



Mediterranean Gems

Evocative of holidays, these plants will thrive in local gardens

Plants native to Mediterranean climate zones are amazingly diverse and include many that are hardy in the UK. Give them a sunny spot in the garden with good drainage and their unique character can be exploited and enjoyed. Many are evergreen. These staples of the Mediterranean landscape provide year-round structure and interest in a garden setting. Others have silver and grey foliage, an illusion created by white hairs over green leaves, providing the perfect foil for hot colours or a beautiful contrast with purple-leaved plants. And finally there is scent. Anyone who has gone for an evening stroll through a sun-baked landscape will know the heady perfume exuded by many Mediterranean plants.

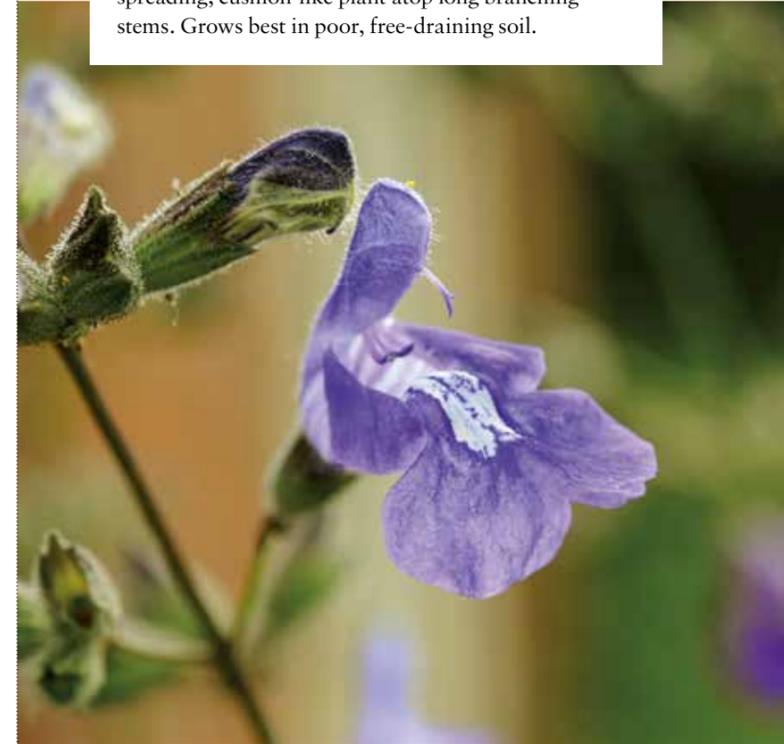
A**RBUTUS UNEDO**
This small, adaptable evergreen tree grows wild in both Greece and south-west Ireland. It bears small, white, bell-shaped flowers in autumn alongside fruit from the previous year's pollination. Not all the flowers are fertilised so the resulting fruit are widely spaced, as if hung deliberately like Christmas baubles. They ripen red and look like strawberries, but the species name is apt – *unedo* derives from the Latin for 'I eat only one'. This ericaceous plant copes with alkaline soils providing drainage is perfect.



2 PINUS PINEA
 Pines were in the ascendant at the Chelsea Flower Show this year. This one has been grown since prehistoric times for its edible pine nuts. It emits the classic pine fragrance and gradually assumes an umbrella profile. Encourage the latter by pruning out the lower branches in the first few years. It eventually reaches about 20m in height, with a trunk encased in beautiful orange-brown fissured bark. For smaller spaces try a cultivar of the dwarf mountain pine such as *Pinus mugo* 'Ophir'.



6 BUDDLEJA GLOBOSA
 Chile is perhaps one of the lesser known Mediterranean climate zones and home to this unusual *Buddleja* with orange-yellow flowers forming tight balls held in clusters at the tips of arching stems. These are sweet-scented and borne from May to July. This semi-evergreen shrub can reach 5m in height. Unlike *Buddleja davidii*, which needs hard pruning in spring, you can keep this species in check by trimming after flowering.



5 SALVIA CANELABRUM
 This close relation to common sage is used to great effect in the gardens of Lambeth Palace, growing in bands alongside other dry-garden stalwarts such as *Santolina*, *Nepeta*, *Calamintha* and *Artemisia*. Each sage leaf is covered in hairs that reflect the sun's rays and trap a layer of moist air close to the leaf – an adaptation to reduce water loss in its natural habitat, the stony hillsides of southern Spain. In June gorgeous blue-mauve flowers seem to float above this spreading, cushion-like plant atop long branching stems. Grows best in poor, free-draining soil.



3 EPILOBIUM CALIFORNICA 'WESTERN HILLS'
 Not strictly a Mediterranean plant, but 'Western Hills' is a Californian perennial suited to a similar climate. Formerly known as *Zauschneria*, it has narrow silvery leaves. The bright, orange-red tubular flowers with protruding stamens appear from July to September and look like small hummingbirds. Tidy the rather wiry plants in spring by cutting back to new growth near the base. If perfect drainage in open ground is impossible, try raising in a pot.



4 PHILLYREA LATIFOLIA
 This large shrub, a cousin of the olive, slowly grows into a beautiful small tree. An ancient specimen in Montpellier Botanic Gardens, with a gnarled and knotted trunk, serves as a post box for love letters. More prosaically, it is useful as a screen and to light up the winter garden with its thick, glossy leaves. Team with other evergreens such as *Rhamnus alaternus* 'Argenteovariegata' and *Viburnum tinus* or underplant with the Corsican hellebore (*Helleborus argutifolius*). In smaller spaces, try medium-sized *Phillyrea angustifolia*.

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7 MYRTUS COMMUNIS SUBSP. TARENTINA
 Myrtle has long been revered as a medicinal plant and contributes to the powerful scent of the maquis of Corsica. This small-leaved form is a compact evergreen shrub bearing large, pink-tinged cream flowers with a central boss of protruding stamens in summer. White berries follow these. It can withstand clipping and is used as low hedging in the famous Court of the Myrtles at the Alhambra in Granada. It is worth finding a sheltered spot to enjoy its fruity scent.

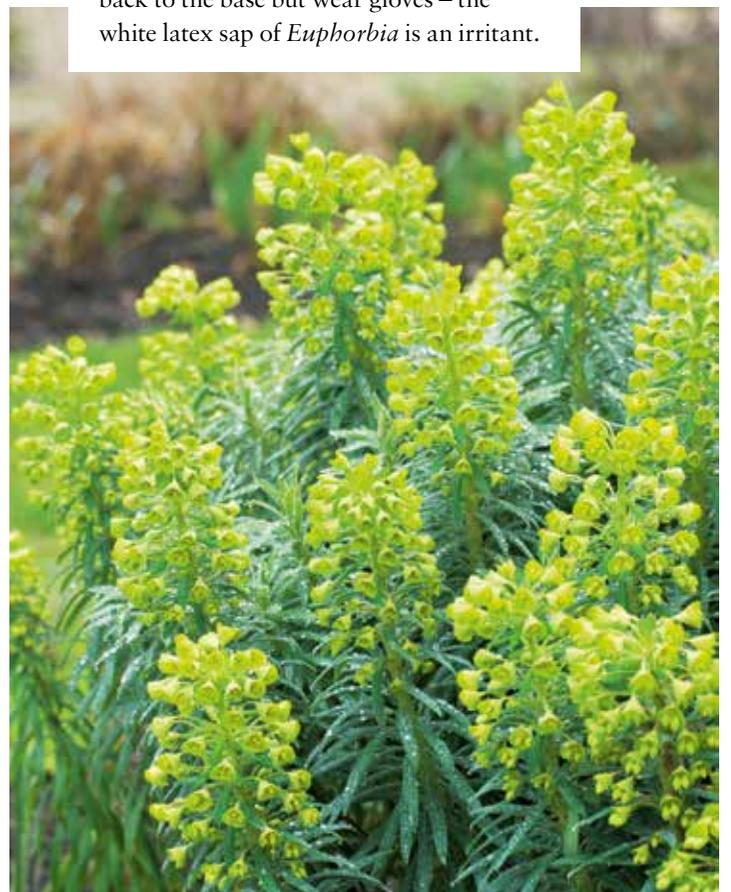


8 YUCCA GLORIOSA
 This evergreen shrub is from the south-eastern United States and so strictly speaking not a Mediterranean climate plant but it is very drought tolerant and has become naturalised in places like Italy and Malta. It certainly has the 'look'. It is truly architectural with rosettes of stiff gutter-shaped, spine-tipped leaves and in late summer branching spikes of bell-shaped, creamy white flowers up to 2m in height. The straight species has green leaves but in the cultivar 'Variegata' they are striped and edged creamy yellow. Both plants have been given a Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit.



10 LAVANDULA X INTERMEDIA 'GROSSO'
 The evaporation of essential oils from the leaves of aromatic plants such as lavender cools them and prevents sun scorch. The aroma this creates adds another dimension to a garden and this hybrid, with profuse and early luminous purple flowers, is particularly strongly scented. The flowers' stems are long and good for cutting. Most lavender oil produced in France is from fields of this variety. Keep it from getting leggy by shearing back in mid-August.

9 EUPHORBIA CHARACIAS SUBSP. WULFENII
 A highly architectural and garden-worthy spurge that grows to about 1.5m tall. Flower heads that hang low in January open as acid green spikes in spring. On a hot summer day you can hear a clicking sound as the seedpods explode and disperse seed far and wide – the progeny will vary in form, leaf and flower colour. Prune tatty, faded flowering stems back to the base but wear gloves – the white latex sap of *Euphorbia* is an irritant.



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