Tree': A small tree with shredded bark when mature and flowers and strawberry-like fruit in late autumn.

Aucuba species, 'Spotted Laurel': Evergreen shade loving dense shrub with large shiny leaves mottled with yellow. Female shrubs have red berries in autumn.

Berberis species: Deciduous or evergreen shrubs, with yellow or orange flowers and often with long thorns.

Buddleia species, 'Butterfly Bush': Mostly large deciduous shrubs with flowering from July to September. Many varieties available with white, pink, lavender and deep purple flowers.

Callicarpa bodinieri: Medium sized shrub with long leaves, grown for its stunning deep lilac fruit in late autumn.

Ceanothus species, 'Californian Lilac': Best as a wall shrub, mostly evergreen with dark leaves and blue flowers in Spring.

Chaenomeles species, 'Flowering Quince': Early spring flowering deciduous shrub with saucer shaped flowers in shades of Red, orange and white. Good as a wall shrub.

Chimonanthus praecox, 'Winter sweet': Medium sized deciduous shrub with sweetly scented pale waxy flowers in late winter.

Choisya ternata: Medium sized evergreen shrub with shining lime-green aromatic leaves and white sweetly scented flowers throughout summer. 'Sundance' has bright yellow leaves.

Cistus species: Sun roses are small shrubs that flower freely with white, pink or yellow flowers in June and July. Best in full sun.

Cornus mas: Small tree or large shrub with yellow flowers in February.

Cotoneaster species: Evergreen shrubs ranging from low-growing spreading ground cover to tall small trees. Small shiny dark green leaves and red or yellow berries.

Deutzia species: Vigorous deciduous shrubs with white flowers in June.

Escallonia species: Evergreen with small white, pink or red flowers in summer and early autumn. Good for informal hedging.

Forsythia species: Tall vigorous deciduous shrub with bright yellow flowers in spring.

Fremontodendron species: Tall evergreen wall shrub with yellow flowers.

Fuchsia species: Hardy fuchsias are available in many sizes and colours. The flowers are like dangling lanterns and are produced all summer until the first frosts.

Garrya elliptica: Evergreen with leathery leaves and long flowers tassels in January and February. Good as a wall shrub.

Hebe species: Invaluable small to medium sized evergreen shrubs, available in a variety of leaf colours. With White, pink or purple flowers from spring to autumn.

Hypericum species: Easy to grow small to medium sized shrubs with conspicuous bright yellow flowers in summer to autumn.

Ilex species, 'Holly': Prickly, evergreen shrubs and small trees. Red berries on female plants in autumn. Many with variegated leaves.