

Around here, we have entered that period of spring gardening where everything has to be done NOW! After being slow, dead, or dormant all winter, and showing tentative movement in February and March, spring's pace is now quickening. Time to weed, mow, prune, weed, fertilize, weed, mow, weed, mulch....did we mention weed? But it's good to be outside, in the warming and lengthening days, so if you can manage to squeeze in a little time for planting, here are some suggestions for this week.



## TEA HERBS

Herbs are easy, forgiving plants to grow, providing year-round color and flavor for the garden and kitchen. If you have an open spot or two, tuck a few tea herbs in among other garden plants and harvest a fresh supply all summer for iced teas and other cooling beverages. Or, to grow and dry a plentiful supply for winter brews, you can start a dedicated tea garden bed.

Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), spearmint (*Mentha spicata*), and chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*) are a good place to start if you want a more familiar tea- they can be used on their own or combined with loose black or green teas for a custom blend. It is the menthol in mint that we recognize as feeling both cool and warm at the same time, making mint teas ideal for iced summer beverages and soothing winter warmers. Mint is also incredibly easy to grow; its drawback is that it grows and spreads too easily. Keep it in containers or in its own bed where it can't run all over the rest of the garden. Chamomile tea, another perennial favorite, is made from the small white or yellow blooms - fresh or dried - that appear in summer.



Other familiar culinary herbs can also contribute to flavorful teas and beverages:

Lavenders - fresh or dried, the flower spikes steeped in hot water lend beverages a floral aroma and flavor

Rosemary, sage, thyme - Fresh or dried leaves have a warming, savory spiciness

Lemon balm - Use the fresh or dried leaves of this lemon-scented mint relative

Harvesting tips: To brew with fresh herbs, pick them any time, then bruise the leaves or flowers slightly to release their flavor. To dry them for

later use, it's generally best to harvest leaves before the flowers open. Sprigs can be bundled and hung or placed on screens in a dry place with good air circulation that's not in direct sunlight; or cut a whole plant as flowering begins and hang it to dry, if you plan on brewing a lot. After they are dry, store the leaves or flowers in glass jars. For the best flavor, don't crush the dried herbs until just before using. Visit the [Herbal Teas](#) page on our website to see brewing tips and our recipes for Lavender Mint Tea, Rosemary Lemonade, Herbfarm Lavender Lemon Ice Tea, and others.

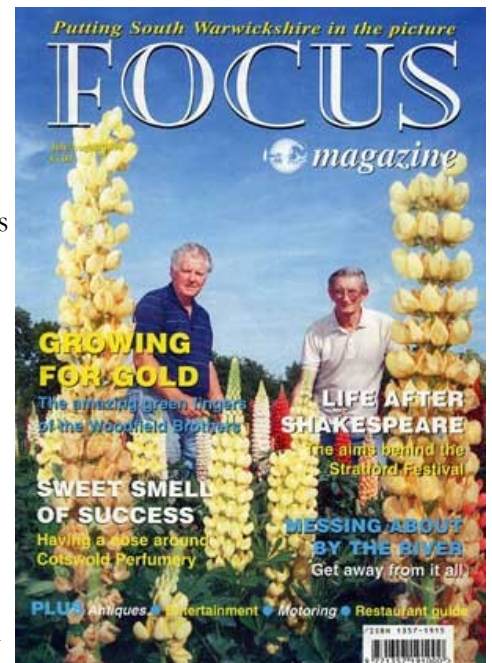


## LUPINE 'NEW GENERATION' HYBRIDS

Every plant has a story...and many breeders, professional and amateur, have played a role in the history of developing the charming but scrubby wild lupine into tall, sturdy hybrids that produce the solid columns of color so identified with a romantic cottage garden. Brian and Maurice Woodfield are the heroes of the 'New Generation' Lupine story, which begins in the 1970s. The brothers, plant breeders in England, feared that the world-esteemed Russell lupines had deteriorated beyond recognition from their peak in the 1930s. By crossing the best of the older varieties with their own seedlings, the Woodfields were able to eliminate weak plants and produce what they called the New Generation lupines. They had found their life's work! (You can read more of their story in our [lupine article](#) online.)

One of the Woodfield brothers' most successful plants, Lupine 'New Generation' has densely-packed, brilliantly-colored 3 foot floral spikes and a sturdy, disease-resistant constitution, a far cry from the aphid-ridden cultivars of old. No staking is necessary for these strong plants, which bloom in a dazzling array of colors and bicolors, ranging from cream, yellow and peach to pale pink, light scarlet, blood red and shades of blue and white. Four years ago, Lupine 'New Generation' received the Vetch award, the Queen of England's highest honor, and has won over 13 gold medals from the Royal Horticulture Society. Because of our relationship with the brothers, Log House was the exclusive grower in the United States for many years.

Our crop for this year is now available, with the distinctive palmate green leaves bursting out of the soil in search of sunlight to fuel their flowering. When planting lupines, find a site with light, well-drained sandy soil in full sun or light shade. Planted in a border or wild garden alongside delphiniums, hollyhocks, or poppies, their bold, upright early summer color spikes conjure up the English countryside. A lovely view to contemplate while sipping that refreshing midsummer mint tea!



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