



14th August 2025

British Garden Centres' guide to retro flowers that are blooming again

Retro flowers are making a stylish comeback in our gardens, as gardeners embrace classic blooms like hydrangeas, dahlias and sweet peas. This nostalgic trend blends vintage charm with sustainability, offering beautiful, pollinator friendly plants that connect us to traditional English garden heritage. British gardeners are rediscovering these timeless flowers to create beautiful outdoor spaces, and British Garden Centres has the lowdown on the most popular retro flowers to plant.

Dahlias: Dahlias are loved for their dramatic daisy, cactus, pom pom and dinner plate-sized blooms that come in a multitude of colours. They thrive in fertile, well-drained soils with plenty of sunlight, and with regular deadheading and feeding, they can provide an extended flowering season well into the autumn months. Taller dahlias may need staking for support and remember to lift the tubers over winter to keep this retro flower in the best condition for the next year.

Chrysanthemums: Chrysanthemums are often associated with vintage gardens and come in shades like white, yellow, orange, purple, and red. They prefer full sun and rich soil, and consistent watering and feeding encourage bushy growth and prolific blooms that last well into autumn. Pinching back the shoots early on helps maintain their shape, and regular deadheading supports continued flowering for that retro look.

Sweet Peas: Sweet peas bring a delicate fragrance to gardens, evoking a sense of nostalgia and are excellent climbers for trellises or fences. They flourish in sunny, well-drained, and fertile soil, requiring frequent watering and feeding to support their growth. Picking sweet pea blooms regularly encourages more flowering, and they can be used as a cut flower to bring a beautiful perfume into your home.

Marigolds: Marigolds are a classic garden favourite and add a burst of bright orange, yellow, and red to any garden space, whether it be borders, containers or window boxes. They prefer full sun and well-drained soil, and gardeners should water at the base of the plant to avoid mildew and keep them in tip top condition. Deadheading marigolds encourages continuous blooming, making them a cheerful and easy-care choice even for beginner gardeners.

Roses: Roses continue to surge in popularity due to their strong scents, attracting pollinators, and roses evoke a sense of connection with the past. There are many heirloom varieties, prized for their resilience, fragrance, and the memories they carry from one generation to the next. Modern roses are easier to care for today, largely because breeders have focused on creating varieties that are more disease-resistant and bloom more reliably throughout the season, making them easier for beginner gardeners to grow.



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Hydrangeas: Hydrangeas across the board have seen an increase this year as we experience a rise in good breeding coming through, alongside customers' appreciation of their many attributes. The later flowering Paniculata types have seen the biggest rise due to the increased range available and the fact that they flower strongly after many other garden shrubs have finished their display.

Peonies: These stand out with their large, romantic, often double-petaled blooms in shades of pink, red, or white. Blooming from late spring to early summer, peonies prefer a sunny spot with rich, moist but well-drained soil. Their crowns should be planted just below the surface, and mulching along with spring feeding supports healthy growth. Peonies can thrive for years, sometimes gracing a garden for decades with their sumptuous flowers.

Lilacs: Lilacs are beloved shrubs that produce fragrant clusters of blossoms, typically in purple, white, or pink, during late spring. They favour sunny positions with alkaline to neutral fertile soil and benefit from pruning immediately after flowering. Lilacs evoke sweet nostalgia, commonly used as classic hedging or in spring bouquets.

Dianthus: Dianthus is another flower making a comeback due to interest in cottage garden styles, reviving its popularity, with gardeners appreciating its nostalgic versatility as both a garden plant and cut flower. New quick flowering varieties allow for annual planting and blooming within the same year, enhancing their appeal for modern gardeners wanting instant impact.

Delphiniums: These are also being revived in UK gardens, celebrated for their tall, colourful blue, pink and white spikes that add vintage charm and height to cottage-style borders. Once a classic garden favourite, they're now popular again for both outdoor planting and cut flower arrangements, appearing regularly at shows like RHS Chelsea.

Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres, said: "As these timeless favourites brighten up our gardens again, it's a lovely reminder that beauty from the past still has plenty to offer today. When you plant these retro blooms, you're not just growing flowers but sharing a piece of garden heritage that can be enjoyed for years to come."

ENDS:

WORD COUNT: 773

Notes to Editors: British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK's largest family-owned garden centre group, with 73 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by the Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire. BGC was launched in 1990 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre, funded by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs. Since 2018, it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres, allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now, with 73 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham. The group has a team of 2,700 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, three growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres and Woodthorpe Leisure Park and Woody's Restaurant & Bar.



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