Tom's garden 'the Barn' in its autumn guise, with towering eupatorium and grasses creating a sense of abundance

ALL FIRED UP

We asked three top garden designers to share their know-how of plants we should be growing this autumn - get ready to be inspired

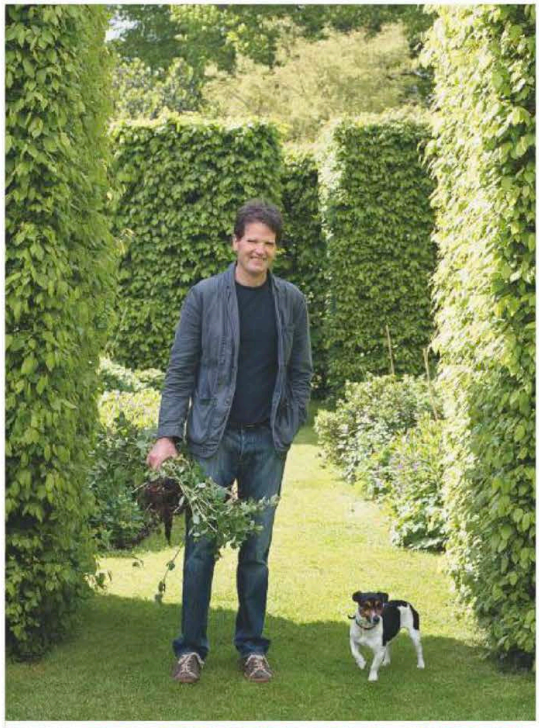
TOM STUART-SMITH COMBINES THE MUTED COLOURS OF NATIVE TREES WITH COLOURFUL FLOWERS FOR SEASONAL SPARKLE

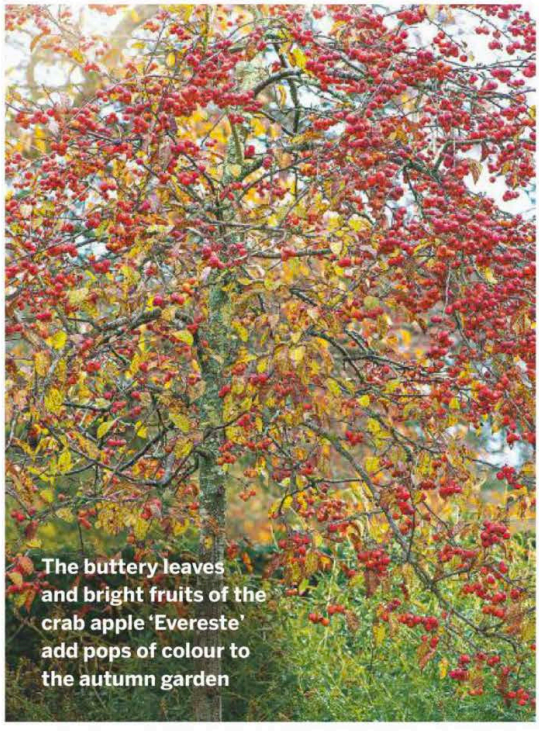
"My garden here at the Barn in Hertfordshire looks beautiful in autumn. Asters are a mainstay in the borders and my favourites include the tall violet and yellow *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* 'Violetta' and delicate pale blue *Symphyotrichum turbinellum*. Some rudbeckias such as *R. maxima* are also still in flower in October in our prairie garden and the seed heads then extend their appeal later in the season. The compass plant, *Silphium laciniatum*, is another good late flower for a naturalistic garden if you have space for it – the sturdy stems of yellow daisies can reach over 2.5m (8ft) and look spectacular in large clumps. These flowers all thrive in sun.

I'm not a great fan of vibrant autumn colour in our countryside setting, where bright red or orange leaves can look a bit like graffiti against the subtle russets and soft yellows of oaks and other native trees. However, they can work very well in an urban or more enclosed outdoor space. I do love autumn fruit, though, and often use *Viburnum betulifolium* for its translucent red berries in my garden designs. Crab apples and hawthorns are very good choices too, providing fruit for the birds, as well as more muted autumn colours.

As the nights start to draw in, I like to spend the evenings planning my garden, deciding what new plants or combinations I want to experiment with. Late September and early October are also the best times for planting hardy plants, so that they can establish before the winter."

▪ tomstuartsmith.co.uk





The buttery leaves and bright fruits of the crab apple 'Evereste' add pops of colour to the autumn garden

"THE NUTTY RICH RUSSETS OF THE OAKS IN THE AUTUMN GARDEN ARE FOR ME THE BEST OF ALL"

FEATURE ZIA ALLAWAY **PHOTOGRAPHS** (PORTRAIT) EVA VERMANDEL; (CRAB APPLE) GETTY IMAGES; (TOM'S GARDEN) MIENEKE ANDEWEG-VAN RIJN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

***Succisa pratensis*, known as the devil's-bit scabious, lends a naturalistic note to an informal border**

"AS PLANTS RETURN TO THE EARTH IN AUTUMN, I AM REMINDED THAT THIS IS A TIME OF REST AND RENEWAL"

MARIAN BOSWALL LOOKS TO NATURE FOR INSPIRATION AND ADDS ELEMENTS OF SURPRISE TO HER DESIGNS FOR AUTUMN

"The lockdown has helped us to realise how closely we are connected to nature and this has fuelled a trend coming through in designs this autumn. Instead of keeping rabbits and deer out, we're embracing them with tough plants that they don't usually touch, such as sun-loving echinaceas and the bright pink aster, *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae* 'Andenken an Alma Pötschke'. In shadier areas, I'm using *Cyclamen hederifolium* and the dainty *Succisa pratensis*, an English native that thrives in moist soil. I like to include a few surprises, too, and the pink and blue berries of the harlequin glorybower (*Clerodendrum trichotomum*) and vibrant mauve beads of beautyberry (*Callicarpa bodinieri* var. *giraldii* 'Profusion') do the job perfectly.

For wildlife and foraging, try an edible hedge of goji berries, mulberries and lingonberries. Taking a lead from Isabella Tree's book *Wilding*, I also let a tiny patch of my garden go wild a few years ago and was excited when nightingales nested in the brambles this summer. To keep my soil productive without chemicals, in autumn I add a teaspoon of biodynamic horn silica or a sprinkling of biochar under a layer of compost – it's like putting money in the bank for the plants the following year. I buy mine from The Biodynamic Association (biodynamic.org.uk) and Carbon Gold (carbongold.com).

I've learned more about rewilding through the Garden Masterclass (gardenmasterclass.org) series of lectures – and you can find out more about designing your garden, too, from its experts."

■ marianboswall.com

PHOTOGRAPHS MARIAN BOSWALL

Echinaceas offer flowers in early autumn and pretty seed heads later in the season

A star of the autumn garden, the bright red leaves of the liquidambar tree take centre stage at this time of year

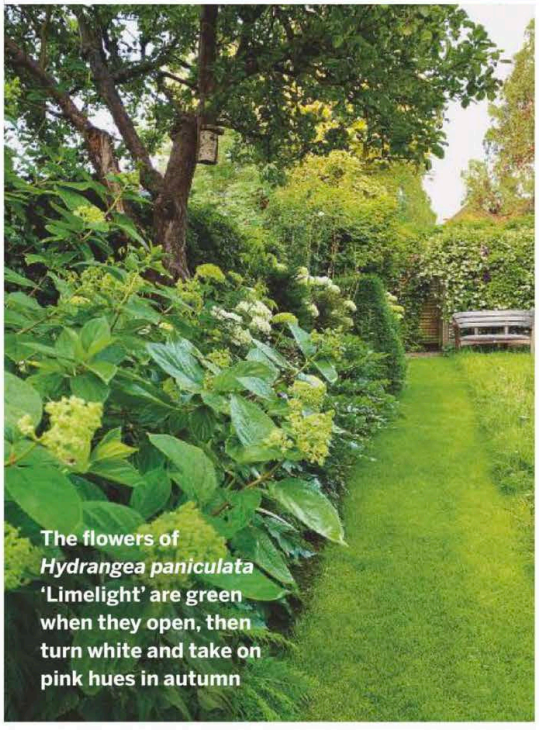
BUTTER WAKEFIELD WELCOMES IN AUTUMN WITH ROSE-TINTED FADING FLOWERS AND TREES CLOTHED IN FIERY FOLIAGE

"Hydrangeas are my favourite shrubs for autumn and one of the best is *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight'. It's an absolute joy when the huge white flower heads take on beautiful shades of dusky pink as the weather cools. In the herbaceous border, I always include salvias, such as the tall 'Black and Blue' and 'Amistad', for autumn colour. Both have glorious dark purple flowers and bloom right up to November in my London garden. I'm also keen to keep the wildlife happy and leave a patch of ivy for the bumblebees and other pollinators, which feast on the late flowers. Birds then step in to take the berries that follow.

Like many people, I've found my garden very nurturing in these difficult times, and love the way each season heralds exciting new colours and textures. For a fiery autumn showstopper, try the sweet gum, *Liquidambar styraciflua* 'Worplesdon'. This beautiful tree is ideal for a medium-sized to large garden and sports star-shaped leaves that turn bright red in autumn. In a smaller garden, I would use a pleached Persian ironwood tree (*Parrotia persica* 'Vanessa'), which produces a rainbow of red, yellow and orange leaves in October. Fruit trees are another great choice, providing food for birds and insects as well as people.

My main jobs for the autumn are moving plants, tying in my climbing roses and planting bulbs – I like to fill large pots with a jumble of narcissi, anemones and grape hyacinths, as well as tulips, for a riot of colour the following spring."

▪ butterwakefield.co.uk



The flowers of *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' are green when they open, then turn white and take on pink hues in autumn

"I LOVE THE WAY THE SOFT SUN SLANTS THROUGH THE GARDEN IN AUTUMN, GENTLY ILLUMINATING THE BORDERS"

PHOTOGRAPHS (LIQUIDAMBAR TREE) ANNE GILBERT/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; (PORTRAIT) EVA SCHWANK; (HYDRANGEA) BUTTER WAKEFIELD