



# Top 50 Medicinal Plants Plants for Pollinators

Medicinal plants to create an Apothecary-style garden  
to help our pollinators

**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



# Introduction



At the National Botanic Garden of Wales, we feel it is important to recognise the rich history of botany and plant science we have in Wales and around the UK. One such way to display this is through a living museum of plants once used, and some still used, to treat various ailments and maintain good health. These medicinal plants can be grown together to create a physic garden or apothecaries garden; such as the one we have here. Apothecaries were herbal medicine specialists before the event of modern medicine. The apothecaries garden is split into sections depending on the usage of the plants. If you would also like to create one, you can use this model to help you. Almost all the selected plants are found in our Apothecaries Garden and many are also culinary herbs or ornamentals found elsewhere in the garden. Most of the plants used are native to or naturalised in Western Europe.



The Apothecaries Garden

The Apothecaries Garden

Digestive

Muscular-Skeletal

Ear, Nose & Throat

Nervous

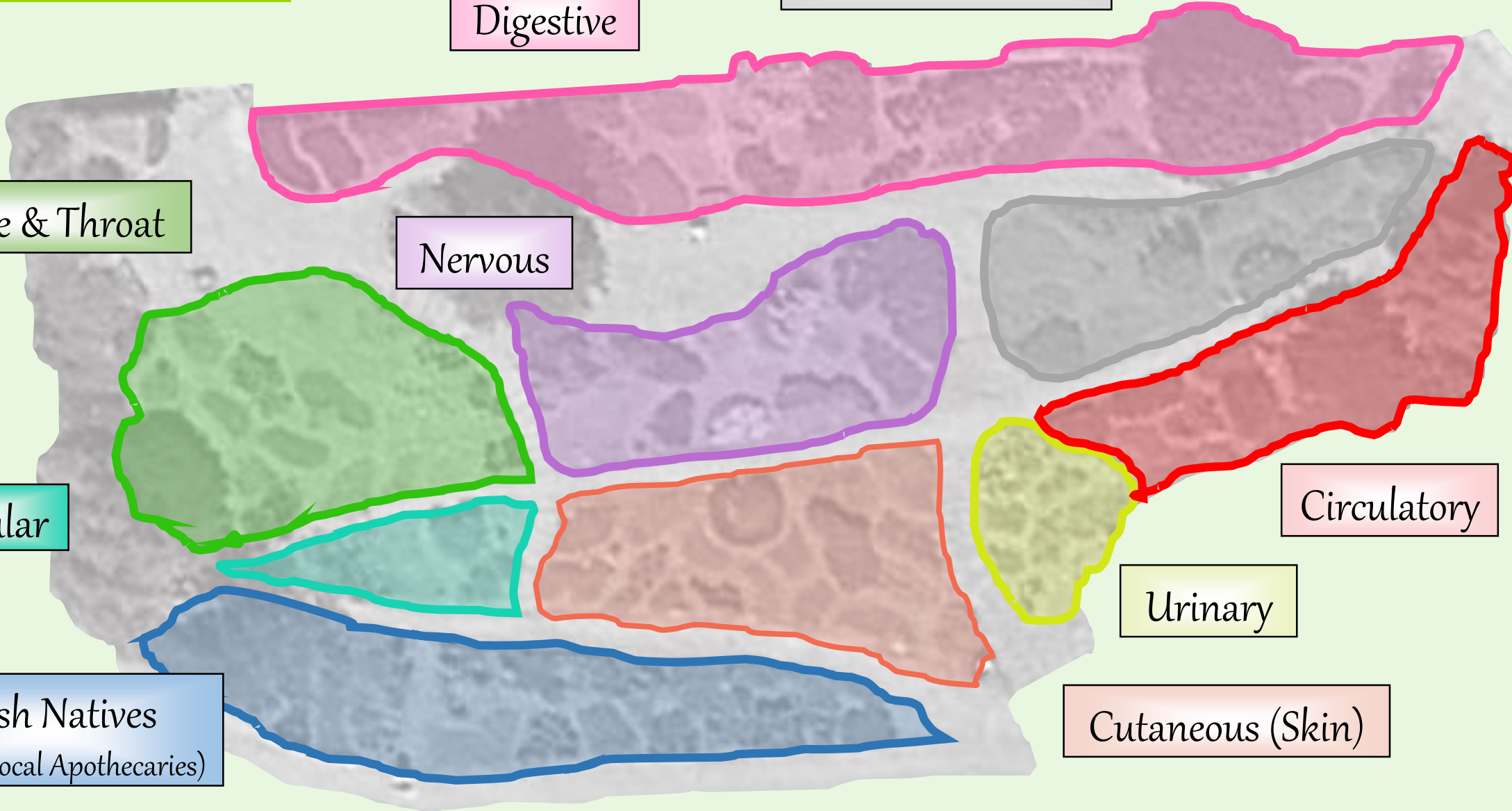
Glandular

Circulatory

Urinary

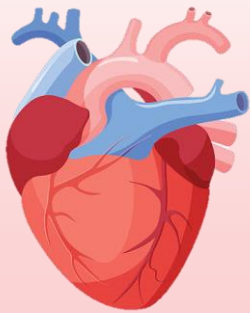
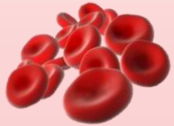
Welsh Natives  
(Used by local Apothecaries)

Cutaneous (Skin)



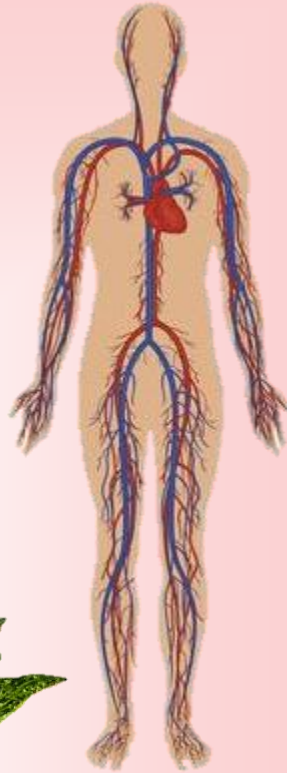
# The Circulatory System

The Circulatory system comprises the Heart, blood and blood vessels; arteries, veins and capillaries. Plants used to treat this bodily system were primarily for heart conditions or associated with blood letting. Few are used in modern medicine but the active ingredient in foxglove, Digitalin, is still used in heart medicine today for its potent affects.



Circulatory Plants included:

- Achillea millefolium*
- Digitalis purpurea*
- Laurus nobilis*
- Lavandula angustifolia*
- Melissa officinalis*
- Valeriana officinalis*



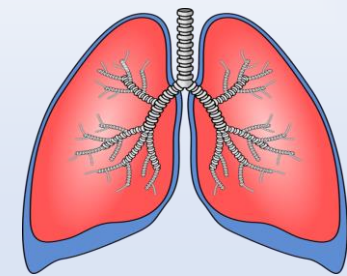
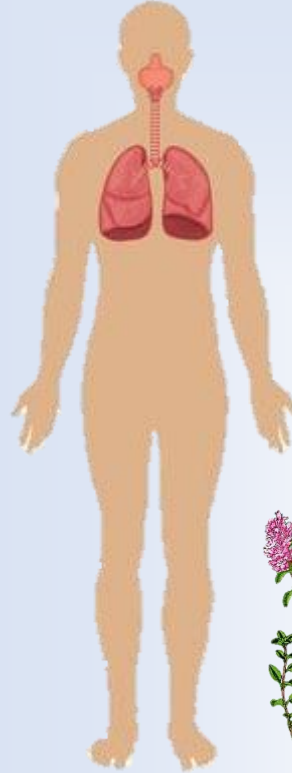
# The Respiratory System

The Respiratory system comprises the Lungs, Trachea (Windpipe) and connects directly to the nose, mouth and also circulatory system.

Plants used to treat respiratory problems were usually taken as a vapour over boiling water and breathed in; in order for their oils to travel directly into the windpipe. Herbs to treat ear, nose and throat conditions were classed separately.

Respiratory Plants included:

- Primula vulgaris*
- Pulsatilla vulgaris*
- Salvia sclarea*
- Thymus vulgaris*
- Verbascum nigrum*
- Viola tricolor*



# The Nervous System

The nervous system comprises of the brain, spinal cord and nerves (neurons). Plants used to treat nervous conditions were usually associated with pain relief and the calming of nerves. They were often taken orally, mixed with some sort of alcohol. Many are still used today to aid in calmness such as camomile and lavender. Others are much more potent such as opium poppy; the plant by which morphine and other opioids are derived from. These are powerful nervous-blockers used in pain relief.



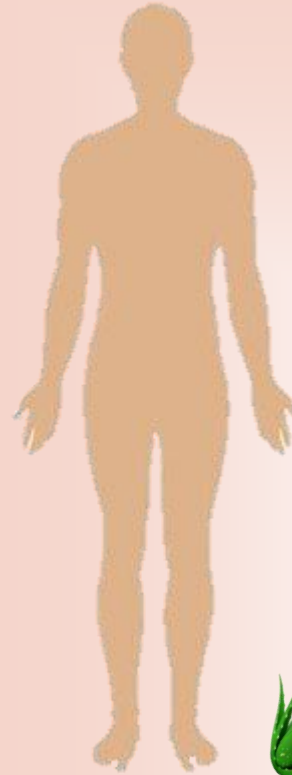
- Nervous Plants included:
- Chamaemelum nobile*
  - Hyssopus officinalis*
  - Lavandula angustifolia*
  - Origanum vulgare*
  - Papaver somniferum*
  - Tanacetum parthenium*
  - Valeriana officinalis*



# The Cutaneous System

The cutaneous system is made up of epidermis (visible skin) and dermis (the skin underlayer).

Plant-based treatments used on skin were extremely varied from soothing burns, acne & rashes to attempting to treat leprosy and measles. Today, plant-based skin treatments are as popular as ever but are much more commonly used for anti-ageing and maintaining clear, supple skin and treating acne or scars.

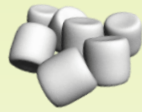


Cutaneous Plants included:

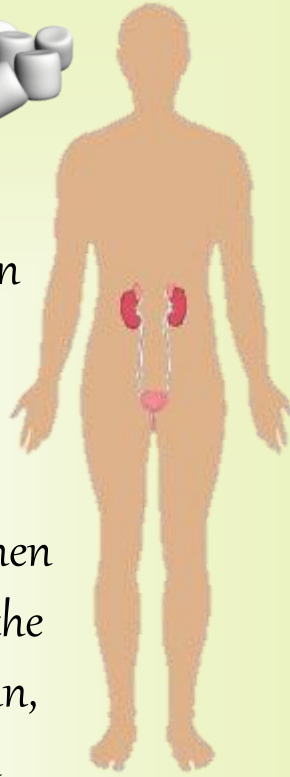
- Bistorta officinalis*
- Borago officinalis*
- Calendula officinalis*
- Chamaemelum nobile*
- Hamamelis mollis*
- Hypericum perforatum*
- Malva sylvestris*
- Melissa officinalis*
- Pulsatilla vulgaris*
- Stachys palustris*
- Tanacetum vulgare*



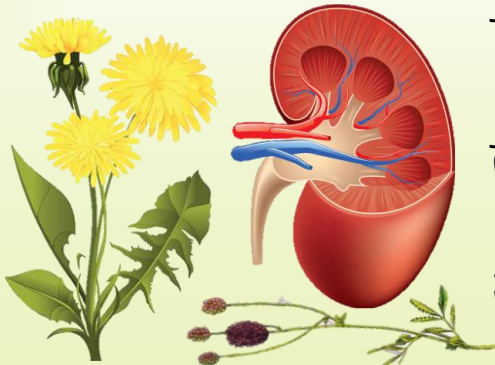
# The Urinary System



The Urinary system is made up of the Kidneys, Ureters, Bladder and Urethra; which terminates in or by the sexual organs in the groin region. Medicinal plants were regularly used as diuretics to increase urine and decrease its concentration which is still an effective way to treat infections when coupled with drinking plenty of water. Herbs for the urinary system were also used to treat bladder pain, incontinence and even wounds sustained through childbirth and other problems relating to the reproductive system.



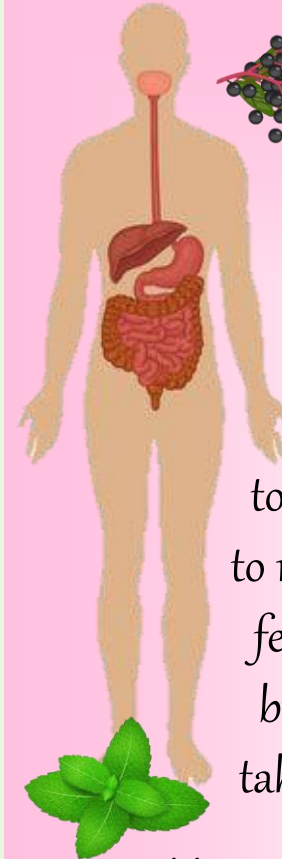
A popular example of a diuretic herb is the dandelion. Due to their weed-status and ability to spread quickly however, they haven't been included in the list.



Urinary Plants included:

- Achillea millefolium*
- Althaea officinalis*
- Echinacea purpurea*
- Eupatorium cannabinum*
- Origanum vulgare*
- Rosa gallica*
- Sanguisorba officinalis*
- Thymus vulgaris*

# The Digestive System



The Digestive system comprises of the oesophagus, stomach, liver, gall bladder, small and large intestine and pancreas. It is responsible for the digestion of food. Many edible plants were used to treat digestive issues as they could easily be added to meals and herbal teas such as mint, lemon balm or fennel. A common digestive-aid used today is ginger but this is not easily grown in the UK. Many are still taken as dietary supplements for their natural ability to calm bowel spasms or laxative effects.



Digestive Plants included:

- Althaea officinalis*
- Artemisia absinthium*
- Chaenomeles speciosa*
- Eupatorium cannabinum*
- Filipendula ulmaria*
- Foeniculum vulgare*
- Hamamelis mollis*
- Hyssopus officinalis*
- Inula helenium*
- Malva sylvestris*
- Melissa officinalis*
- Mentha spicata*
- Mentha suaveolens*
- Oenothera biennis*
- Origanum vulgare*
- Rosmarinus officinalis*
- Sambucus nigra*
- Tagetes patula*
- Tanacetum vulgare*

# The Muscular-Skeletal System

The muscular system, made up of muscles, tendons, joints and ligaments, allows for movement, and is directly connected to the skeletal system, which is our bones. Plants in this category were used to relieve back pain and other muscular problems, were used to aid in calcium uptake for keeping bones strong and may also have been used to quicken recovery after physical trauma such as broken bones or pulled ligaments.



Muscular-Skeletal  
Plants included:



*Alchemilla mollis*

*Artemisia absinthium*

*Calendula officinalis*

*Eupatorium cannabinum\**

*Filipendula ulmaria*

\*Eupatorium may be sometimes known as 'Boneset'

*Lavandula angustifolia*

*Origanum vulgare*

*Rosmarinus officinalis*

*Sambucus nigra*

*Valeriana officinalis*

*Viburnum opulus*

# The Otorhinolaryngic System



A complicated collective way to refer to ears, nose and throat, this system was probably the most widely treated with medicinal plants through history. Relieving flu and cold symptoms has always been important.

Some of the plants used for relieving symptoms have mucolytic properties such as mint, rosemary and also pineapple; which we cannot grow outside in the UK unfortunately! Others have anti-inflammatory properties which naturally relieve irritation. Some even have antibacterial



Otorhinolaryngic  
Plants included:

*Althaea officinalis*

*Chamaemelum nobile*

*Echinacea purpurea*

*Hyssopus officinalis*

*Inula helenium*

*Rosmarinus officinalis*



properties which can help with bacterial infections.

Others help relieve swollen glands such as:

*Artemisia absinthium*  
& *Borago officinalis*

# 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

*Tanacetum parthenium*

Common English Name

Common Feverfew

Photograph of the plant in flower



Insect groups known to favour the nectar of this plant



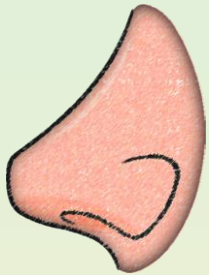
Useful knowledge or warnings about the plant

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 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.

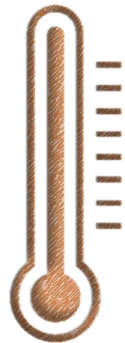
Plants with a coloured thermometer symbol are hardy to varying degrees as follows:



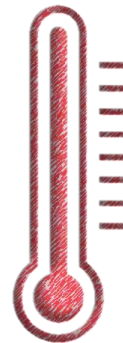
Almost Hardy  
**(H4)**



Half-Hardy  
**(H3)**



Not Frost Hardy  
**(H2)**



Not Hardy  
**(H1)**

## RHS Hardiness Scale

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

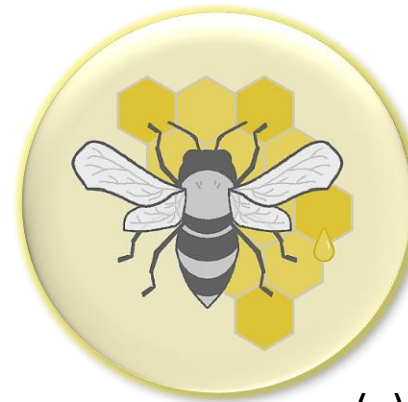
# Pollinators

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.

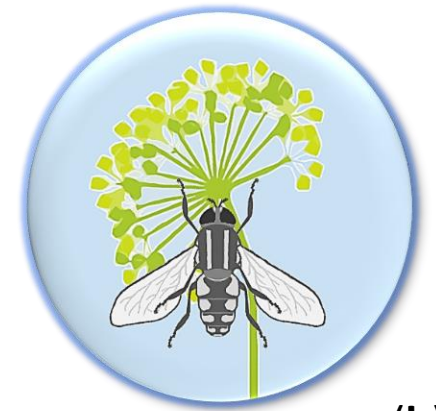
It should be noted that all bee and hoverfly data is ours but lepidoptera data is taken from Butterfly Conservation.

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<br>(Includes Moths) | f) Solitary Bees |



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



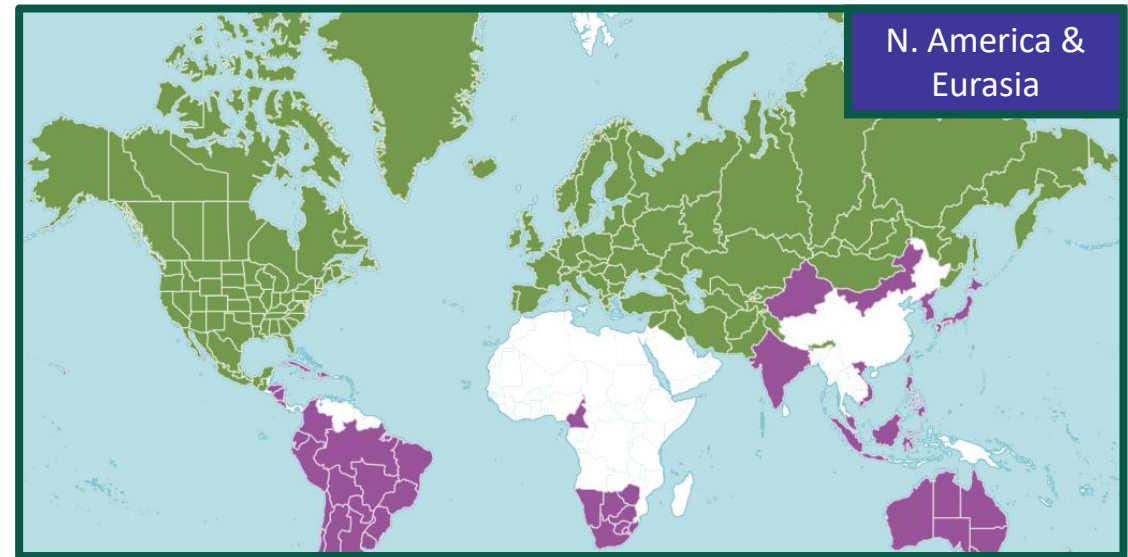
(e)



(f)

# *Achillea millefolium*

## Common Yarrow



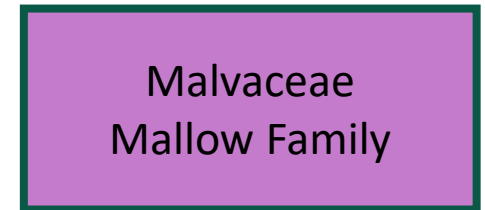
Midsummer  
- Early Autumn

Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

2ft Perennial

# *Alcea rosea*

## Common Hollyhock

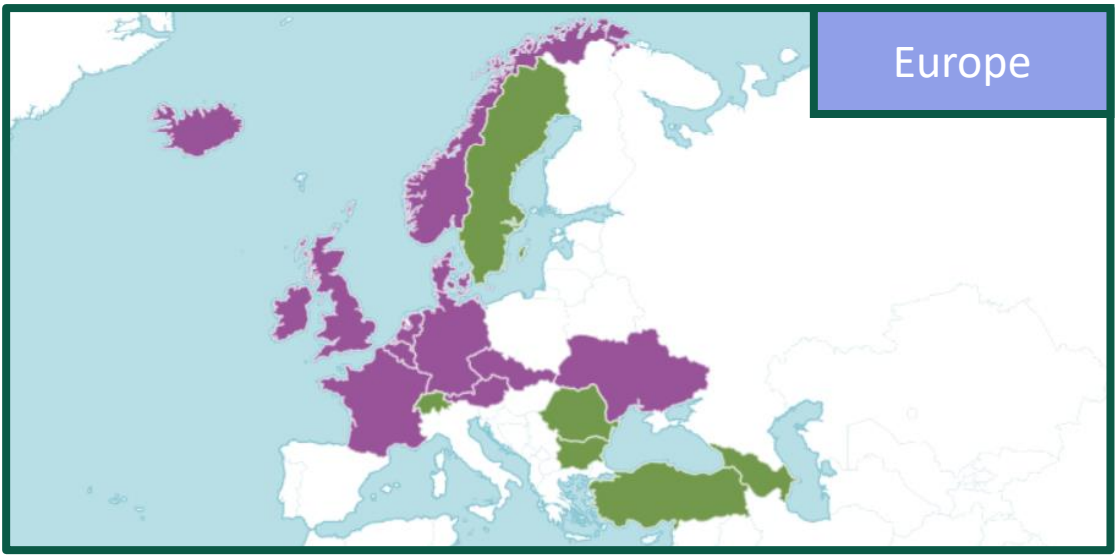


# *Alchemilla mollis*

## Garden Lady's Mantle



Photograph from Flickr (CC) J Mark Dodds



-Species-



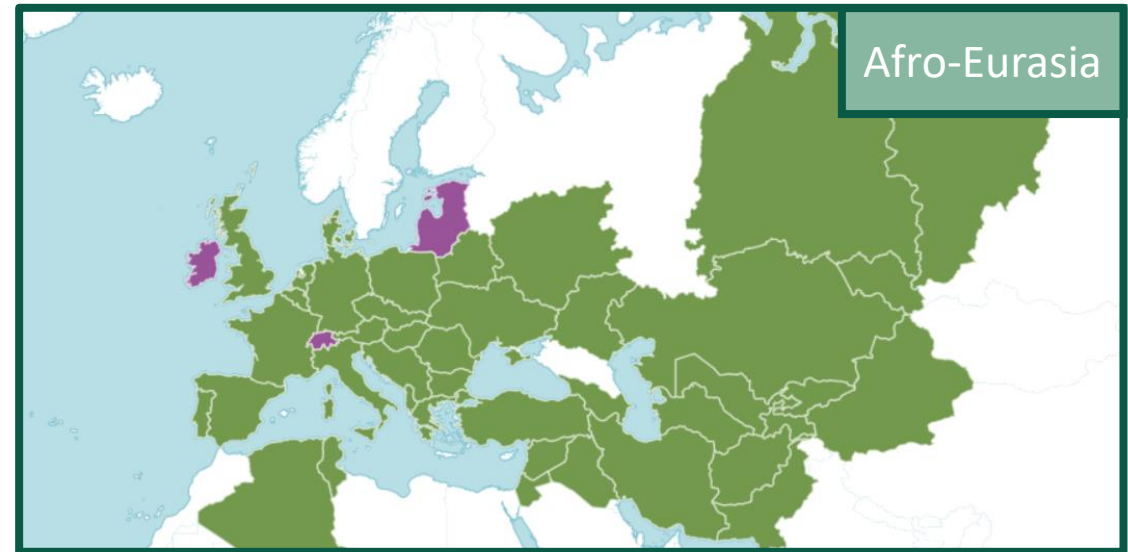
Early Summer  
- Early Autumn

Rosaceae  
Rose Family

2ft Perennial

# *Althaea officinalis*

## Marsh Mallow



Afro-Eurasia



Photograph from Flickr by Gertjan van Noord

None

The logo for the RHS Award of Garden Merit, featuring a trophy cup inside a circular border with the text "RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT" and a tree icon to the right.

Midsummer  
- Early Autumn

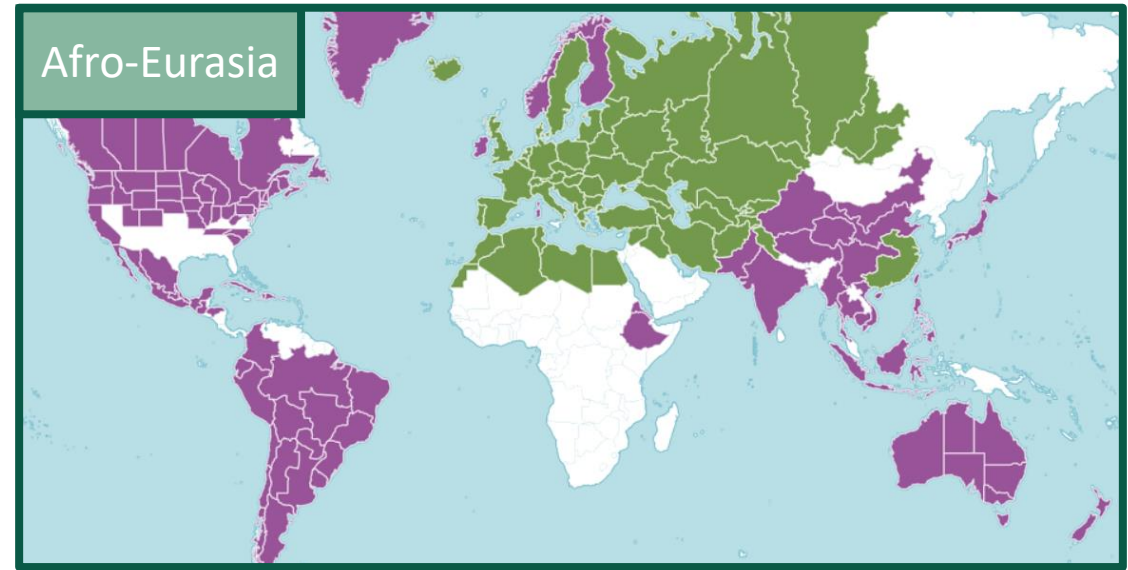
Malvaceae  
Mallow Family

6ft Perennial

Marshlands

# *Artemisia absinthium*

## Wormwood



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Ettore Babocchi

Related Species:  
*A. caucasica*

The logo for the RHS Award of Garden Merit, featuring a green trophy cup inside a white circle with the text "RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT" around it. To the right is a stylized tree icon.

Summer ☀

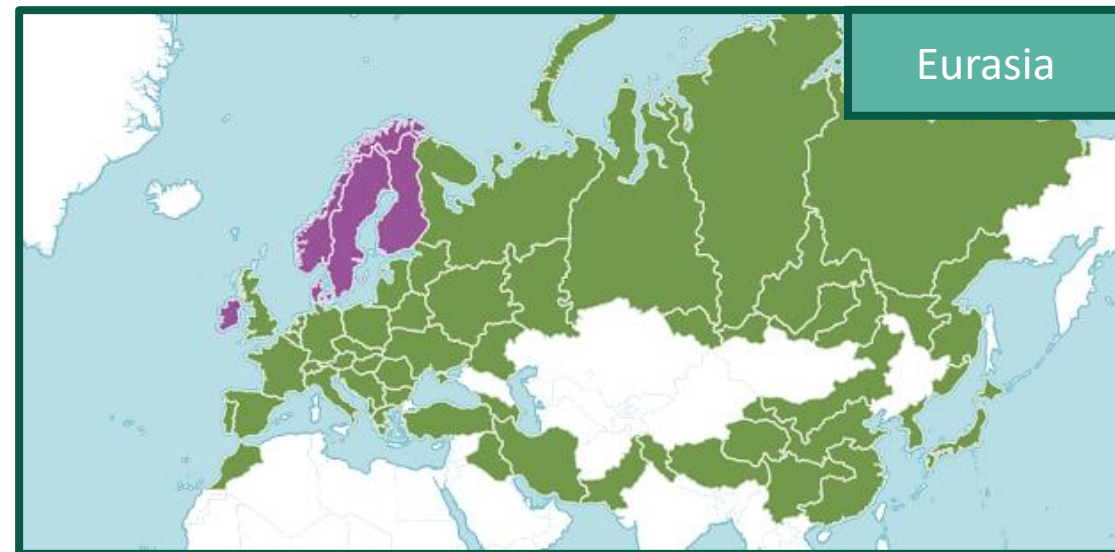
Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

3ft Perennial



# *Bistorta officinalis*

## Common Bistort



Eurasia



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Armin S. Kowalski

'Superba'



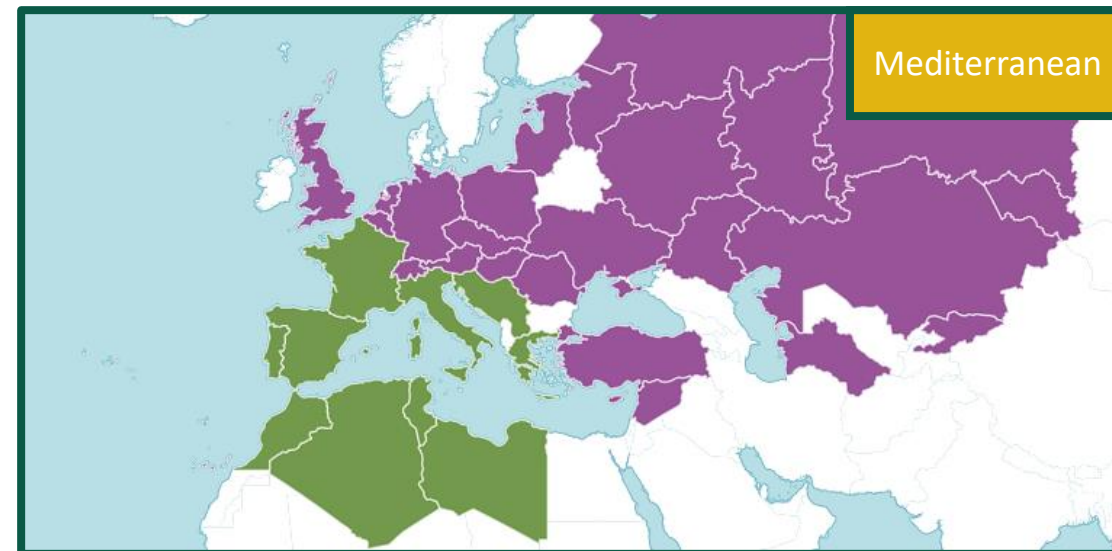
Midsummer  
- Mid Autumn

Polygonaceae  
Knotweed Family

3ft Perennial

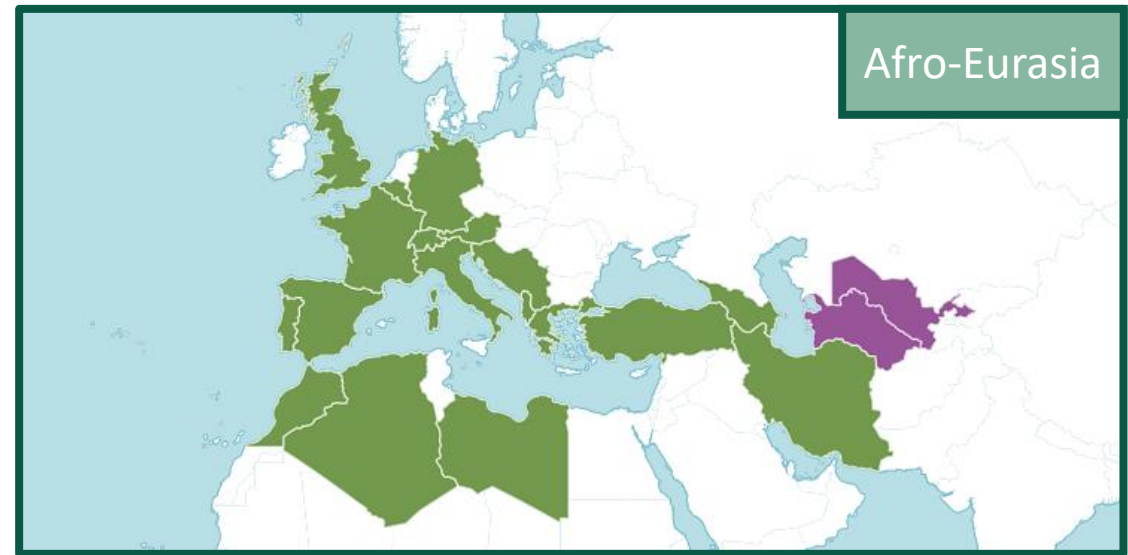
# *Borago officinalis*

## Common Borage



# *Buxus sempervirens*

## Common Box



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) Sten Porse

'Elegantissima'  
'Latifolia maculata'

The logo for the RHS Award of Garden Merit, featuring a trophy cup and a tree.

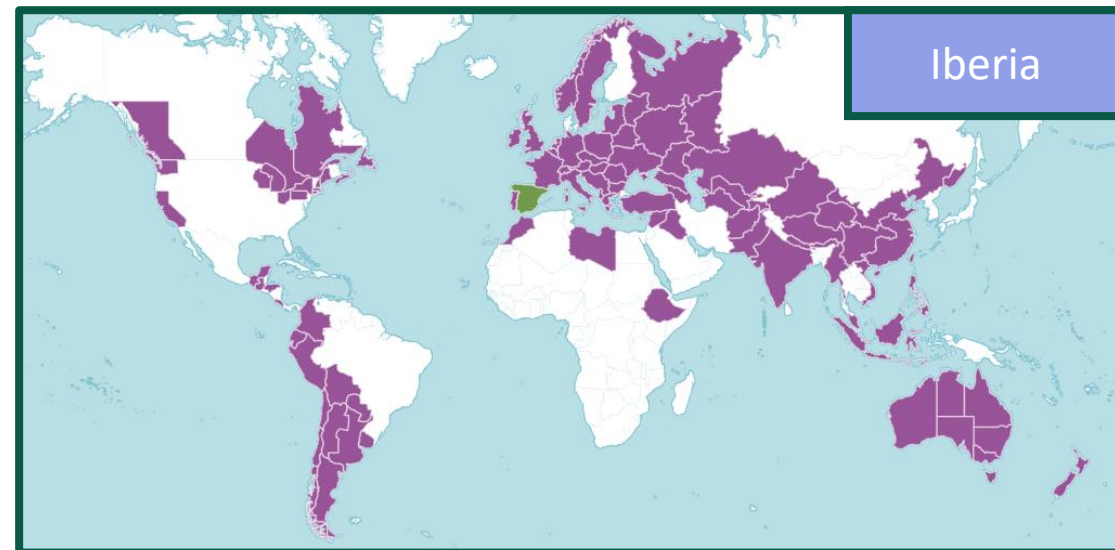
Spring

Buxaceae  
Box Family

Medium Shrub

# *Calendula officinalis*

## Common Marigold



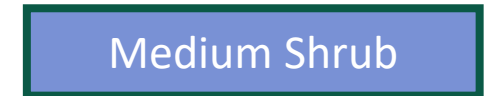
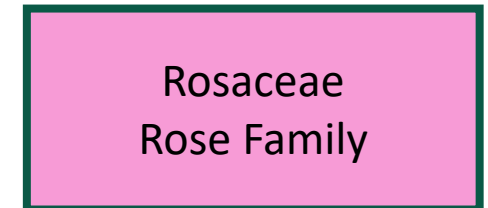
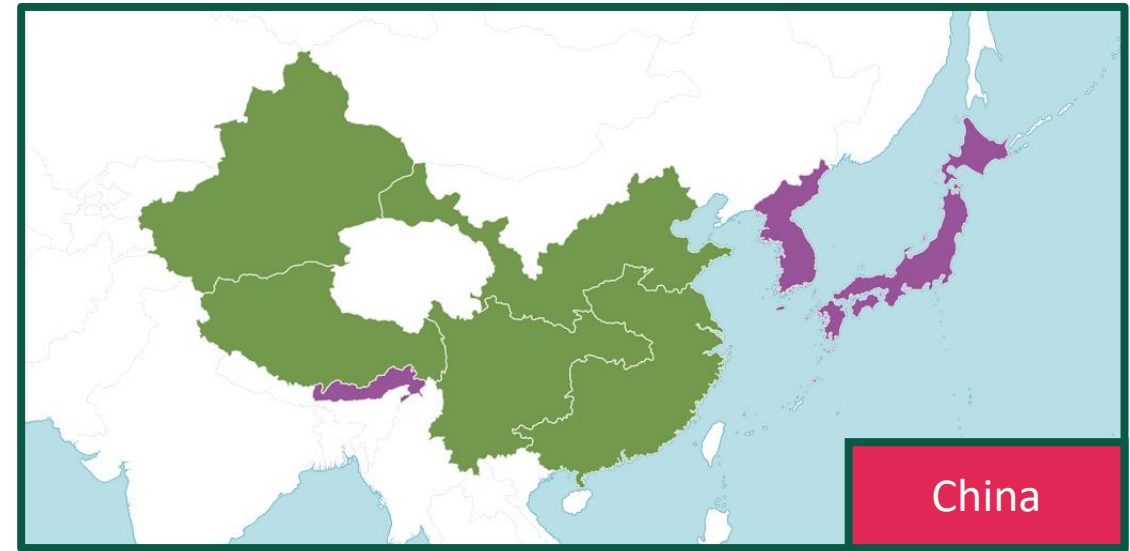
Early Summer  
- Early Autumn

Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

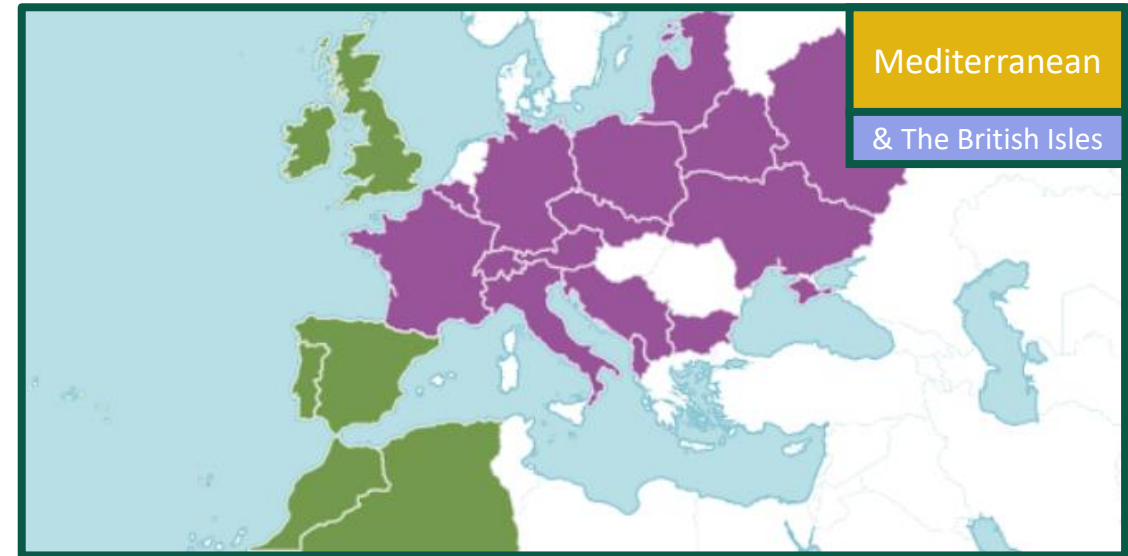
2ft Annual

# *Chaenomeles speciosa*

## Chinese Quince



# *Chamaemelum nobile* Common Camomile



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Melanie Shaw



None



# *Cotinus coggygria*

## Smoke Bush



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Maja Dumat



'Ancot' 'Young Lady'  
'Royal Purple'



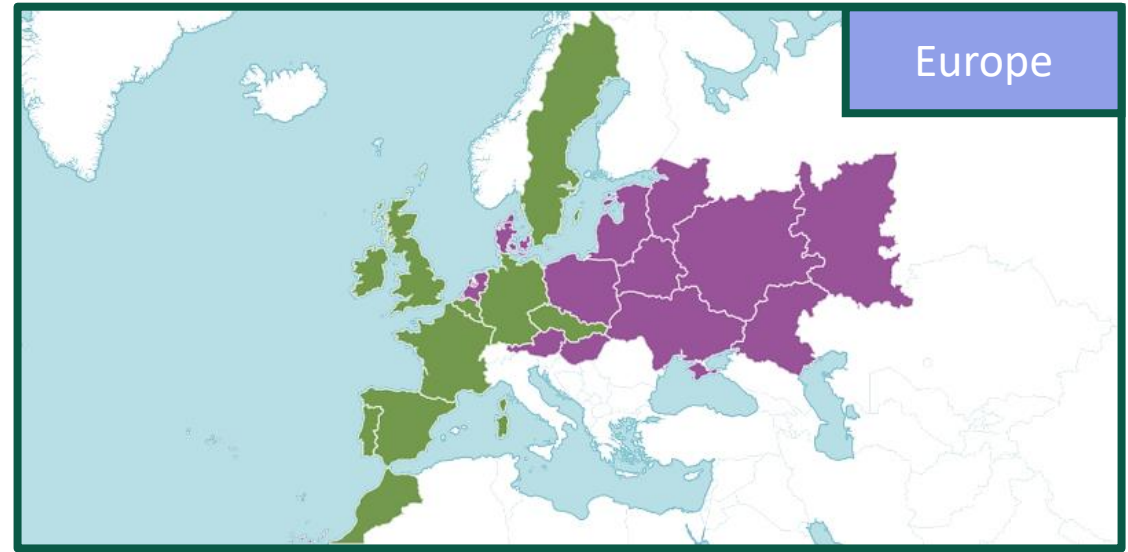
Summer ☀

Anacardiaceae  
Cashew Family

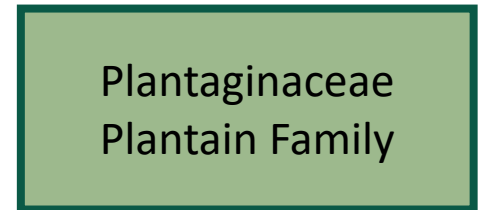
Large Shrub

# *Digitalis purpurea*

## Common Foxglove



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Joachim Blattboldt



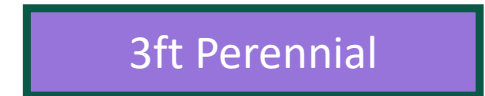
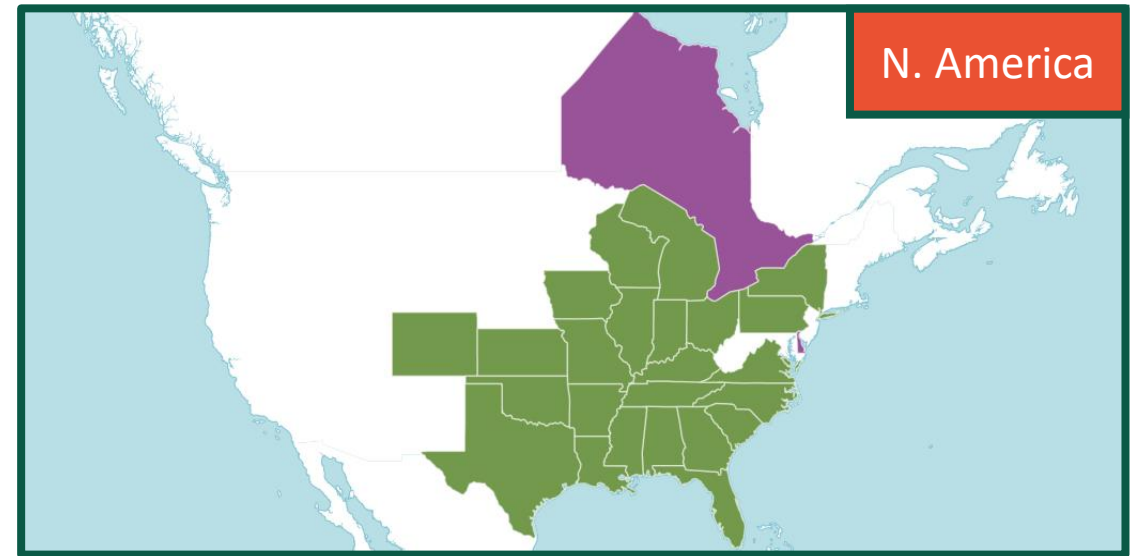


# *Echinacea purpurea*

## Purple Coneflower

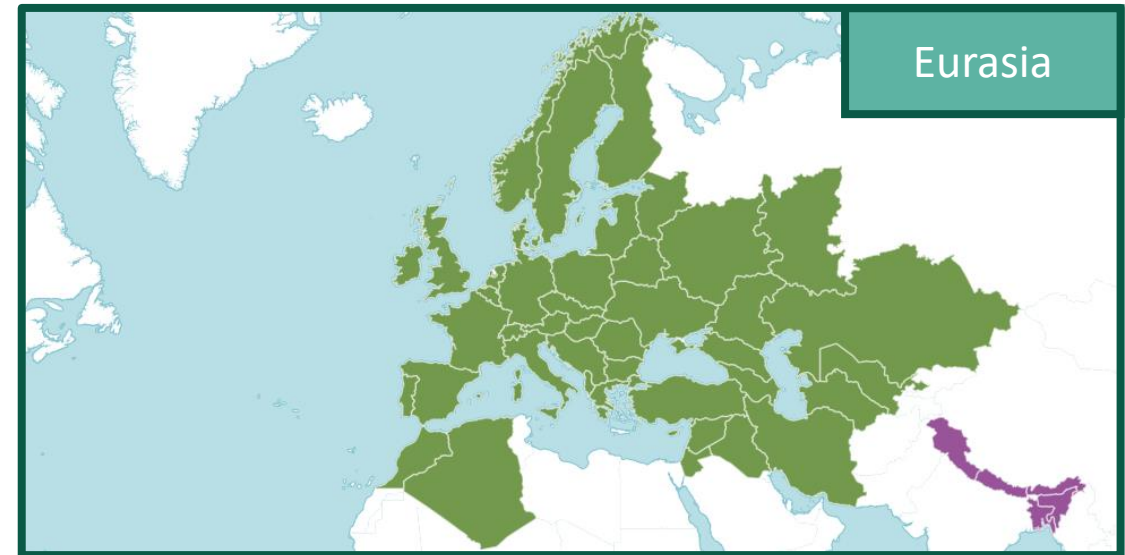


Photograph from Flickr (CC) Alvaro Regaly



# *Eupatorium cannabinum*

## Hemp-Agrimony



Eurasia



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Peter O'Connor

Related species: *Eupatorium maculatum*

'Orchard Dene'

'Purple Bush'



Late Summer  
- Early Autumn

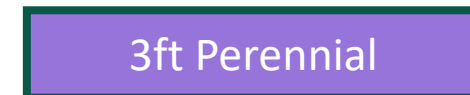
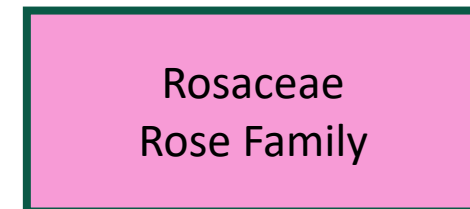
Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

5ft Perennial

# *Filipendula ulmaria* Meadowsweet

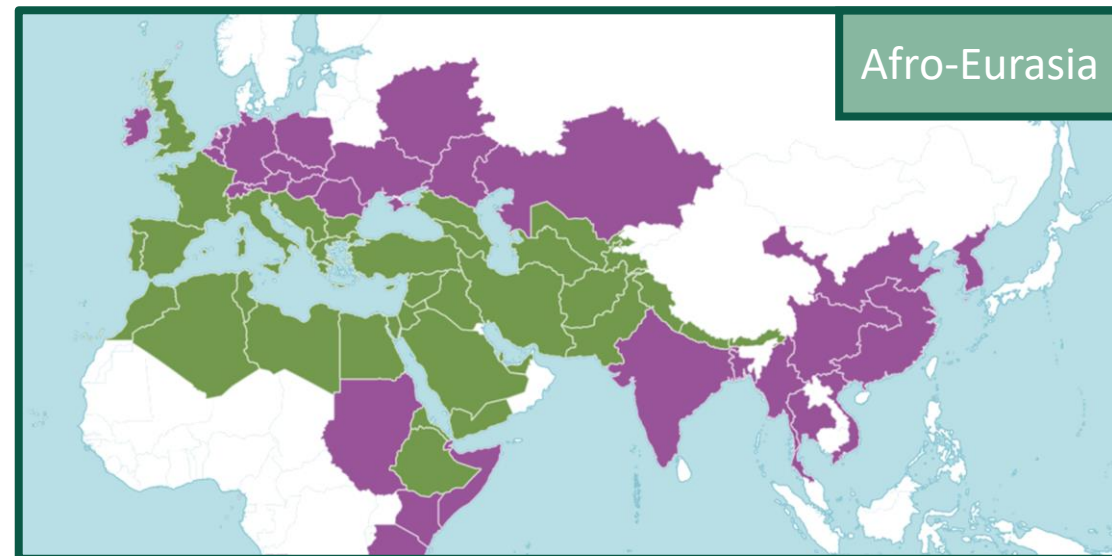


Photograph by Thomas McBride



# *Foeniculum vulgare*

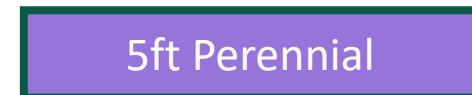
## Common Fennel



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Katy Wrathall



'Florence Fino'  
'Florence Orion'



# *Hamamelis mollis*

## Chinese Witch-hazel



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Wendy Cutler



'Jermyns Gold'  
'Wisley Supreme'



Mid Winter  
- Early Spring

Hamamelidaceae  
Witch-hazel Family

Large Shrub

# *Hypericum perforatum*

## Perforate St John's Wort



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Andreas Rockstein

None

Summer ☀

Hypericaceae  
St Johns Wort Family

2ft Perennial

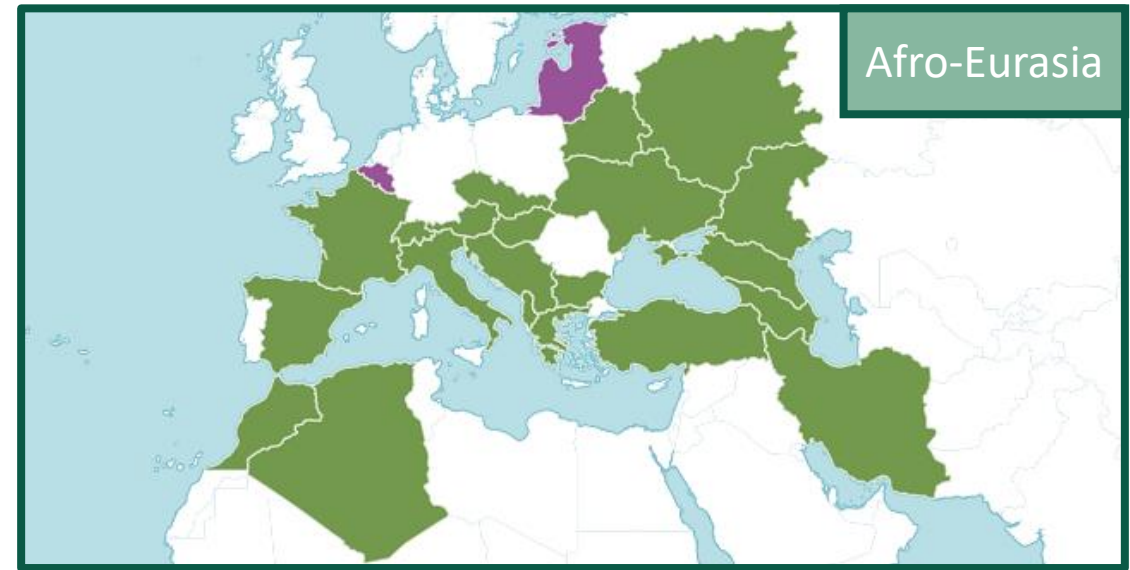


# *Hyssopus officinalis*

## Herb Hyssop



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Lotus Johnson



Afro-Eurasia



None



Midsummer  
- Early Autumn



Lamiaceae  
Mint Family



Small Subshrub

# *Inula helenium*

## Elecampane



Photograph from Flickr (CC) John Munt



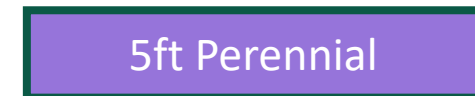
None



Summer ☀



Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

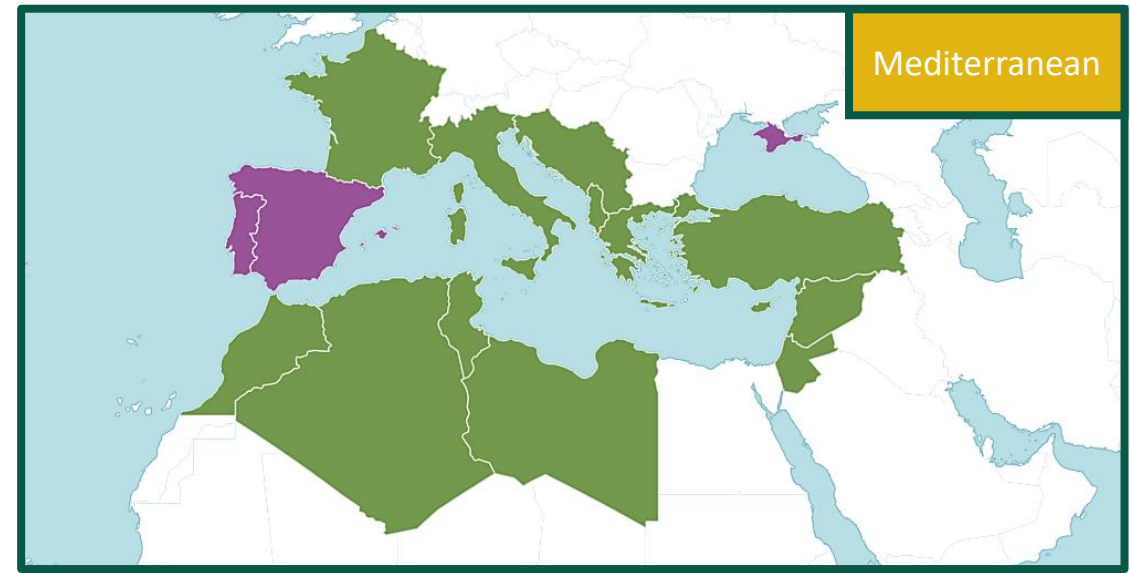


5ft Perennial



# *Laurus nobilis*

## Bay Tree, Laurel



'Aurea'  
*f. angustifolia*

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

Spring

Lauraceae  
Laurel Family

Large Shrub

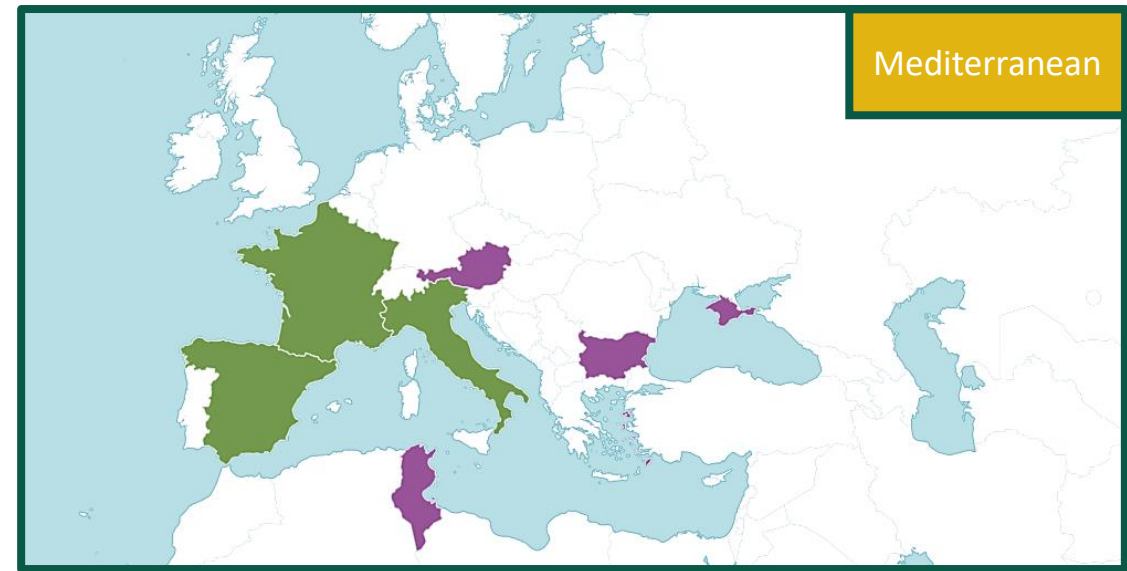
\* Not to be confused with a shrub, often referred to as a laurel, which is actually a poisonous species of cherry. Its flowers are also white but without yellow pollen and occur on spikes.

# *Lavandula angustifolia*

## English Lavender



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Peter Taylor



'Folgate' 'Hidcote'  
'Miss Katherine'



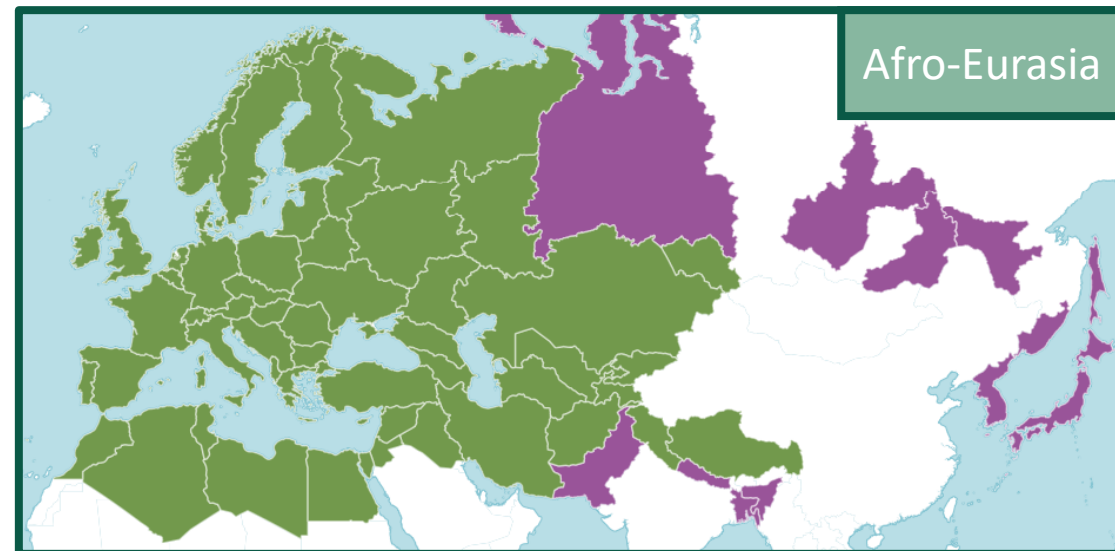
Summer ☀

Lamiaceae  
Mint Family

Small Shrub

# *Malva sylvestris*

## Common Mallow



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Steve Chilton

None



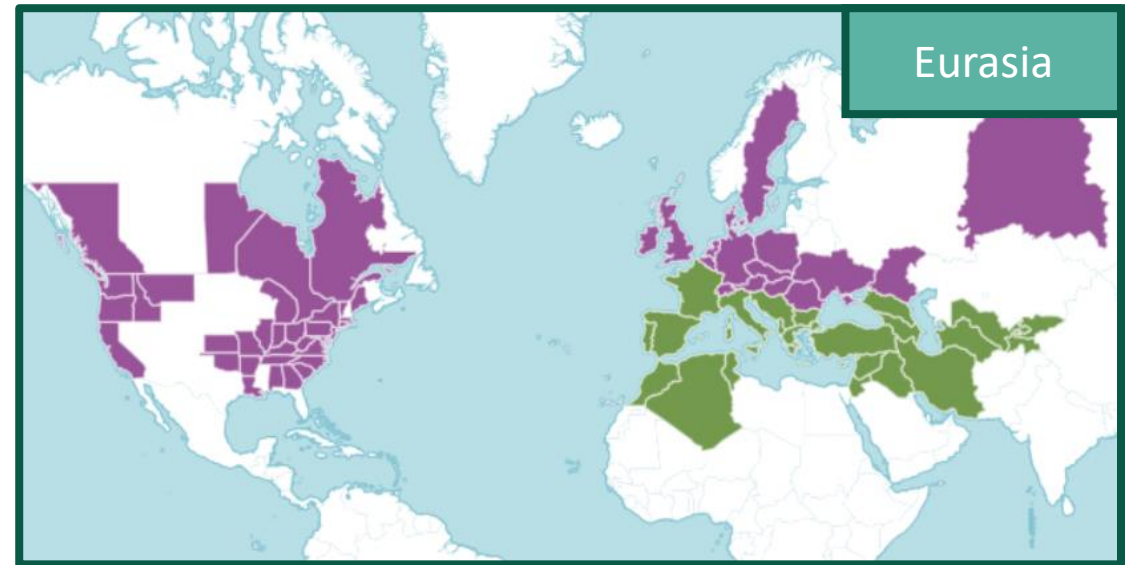
Midsummer  
- Early Autumn

Malvaceae  
Mallow Family

4ft Perennial

# *Melissa officinalis*

## Lemon Balm



None

Summer ☀

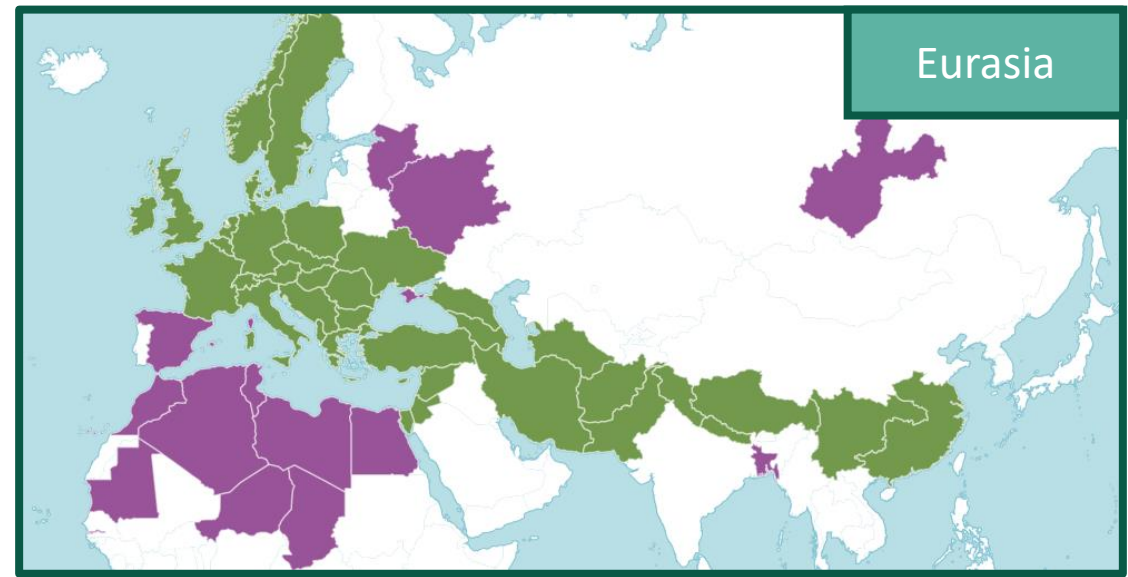
Lamiaceae  
Mint Family

2ft Perennial



# *Mentha spicata*

## Spearmint



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Radu Chibzii

None

The logo for the RHS Award of Garden Merit, featuring a green trophy cup inside a circular border with the text "RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT" and a registered trademark symbol. To the right of the logo is a stylized tree icon.

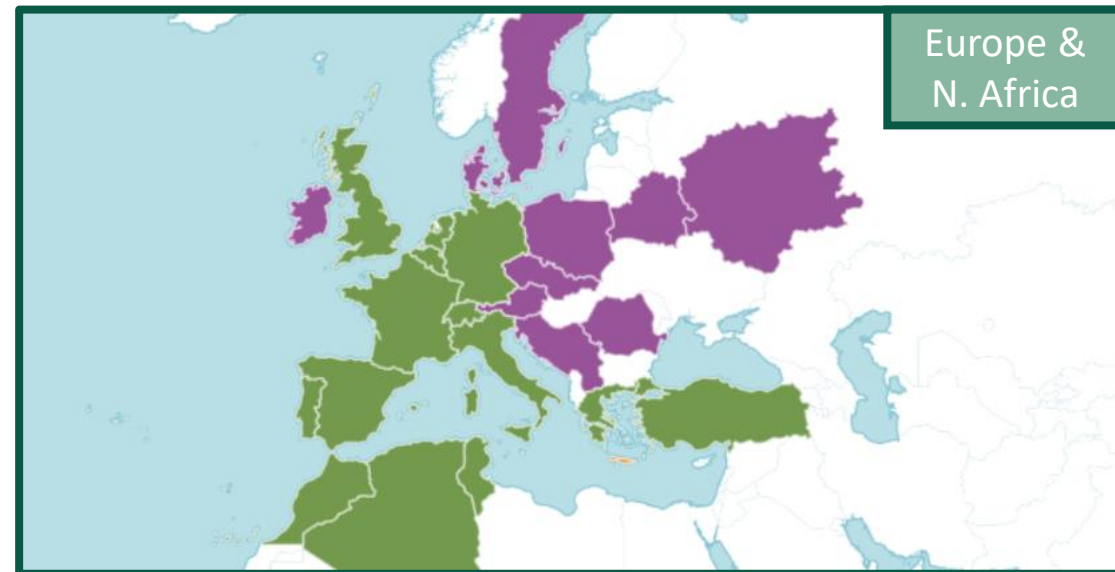
Early Summer  
- Early Autumn

Lamiaceae  
Mint Family

3ft Perennial

# *Mentha suaveolens*

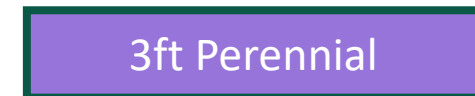
## Apple Mint



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) Aroche

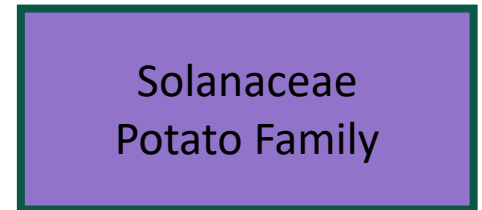
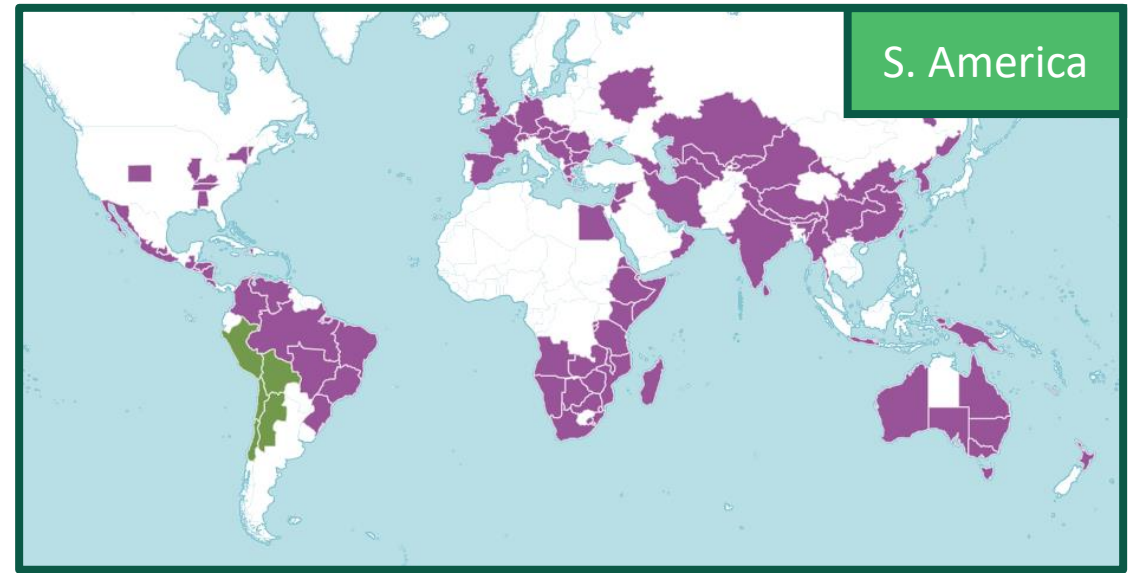


None



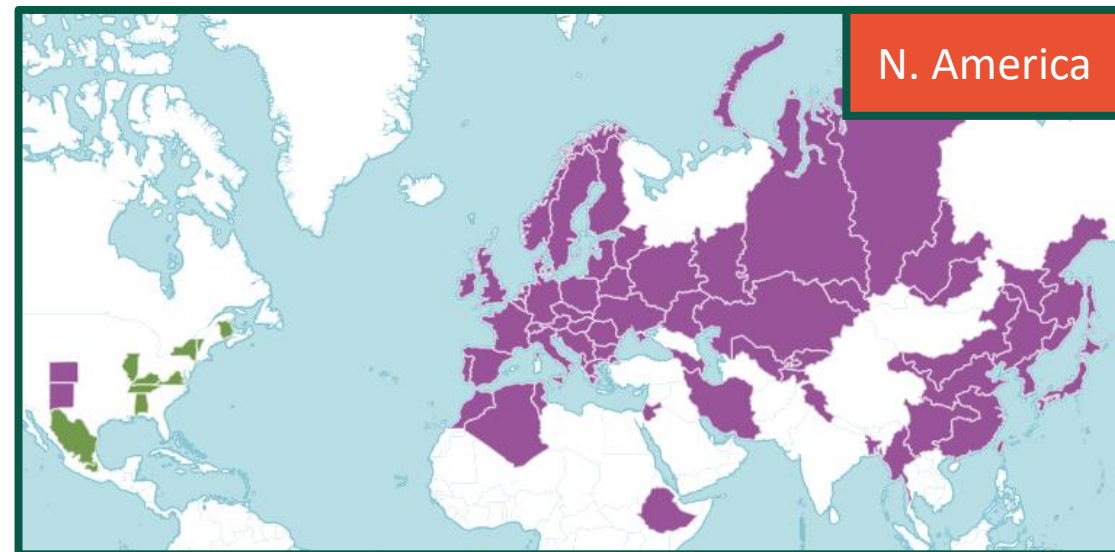
# *Nicandra physalodes*

## Shoo-fly Plant



# *Oenothera biennis*

## Common Evening-Primrose



Midsummer  
- Early Autumn

Onagraceae  
Willowherb Family

5ft Biennial



# *Origanum vulgare*

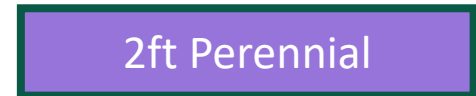
## Oregano Plant



Afro-Eurasia



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Gustav Og

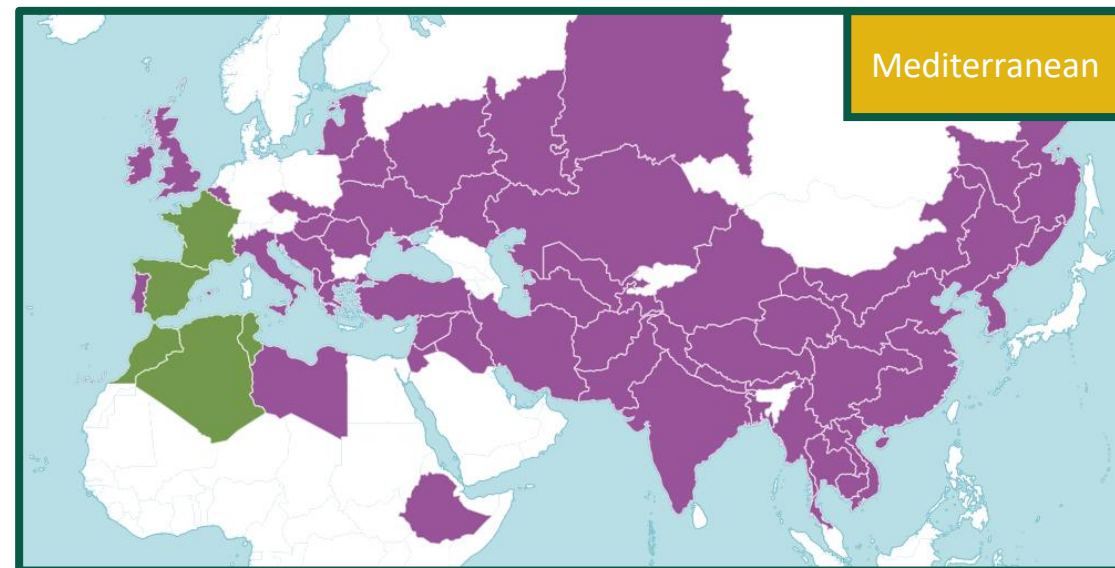


# *Papaver somniferum*

## Opium Poppy



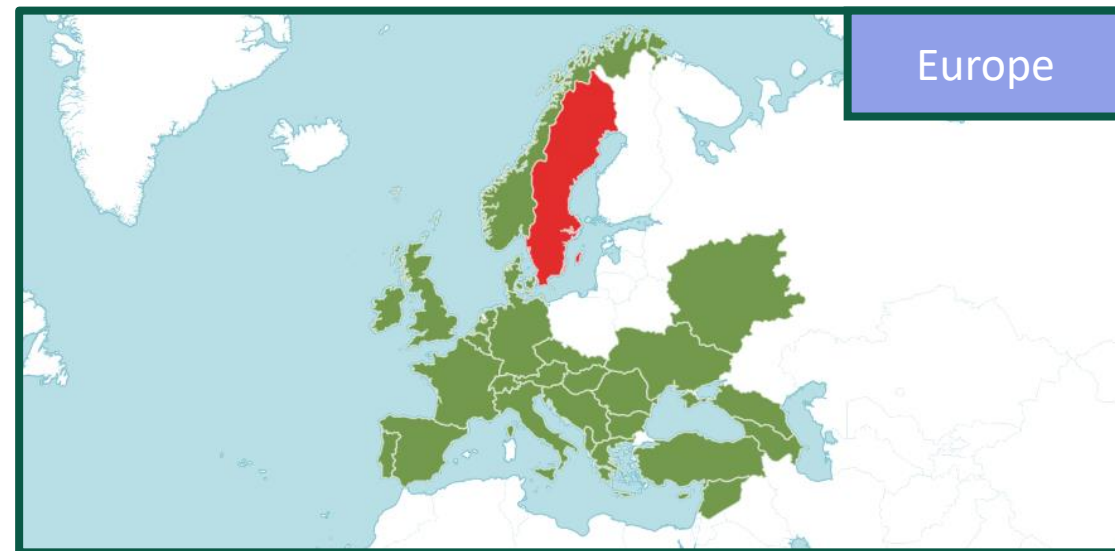
Photograph from Flickr (CC) Aaron Stidwell



\* Dry Seeds edible ('poppy seeds'), all other parts of the plant are poisonous

# *Primula vulgaris*

## Common Primrose



Photograph © Thomas McBride



'Taigetos'  
*Ssp. sibthorpii*

Late Winter  
- Mid Spring

Primulaceae  
Primrose Family

1ft Perennial

# *Pulsatilla vulgaris*

## Common Pasqueflower



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Rainer Stropek

- Species -



Spring 

Ranunculaceae  
Buttercup Family

Alpine Perennial

# *Rosa gallica*

Rosa-mundi, French Rose



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Tim Waters



*var. officinalis*  
'Versicolor'



Summer ☀

Rosaceae  
Rose Family

Small Shrub

# *Rosmarinus officinalis*

## Rosemary Plant



# Salvia sclarea

## Clary Sage



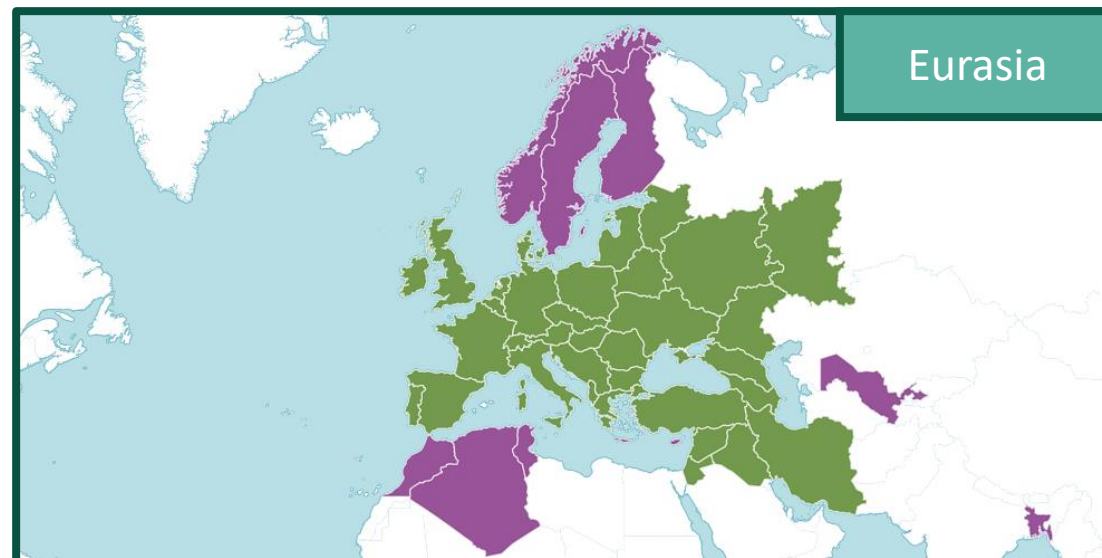
Late Spring  
- Midsummer

Lamiaceae  
Mint Family

3ft Biennial

# *Sambucus nigra*

## Common Elder



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Andreas Rockstein



*f. laciniata*  
'Thundercloud'

Late Spring  
- Midsummer

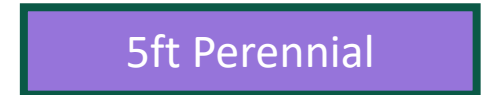
Adoxaceae  
Moschatel Family

Small Tree



# *Sanguisorba officinalis*

## Great Burnet

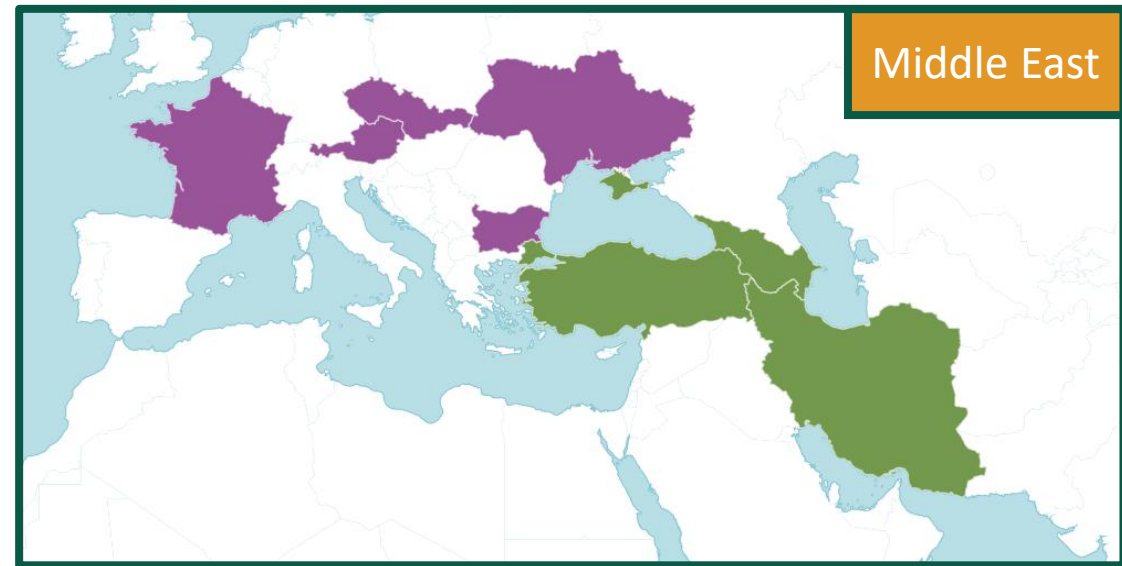


# *Stachys byzantina*

## Lamb's Ear



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) Muse Seeker



None



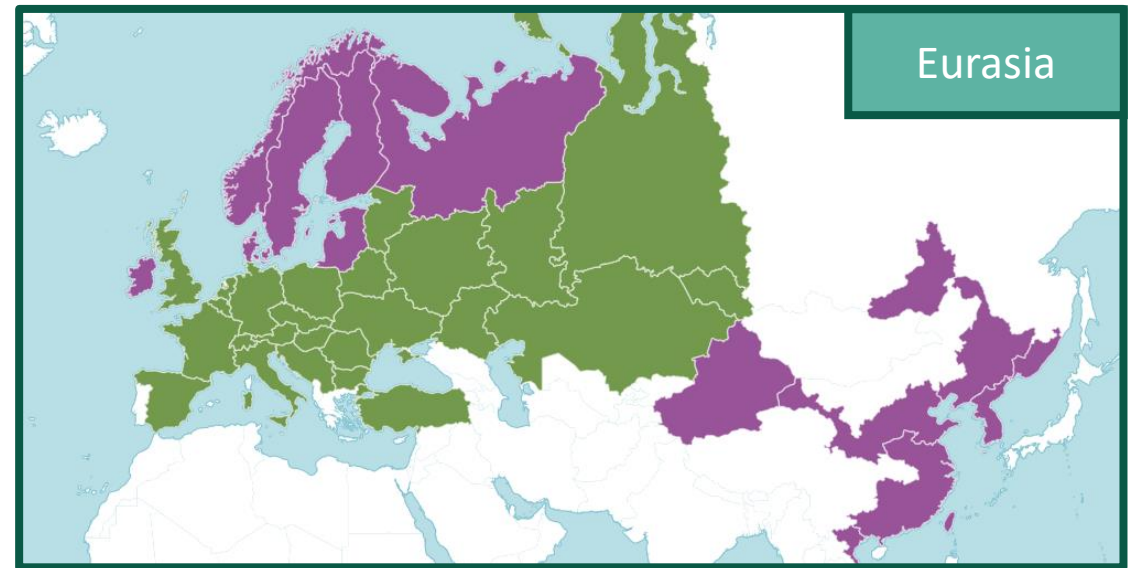
# *Stachys palustris*

## Marsh Woundwort



# *Symphytum officinale*

## Common Comfrey



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Gail Hampshire

None



Late Spring  
- Midsummer

Boraginaceae  
Borage Family

5ft Perennial

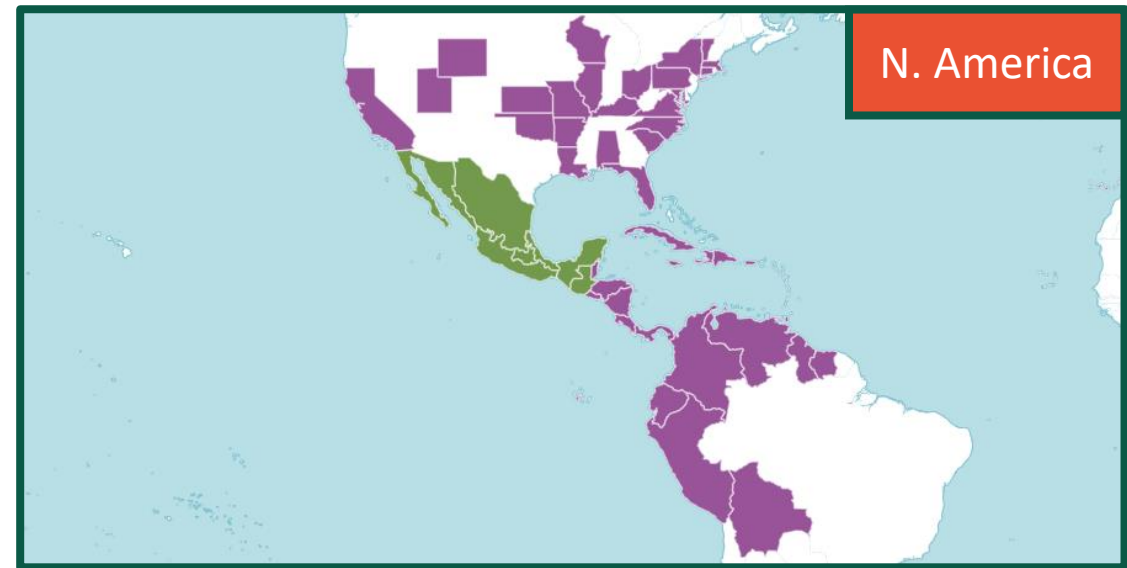
This plant will spread so allow it plenty of room and do not plant in a herbaceous border. Leaves rot down to produce rich compost

# *Tagetes patula*

## French Marigold



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Taco Witte



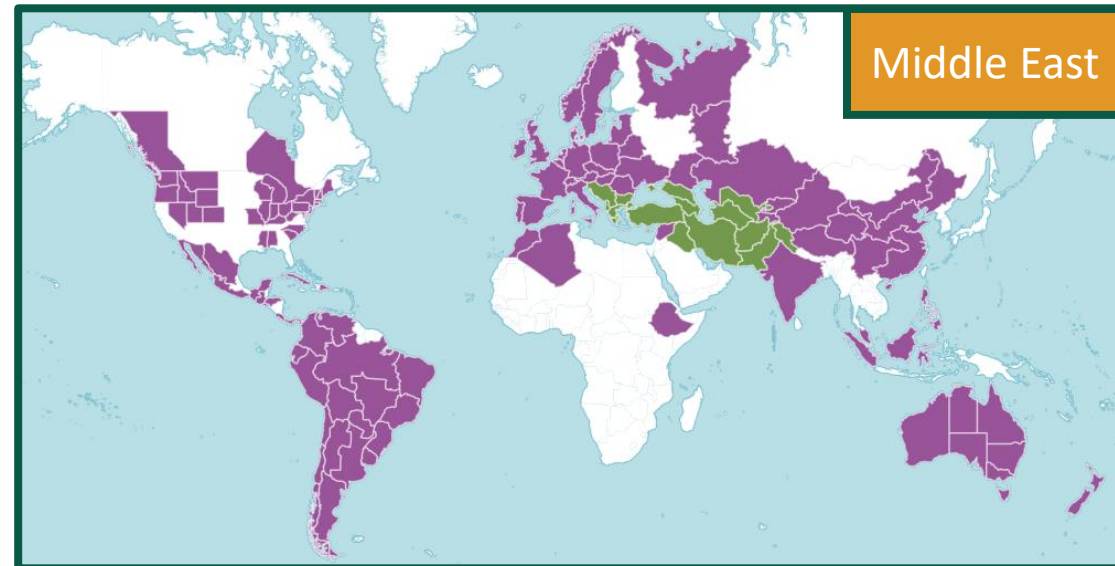
NB: Will not survive a frost, only half-hardy

# *Tanacetum parthenium*

## Common Feverfew



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Cheryl Binstock



Potentially

'Aureum'



Summer ☀

Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

2ft Perennial

# *Tanacetum vulgare*

## Common Tansy



None



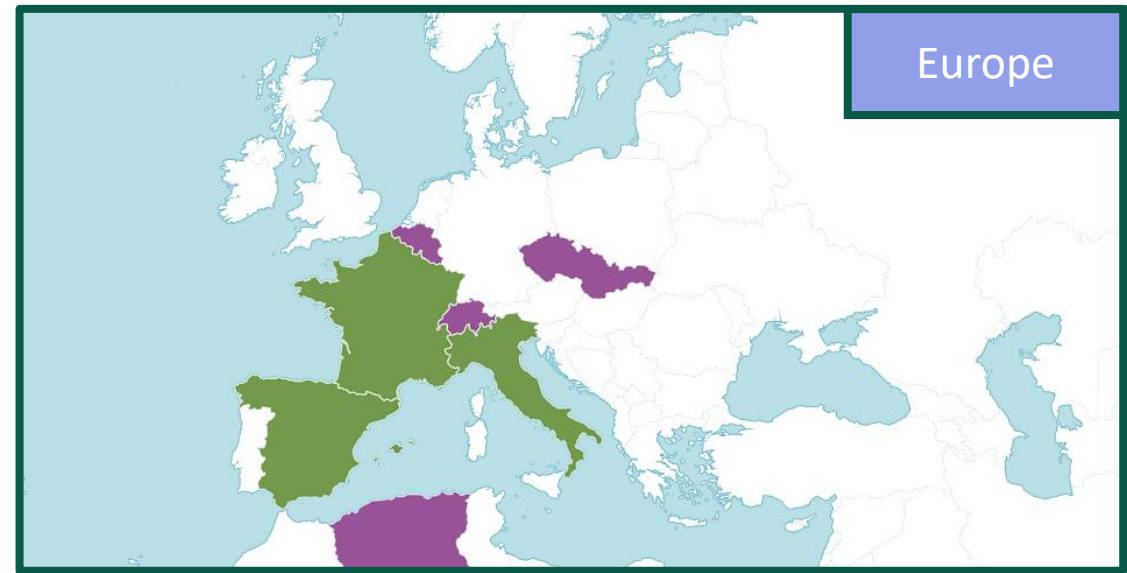
Midsummer  
- Early Autumn

Asteraceae  
Daisy Family

2ft Perennial

# *Thymus vulgaris*

## Common Thyme



'Silver Queen'



Summer ☀

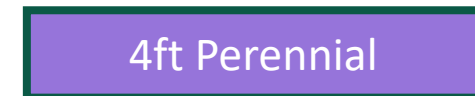
Lamiaceae  
Mint Family

1ft Trailing Subshrub



# *Valeriana officinalis*

## Garden Valerian



# *Verbascum nigrum*

## Black Mullein



Photograph © Thomas McBride



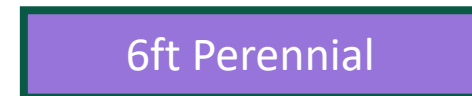
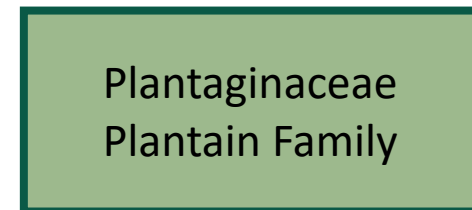
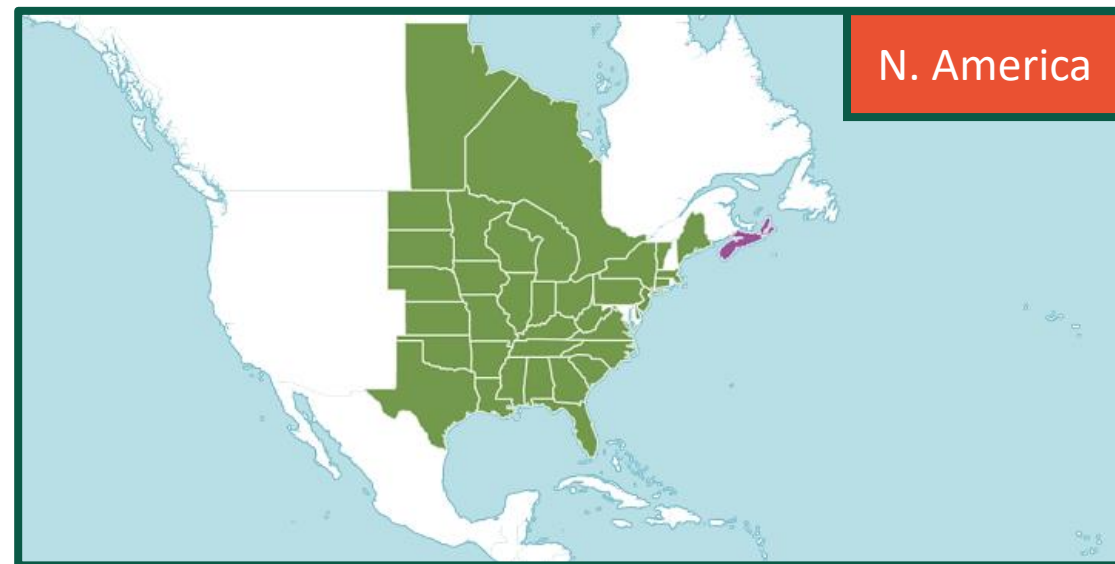
Early Summer  
- Early Autumn

Scrophulariaceae  
Figwort Family

4ft Biennial

# *Veronicastrum virginicum*

## Culver's Root



# *Viburnum opulus*

## Guelder-rose



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Fred F

'Compactum' 'Rosea'  
'Xanthocarpum'

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Late Spring  
- Midsummer

Adoxaceae  
Moschatel Family

Large Shrub

# *Viola tricolor*

## Heartsease



'Jackanapes'  
'Blue Moonlight'



Late Spring  
- Early Autumn

Violaceae  
Violet Family

1ft Biennial (or Perennial)

*Photograph from Flickr (CC) Ettore Balocchi*