



Top 50 Annual and Biennial Plants for Pollinators

Plants, usually sown from seed, that will need to be planted every year or every other year

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



About Annuals and Biennials

Annual and Biennial plants are those which only take one or two years to complete their full life cycle from germination to seed dispersal and death respectively. These plants, especially annuals, are usually grow directly from seed so may be used in a different way to perennials and shrubs in gardens. Often used as a pop of colour, annuals especially can be sown early in the year in the gaps between perennials in the border. Alternatively, they may be grown in a greenhouse and planted out such as petunias and French marigolds, which are usually bedding plants, or planted in the form of a meadow mix, such as poppies, cornflowers, corn cockles and corn marigolds. Due to their quick life cycle, these species are often ruderal and will produce large numbers of seeds during their lifetime. Some annuals will seed every year so they may appear to continue flowering as perennials would. Biennials will only flower on the second year; often growing a basal rosette of leaves the first year to provide energy for the following year's growth such as foxgloves and mullein. If you use annuals and biennials wisely, they can be every bit as impactful as perennials in your borders. Why not try planting them amongst the vegetables in your allotment. If one of your perennials has died, they can be great for filling those sorry-looking gaps.



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)

Latin Binomial
Name

Anethum graveolens

Common
English
Name

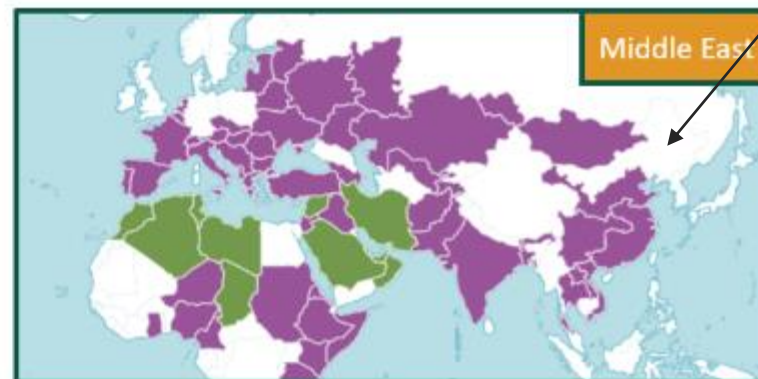
Common Dill

Photograph
of the plant
in flower



Insect groups
known to
favour the
nectar of this
plant

Useful knowledge or warnings about the plant



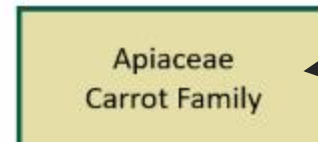
All maps shown
are derived from
'Plants of the
World Online';
courtesy of Kew
Gardens



RHS AGM cultivars of this species (or a related species occasionally)



Flowering Period
(this is when it is good
for pollinators!)



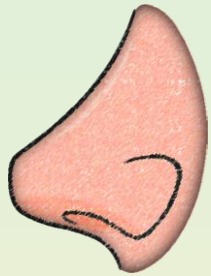
Plant Family



Growing habit
and mature size
of the plant

Key to these Pages

Additional information on these garden plants



The flowers and/or leaves have a Pleasant scent

This plant would only 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

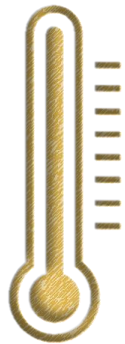
Some of the plants listed in our Top 200 are not fully hardy in all or some parts of the United Kingdom.

Plants without a thermometer symbol are fully hardy in the severest UK Winter; equating to **H5** or hardier.

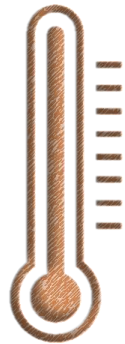
Plants with a coloured thermometer symbol are hardy to varying degrees as follows:



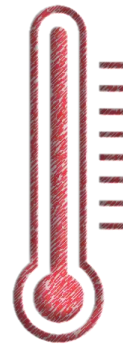
Almost Hardy
(H4)



Half-Hardy
(H3)



Not Frost Hardy
(H2)



Not Hardy
(H1)

RHS Hardiness Scale

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

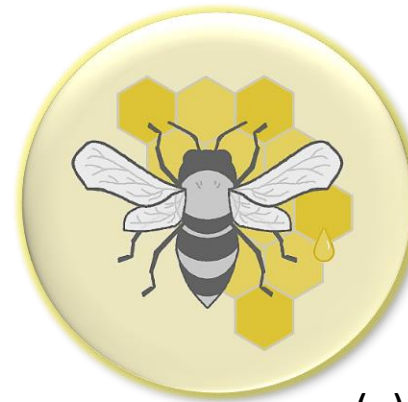
Pollinators

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.

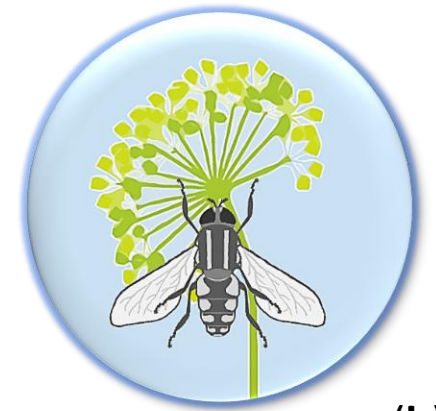
It should be noted that all bee and hoverfly data is ours but lepidoptera data is taken from Butterfly Conservation.

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
(Includes Moths) | f) Solitary Bees |



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



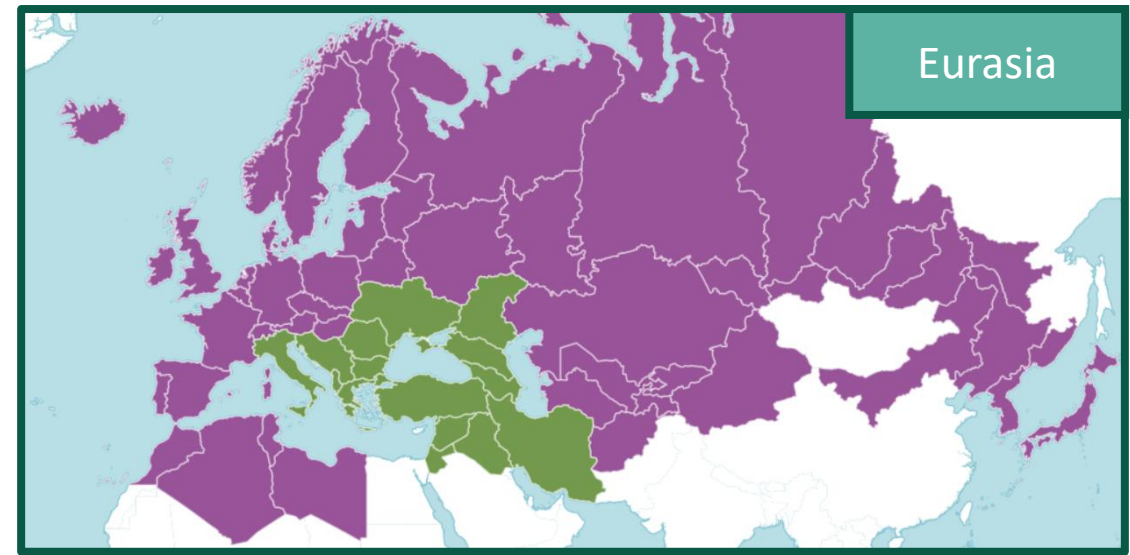
(e)



(f)

Agrostemma githago

Common Corn-cockle



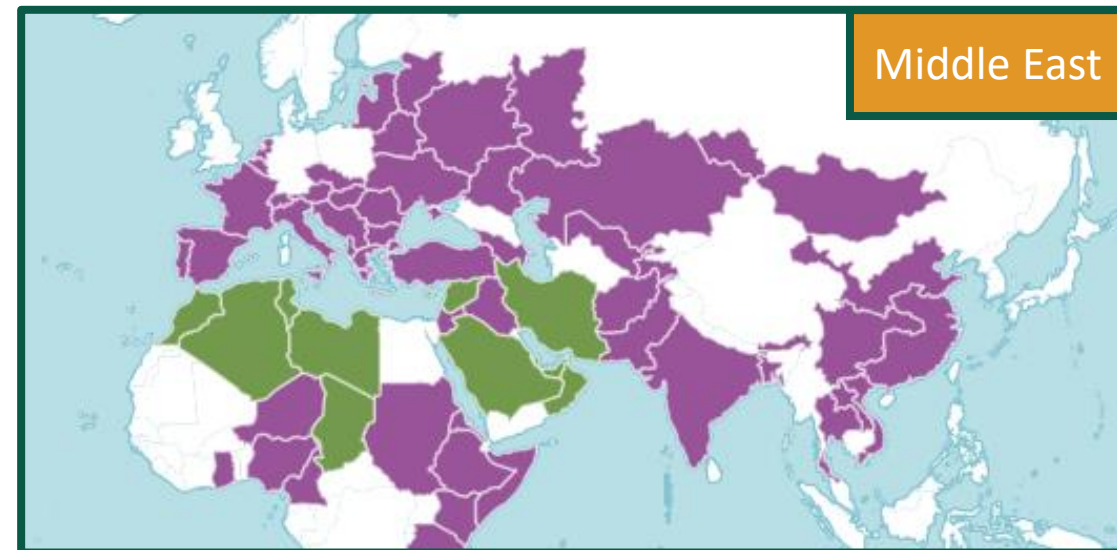
Alcea rosea

Common Hollyhock



Anethum graveolens

Common Dill



'Moulton'
'Annete' 'Hera'



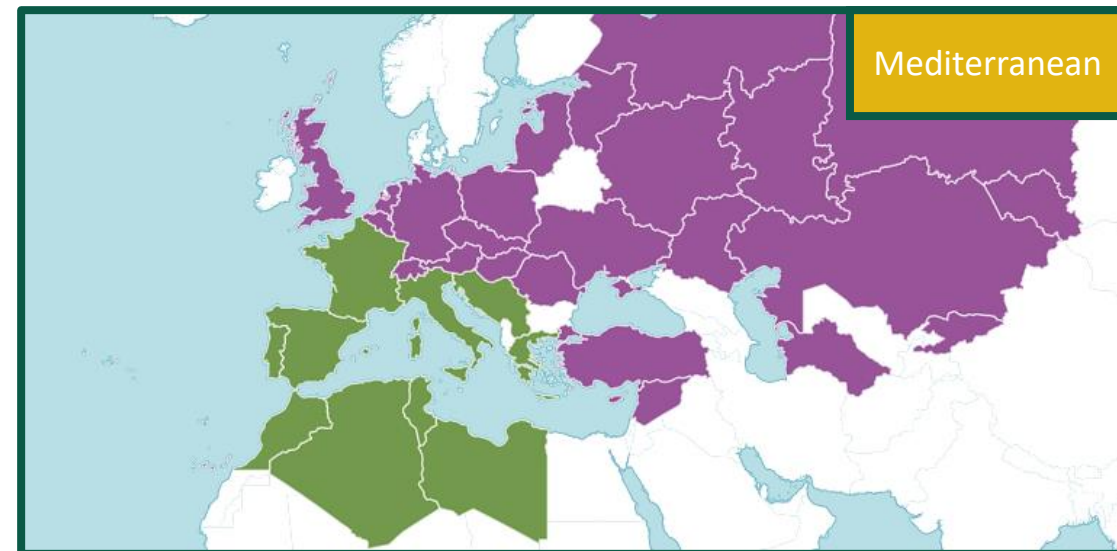
Summer ☀

Apiaceae
Carrot Family

3ft Annual

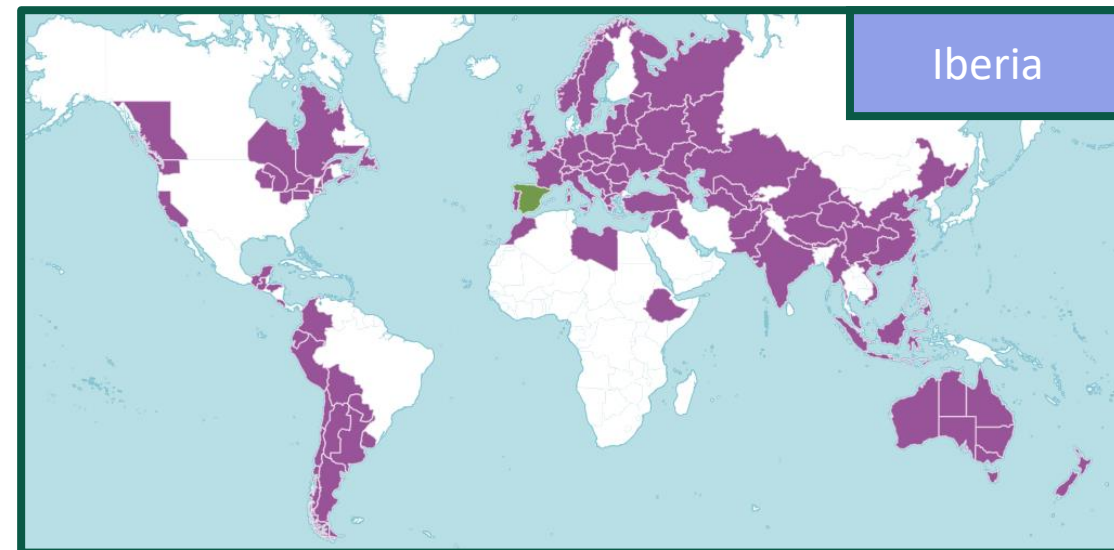
Borago officinalis

Common Borage



Calendula officinalis

Common Marigold



'Fiesta Gitana'



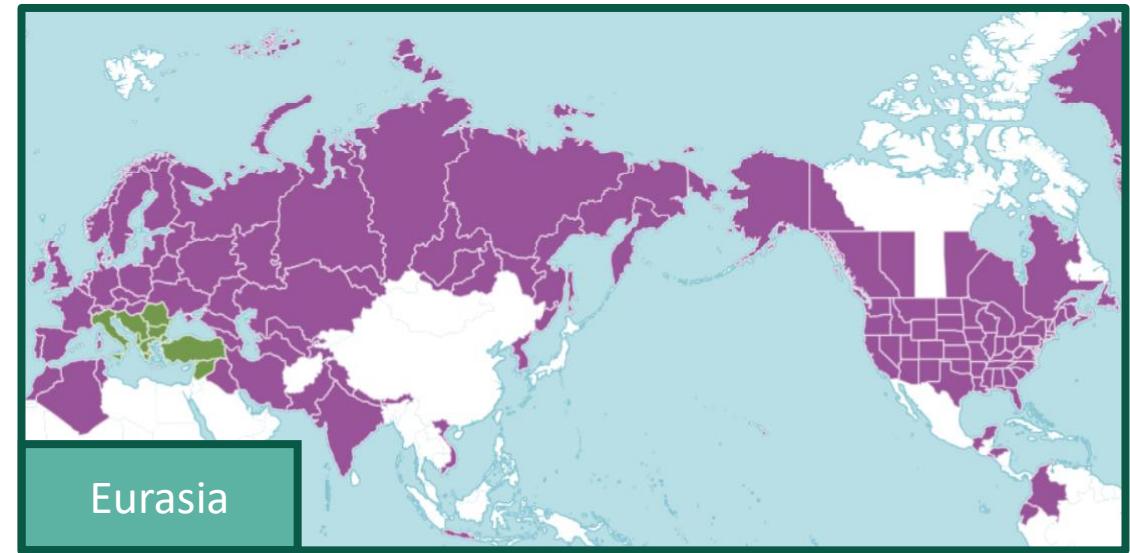
Early Summer
- Early Autumn

Asteraceae
Daisy Family

2ft Annual

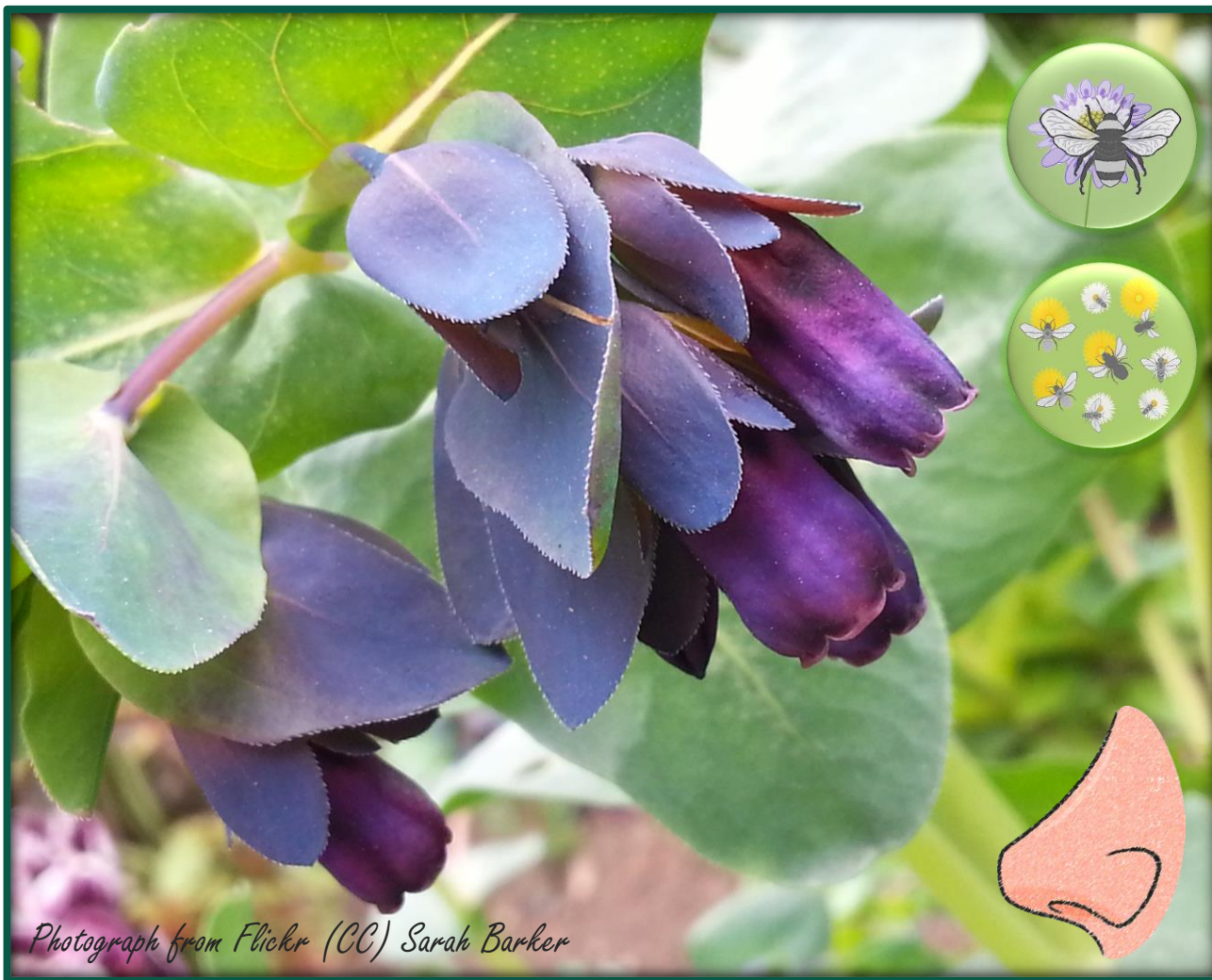
Centaurea cyanus

Annual Cornflower



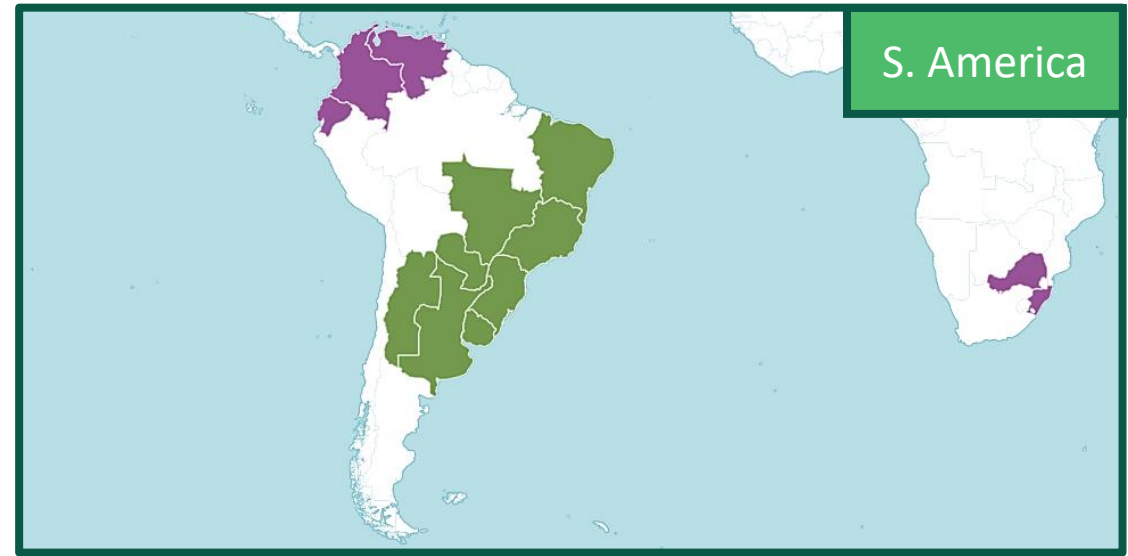
Cerintho major

Greater Honeywort



Cleome hassleriana

Common Spiderflower



'Helen Campbell'

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Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Cleomaceae
Spiderflower Family

5ft Annual

Consolida regalis

Forking Larkspur



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Xulesc G



(Related species: Delphiniums)

None



Late Spring
- Midsummer

Ranunculaceae
Buttercup Family

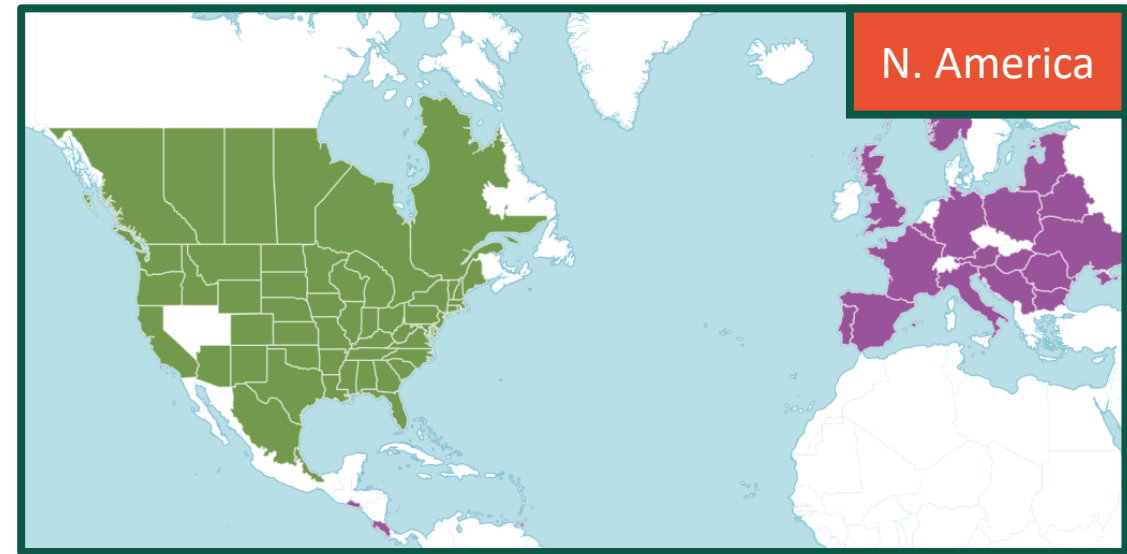
2ft Annual

Coreopsis tinctoria

Dyer's Tickseed



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Natalie J

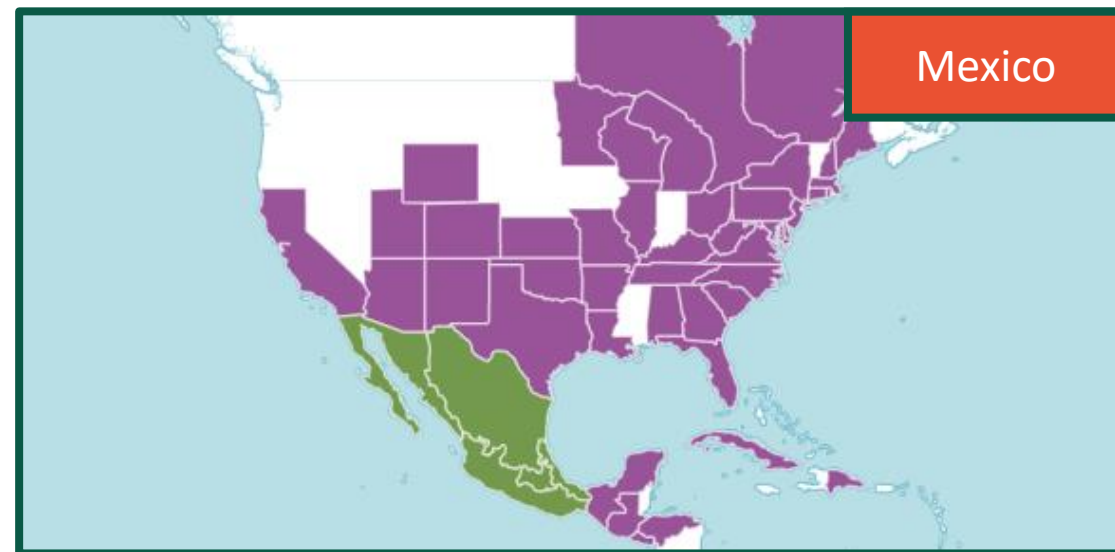


Cosmos bipinnatus

Mexican Daisy



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Dean Morley



Cosmos sulphureus

Yellow Mexican Daisy



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) Ramesh NG



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

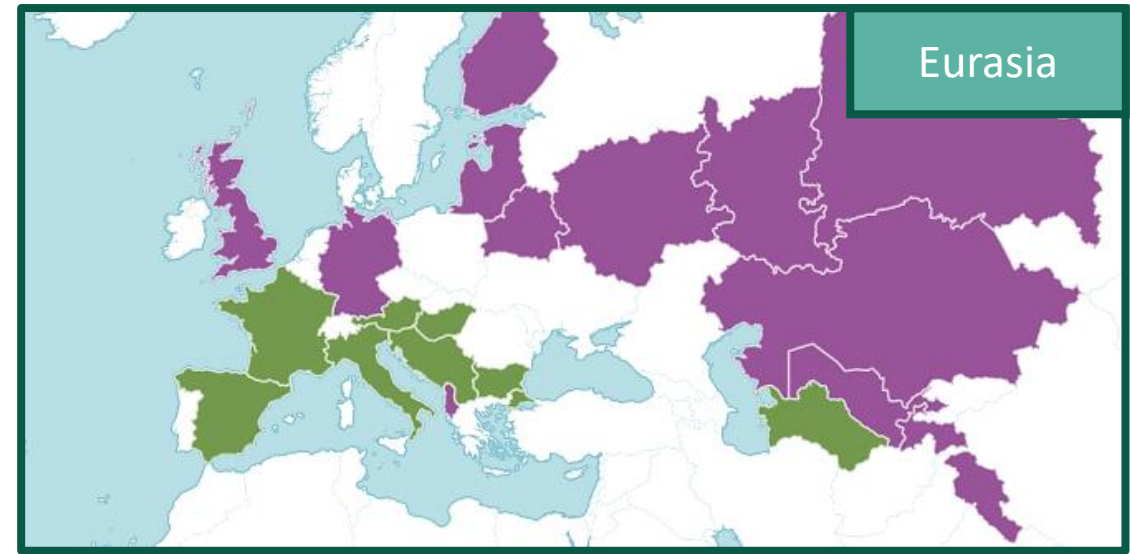
Asteraceae
Daisy Family

4ft Annual

* This plant, if sown early, should be sown inside during winter (cannot survive below -5°C night temperatures)

Dianthus barbatus

Sweet William



'Nigrescens series'
'Super Parfait series'

RHS AWARD OF GARDEN MERIT

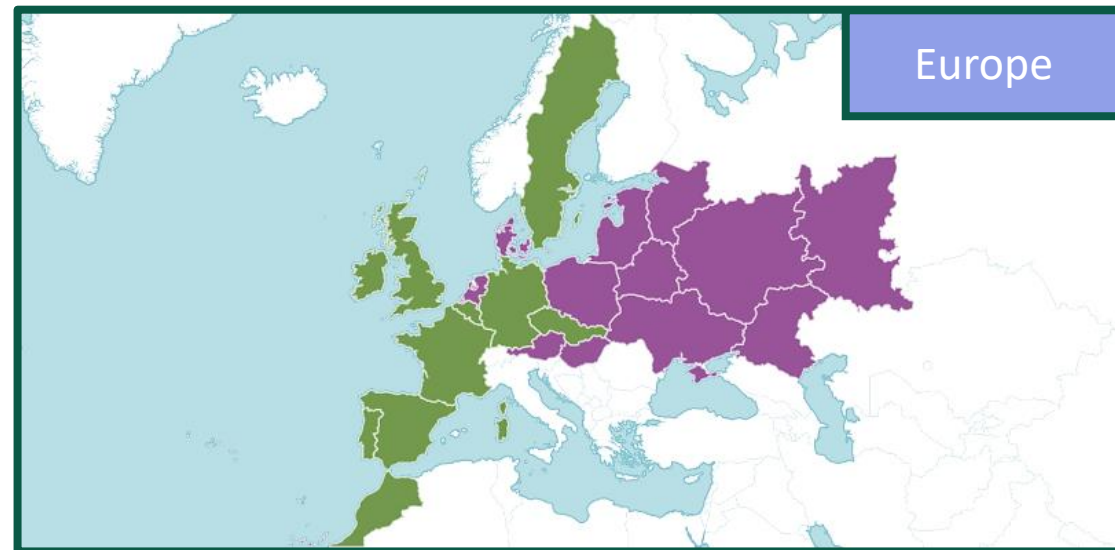
Late Spring
- Midsummer

Caryophyllaceae
Pink Family

2ft Biennial

Digitalis purpurea

Common Foxglove



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Joachim Blattboldt

'The Shirley'
'Dalmatian series'

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

Summer ☀️

Plantaginaceae
Plantain Family

5ft Biennial

Echium vulgare

Viper's Bugloss



Photograph from Flickr (CC) S. Rae

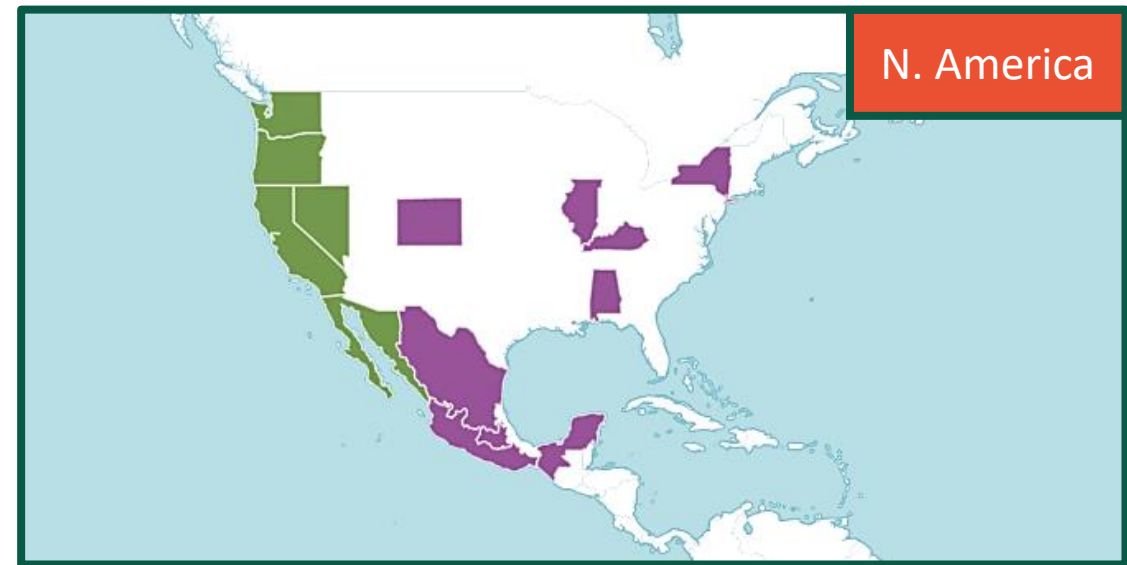


'Blue Bedder'



Eschscholzia californica

Californian Poppy



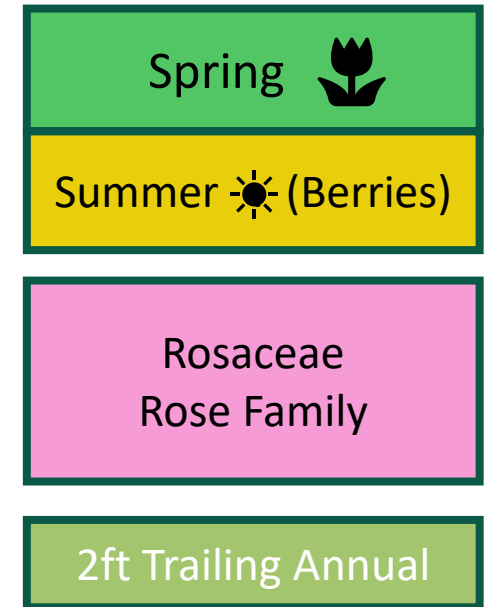
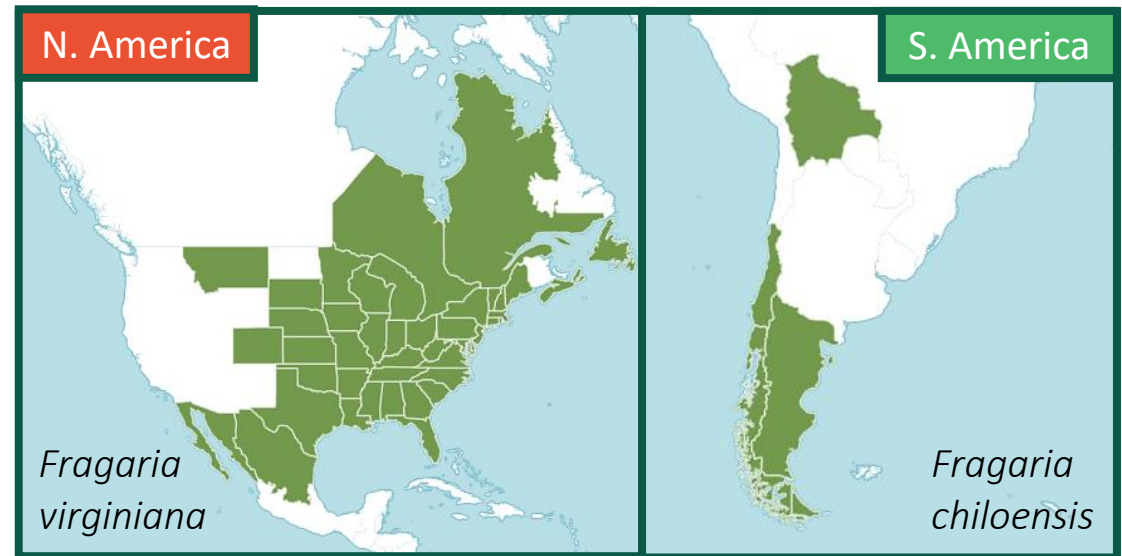
Fragaria x ananassa

Garden Strawberry

Fragaria virginiana x *Fragaria chiloensis*

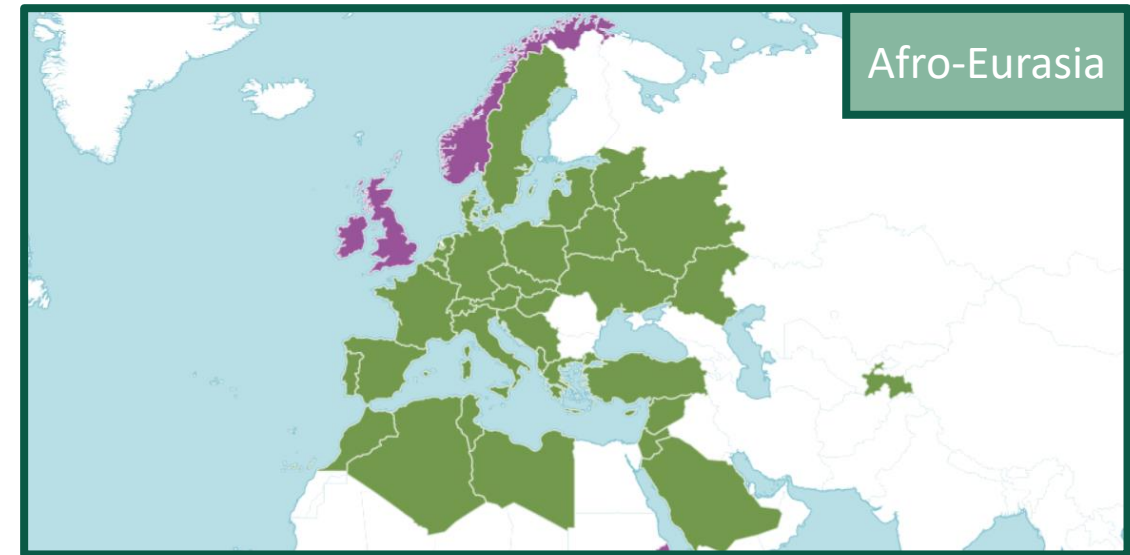


Photograph from Flickr (CC) Maja Damat



Glebionis segetum

Corn Marigold

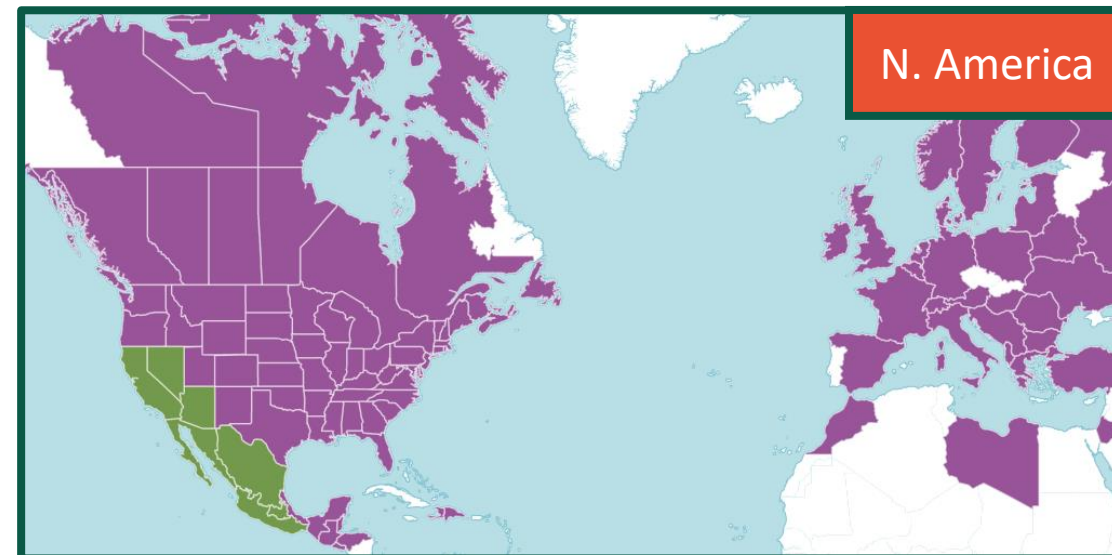


Helianthus annuus

Common Sunflower



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Henry Elliss



'Claret' 'Waooh'
'Valentine'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

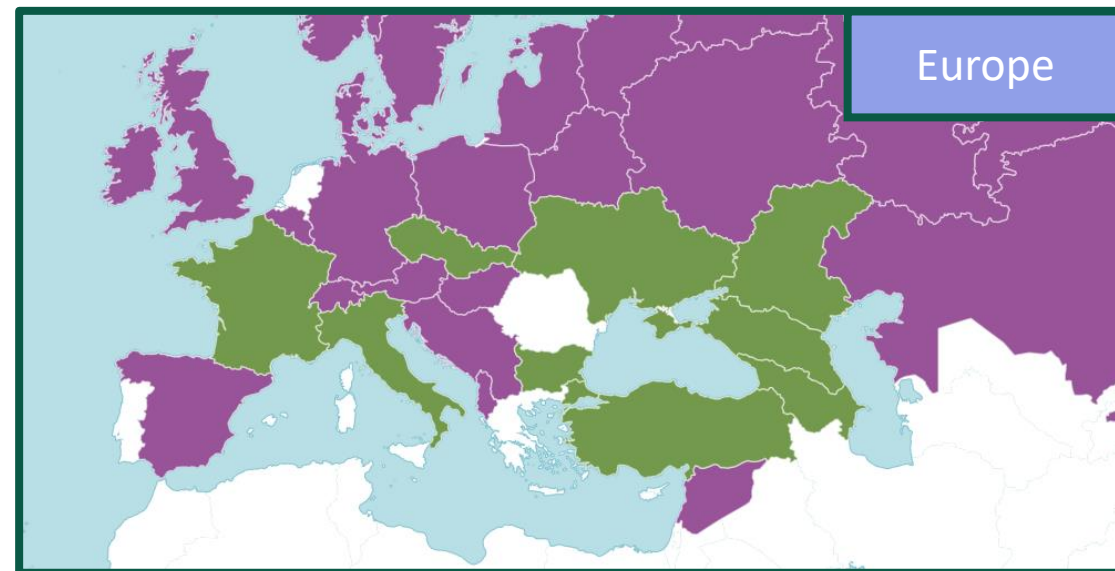
Asteraceae
Daisy Family

3ft Annual

* Dry Seeds edible ('sunflower seeds'),
Seeds are harvested commercially for sunflower oil.

Hesperis matronalis

Dame's-violet



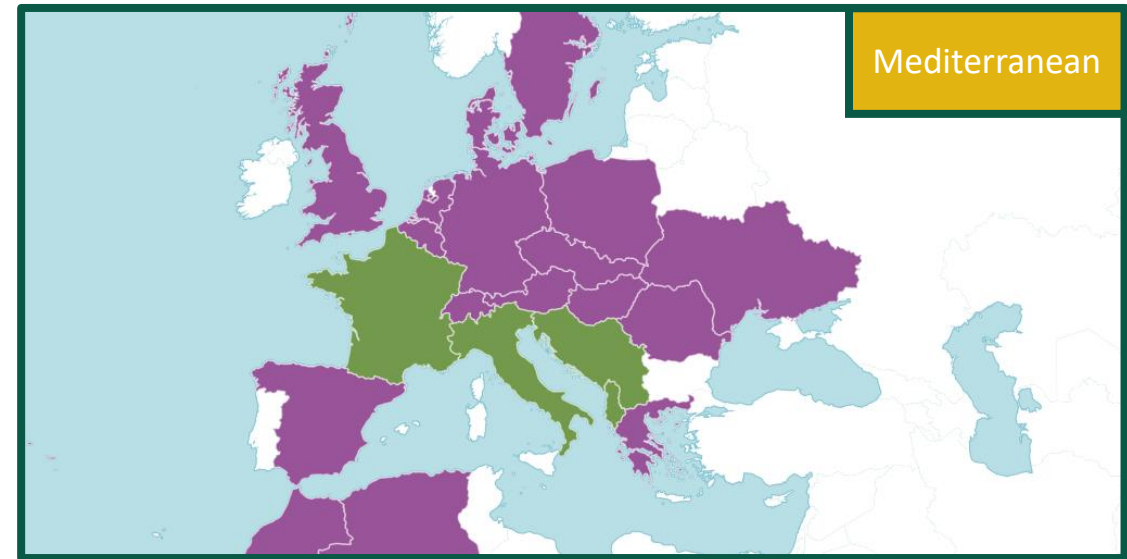
Late Spring
- Early Summer

Brassicaceae
Mustard Family

3ft Biennial

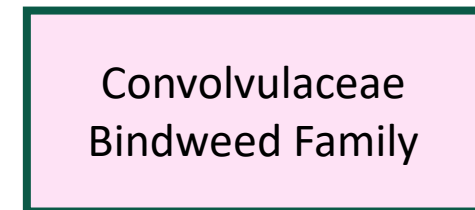
Iberis umbellata

Annual Candytuft



Ipomoea tricolor

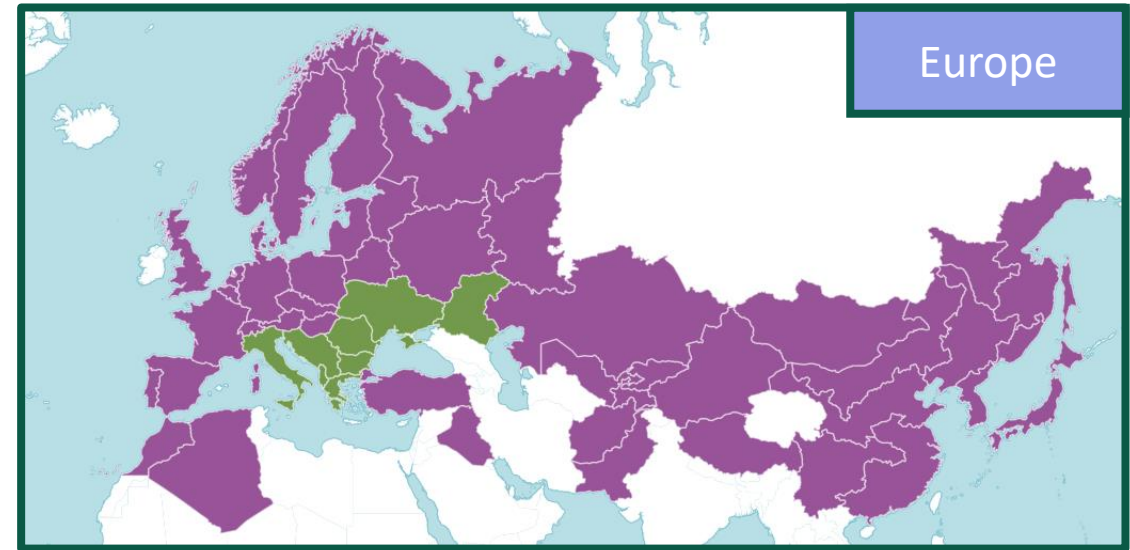
Morning Glory



* This plant can only be grown outside during the summer (above 5°C night temperatures) 22

Isatis tinctoria

Dyer's Woad



None



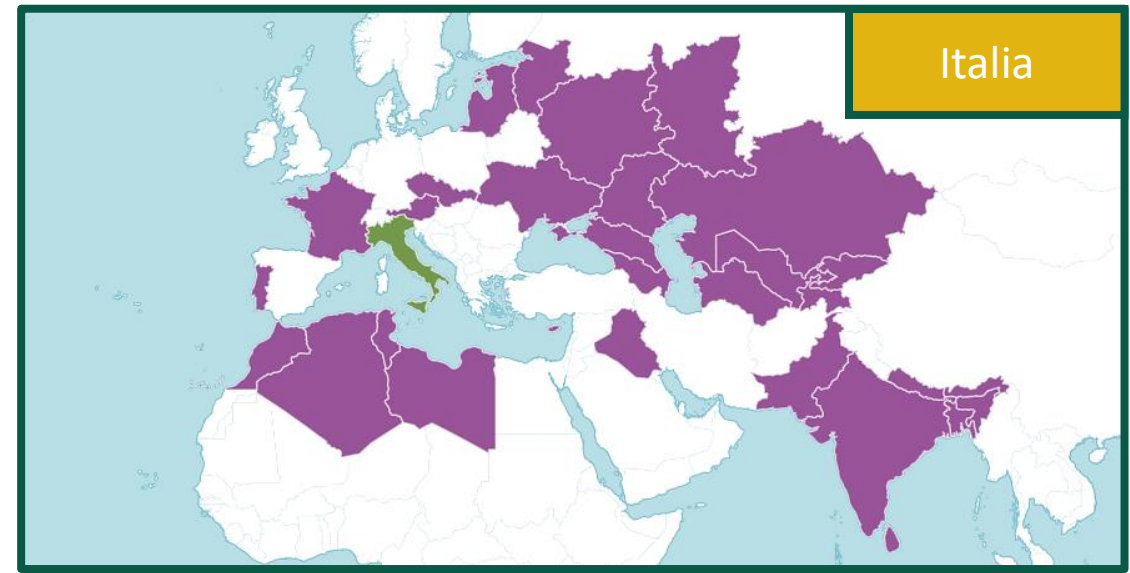
Late Spring
- Early Summer

Brassicaceae
Mustard Family

6ft Biennial

Lathyrus odoratus

Sweet Pea



'Lipstick' 'Bristol'
'Solway series'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Fabaceae
Legume Family

6ft Climber Annual

* This plant, if sown early, should be sown inside during winter (cannot survive below -5°C night temperatures)

Limnanthes douglasii

Poached Egg Plant



Photograph from Flickr (CC) James Gaither



-Species-



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Limnanthaceae
Meadowfoam Family

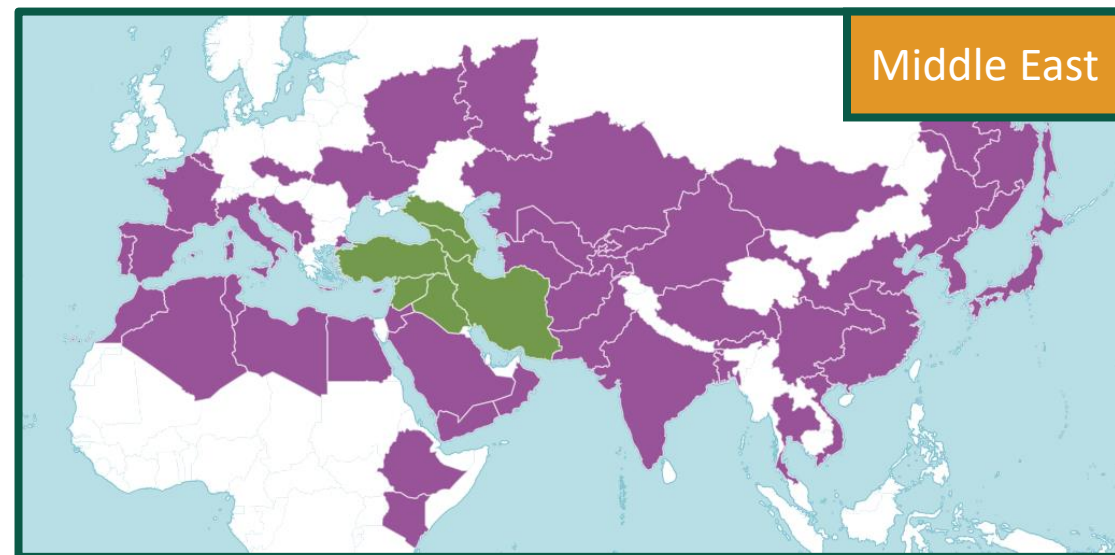
1ft Annual

Linum usitatissimum

Common Flax



Photograph from Wikipedia (CC) John Brighenti



Related species:
L. grandiflorum



Late Spring
- Midsummer

Linaceae
Flax Family

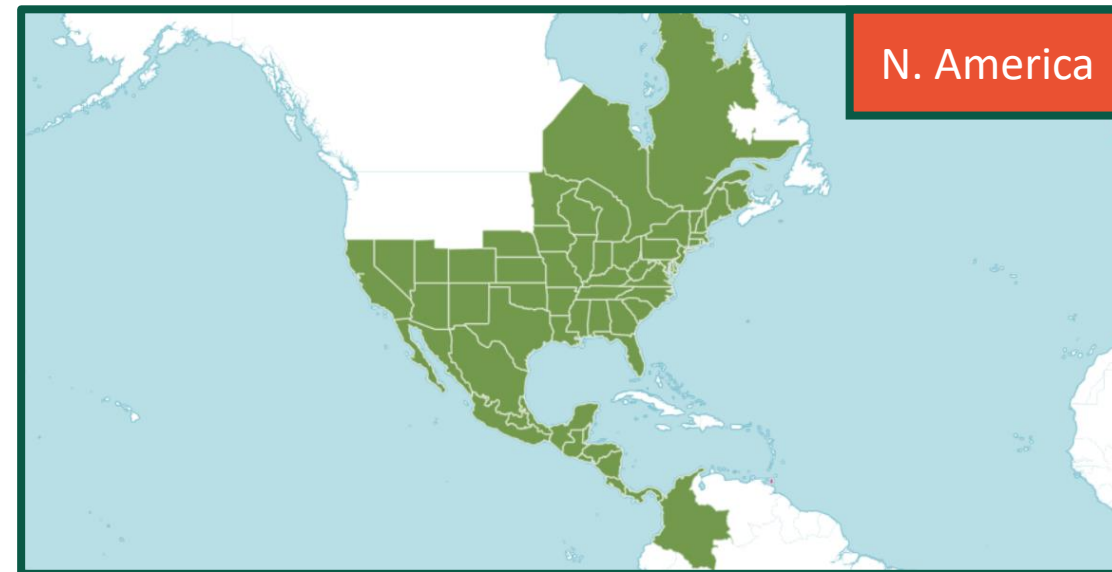
2ft Annual

Lobelia cardinalis

Red Cardinal Flower



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Kerry Woods



- Species -
'Queen Victoria'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Campanulaceae
Bellflower Family

3ft Annual*

Marshlands

*Or short-lived
27 half-hardy
perennial

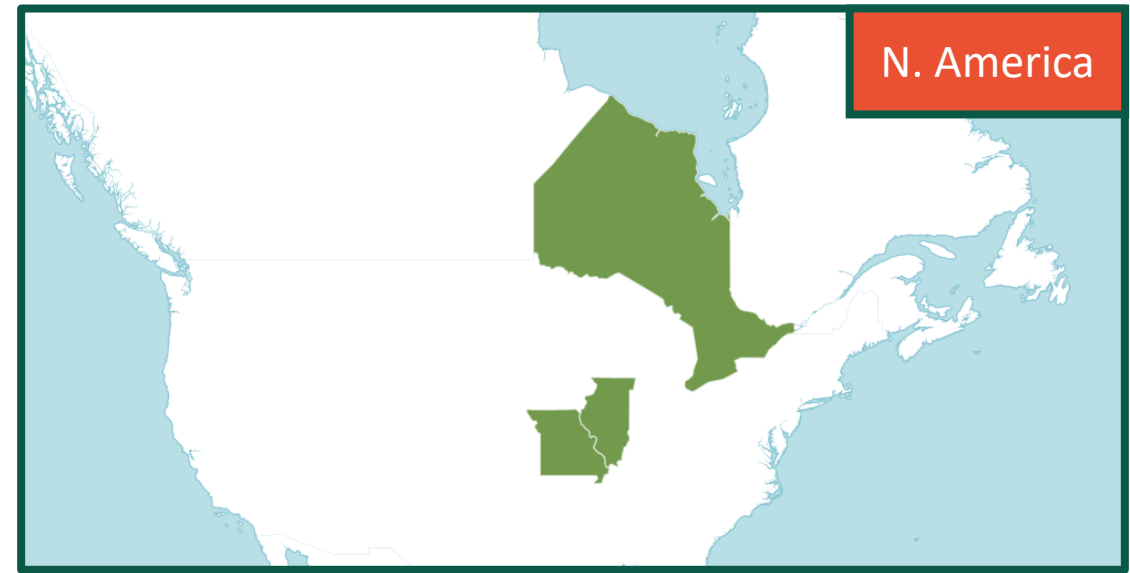
Lobelia x speciosa

Purple Cardinal Flower

Lobelia siphilitica x *Lobelia cardinalis**



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Alwyn Ladell



'Pink Elephant'
'Fan series'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Campanulaceae
Bellflower Family

3ft Annual

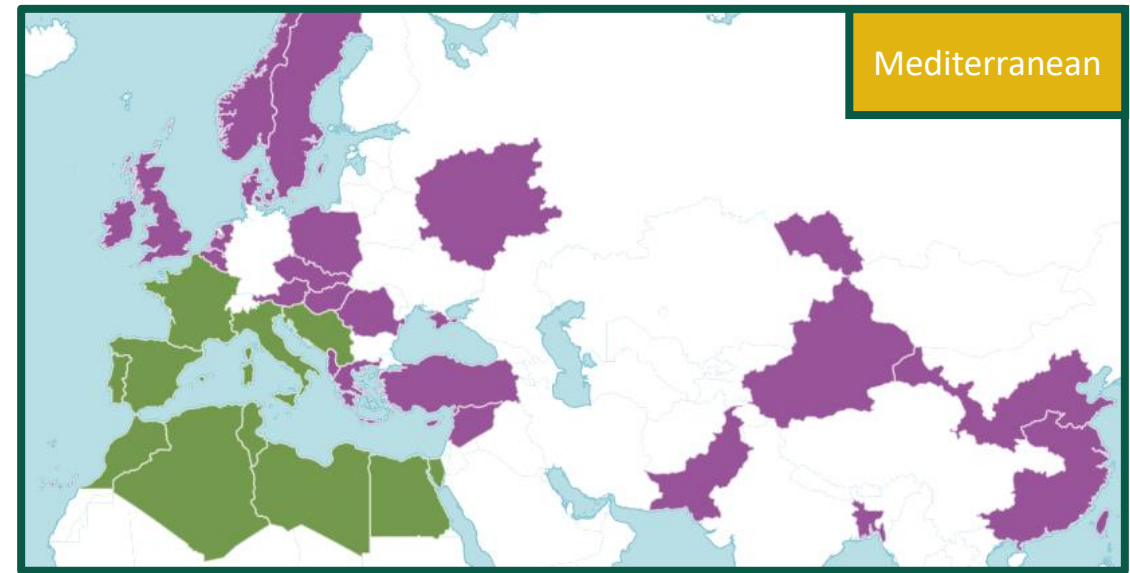
* Natural hybrid between Red and Blue Cardinal flowers.
Map shows the range crossover where the hybrid is native

Lobularia maritima

Sweet Alyssum



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Sampo Pihlainen



Lupinus pilosus

Blue Lupin



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Zachy Evonor



None



Late Spring
- Midsummer

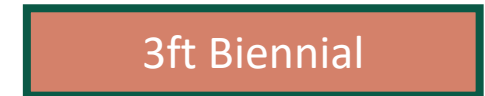
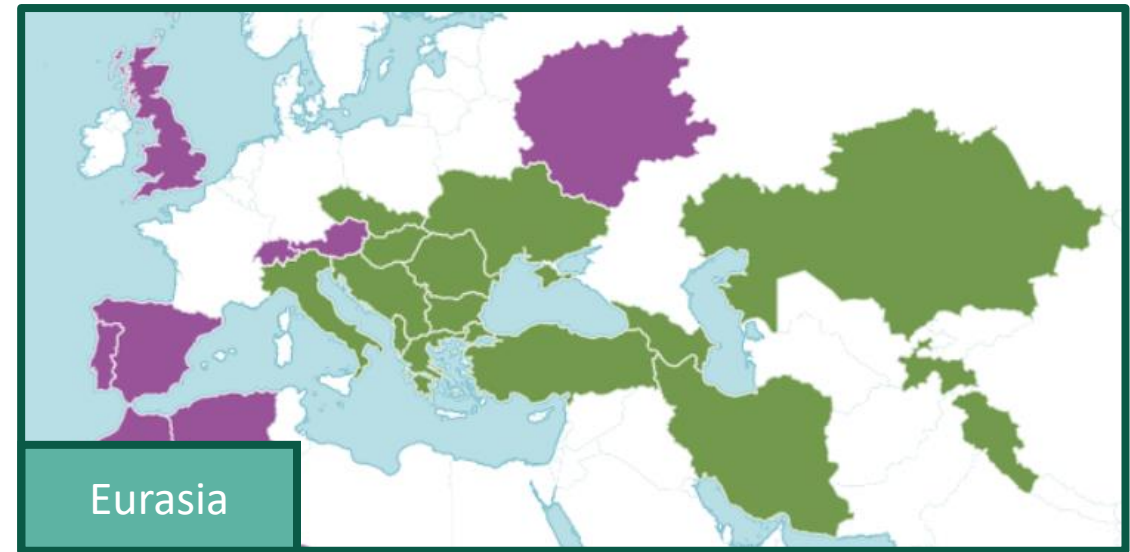
Fabaceae
Legume Family

3ft Annual

* This plant, if sown early, should be sown inside during winter (cannot survive below -5°C night temperatures)

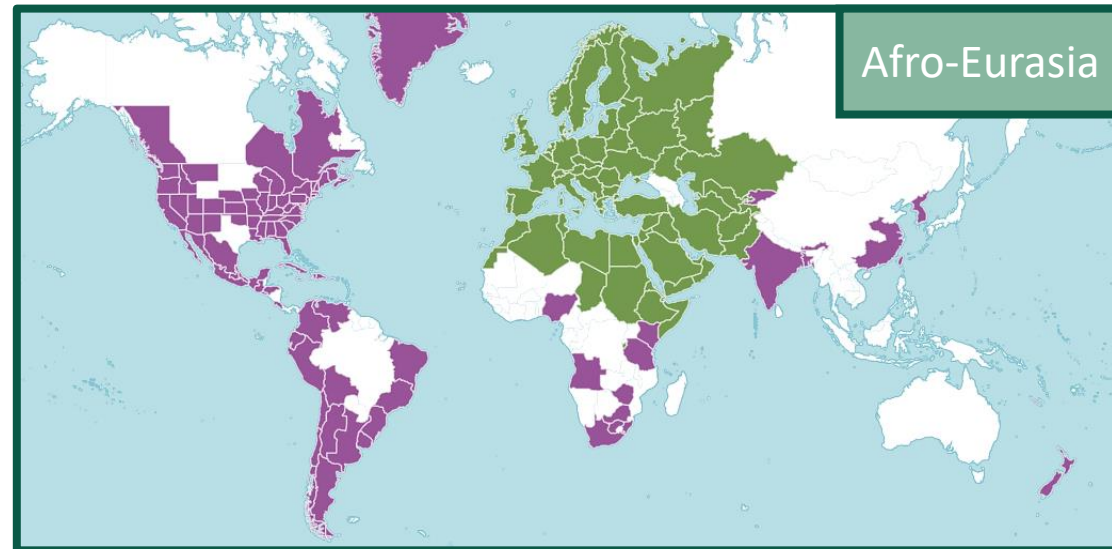
Lychnis coronaria

Rose Campion



Lysimachia arvensis

Scarlet Pimpernel



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Rawdon Fox

Related species: *Lysimachia monelli*

'Gentian Blue'

-Species-

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

Summer ☀

Primulaceae
Primrose Family

1ft Creeping Annual

Lysimachia monelli

Blue Pimpernel



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Gertjan van Noord



'Gentian Blue'
- Species -



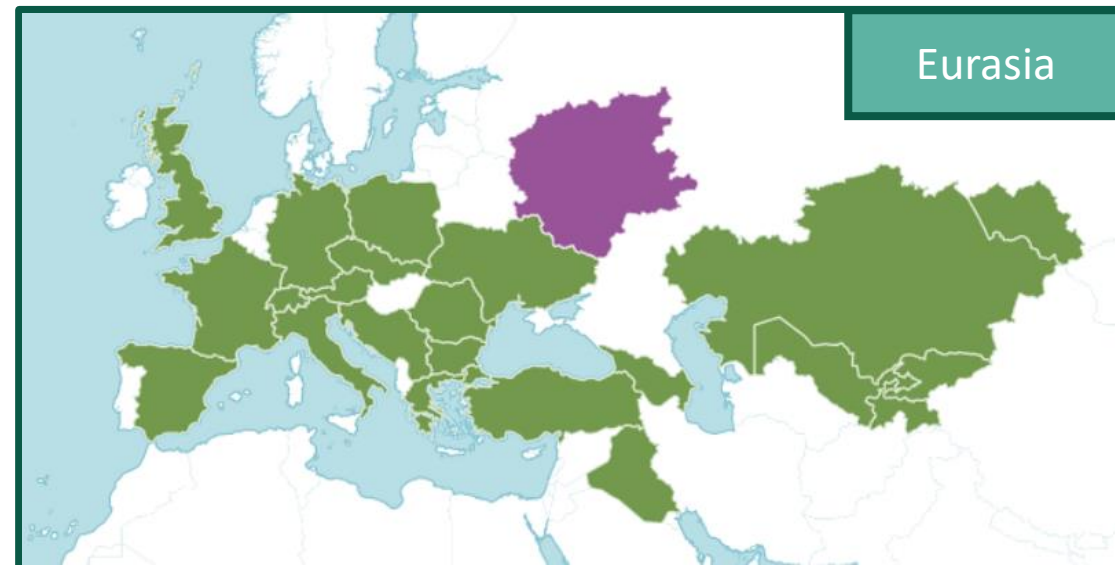
Summer ☀

Primulaceae
Primrose Family

1ft Creeping Annual

Myosotis alpestris

Alpine Forget-me-not



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Marco Bernardini

Related hybrid:
'Blue Ball'

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 is a stylized tree icon.

Mid Spring
- Early Summer

Boraginaceae
Borage Family

1ft Alpine Annual

Nicotiana alata

Jasmine Tobacco



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Carl Lewis



'Lime Green'



Summer ☀️

Solanaceae
Potato Family

2ft Annual

* Will not survive a frost, only half-hardy

Nigella damascena

Love-in-the-Mist



‘Miss Jekyll’
‘Miss Jekyll Alba’

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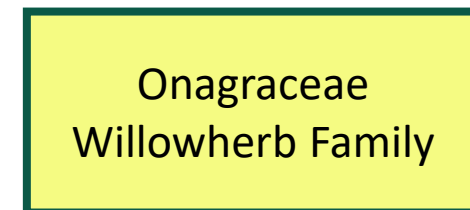
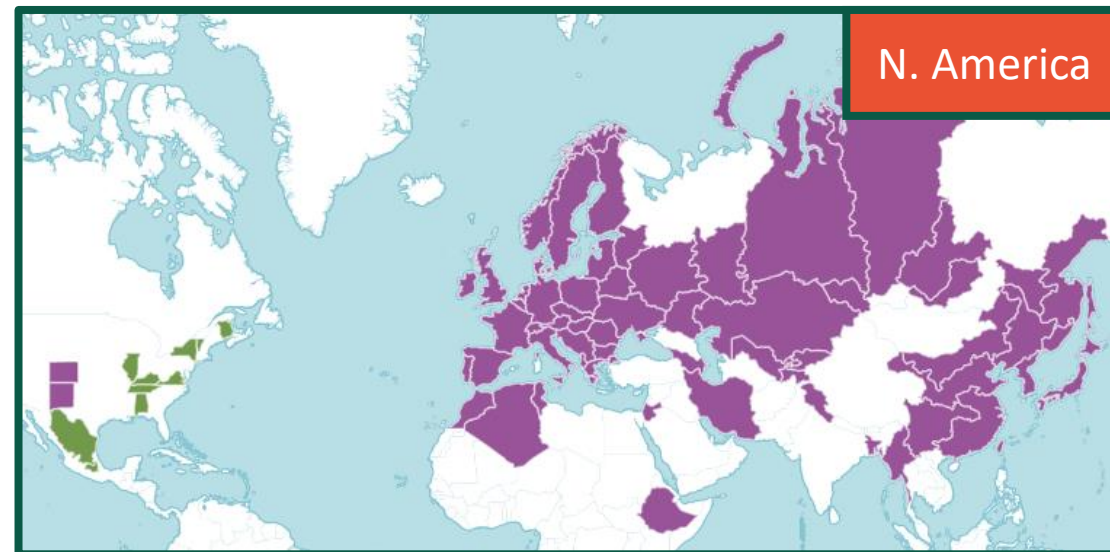
Summer ☀

Ranunculaceae
Buttercup Family

2ft Annual

Oenothera biennis

Common Evening-Primrose



Papaver rhoeas

Field Poppy



Photograph © Thomas McBride

Related Species: *Papaver commutatum*

'Ladybird'



Summer ☀

Papaveraceae
Poppy Family

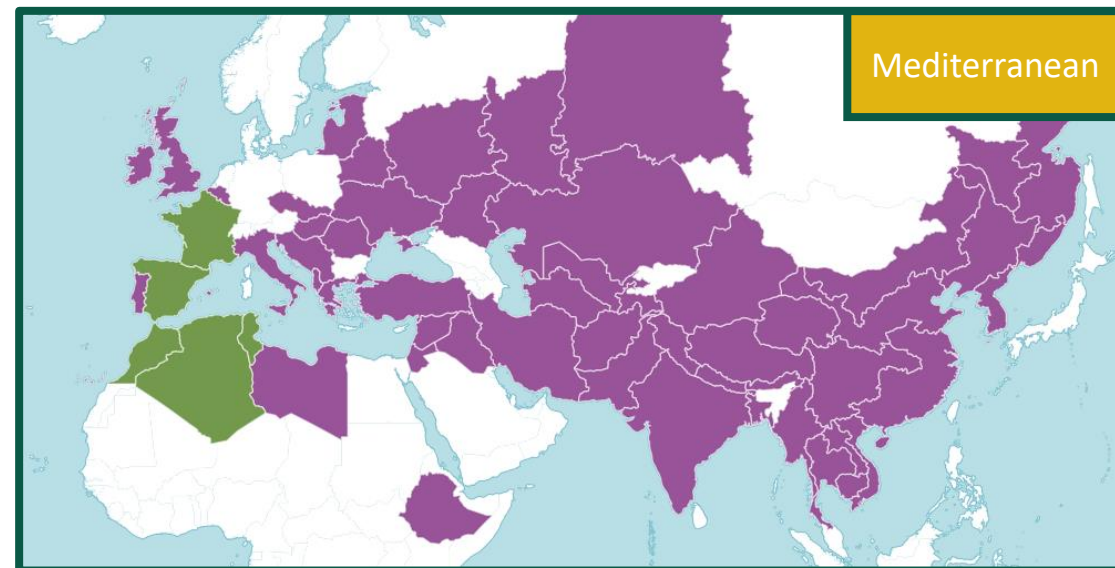
2ft Annual

Papaver somniferum

Opium Poppy



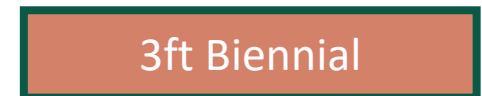
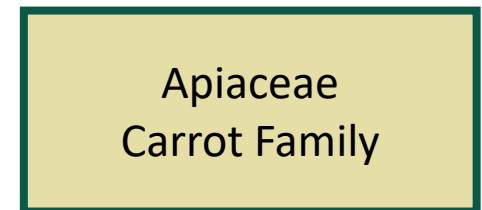
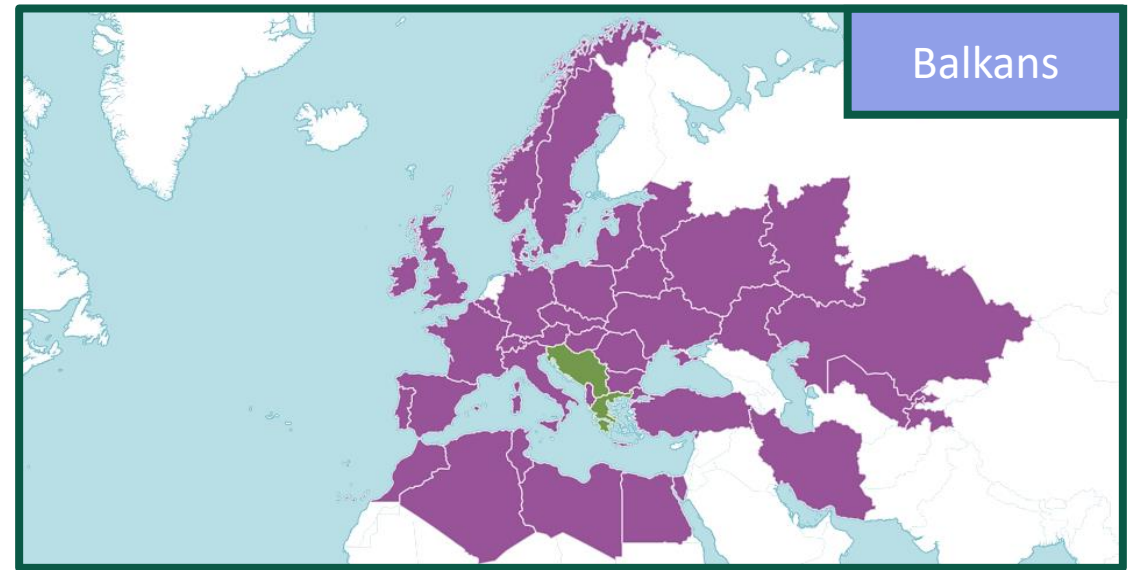
Photograph from Flickr (CC) Aaron Stidwell



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

Petroselinum crispum

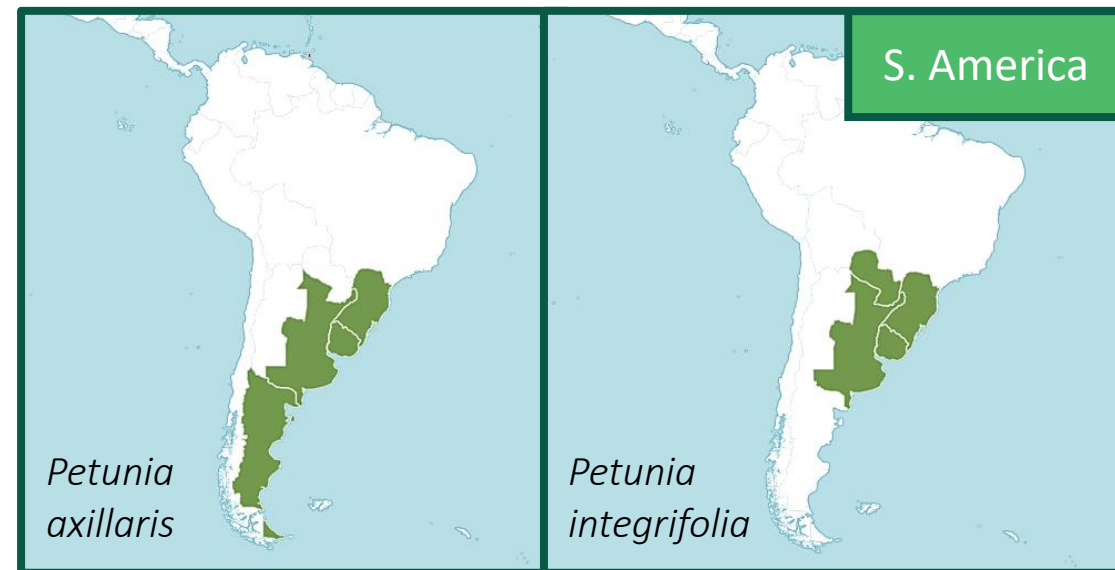
Parsley



Petunia x hybrida

Garden Petunia

Petunia axillaris x *Petunia integrifolia*



‘Lavender Wave’
‘Night Sky’



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Solanaceae
Potato Family

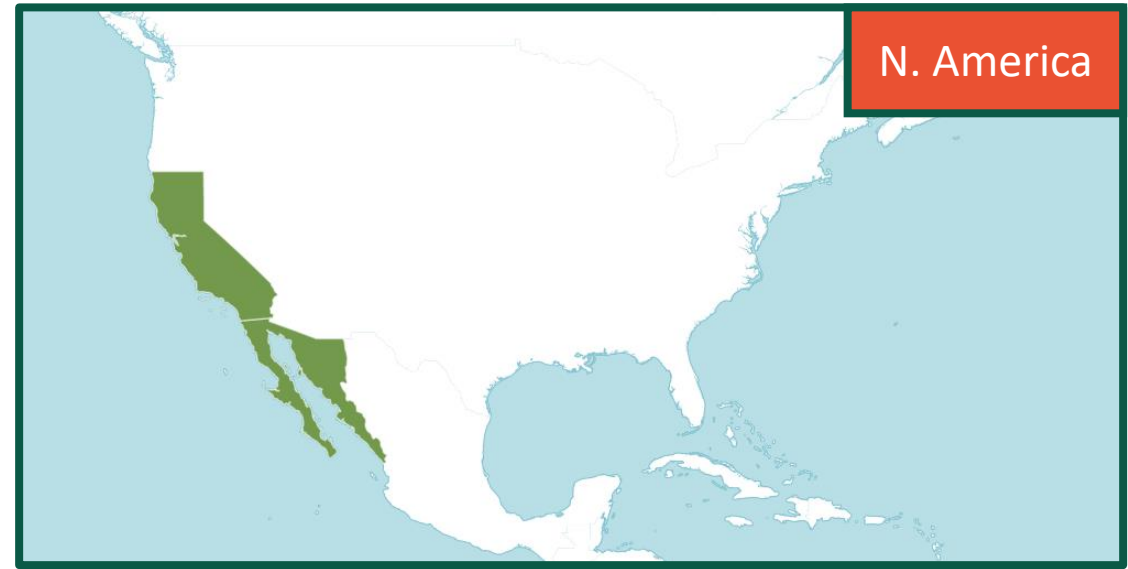
1ft Trailing Annual

Phacelia tanacetifolia

Fiddleneck



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Maja Damat



None



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Boraginaceae
Borage Family

2ft Annual

Salvia coccinea

Scarlet Sage



* This plant will not survive below -5°C night temperatures

Salvia sclarea

Clary Sage



Late Spring
- Midsummer

Lamiaceae
Mint Family

3ft Biennial

Salvia viridis

Painted Sage



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Ali Eminov



None



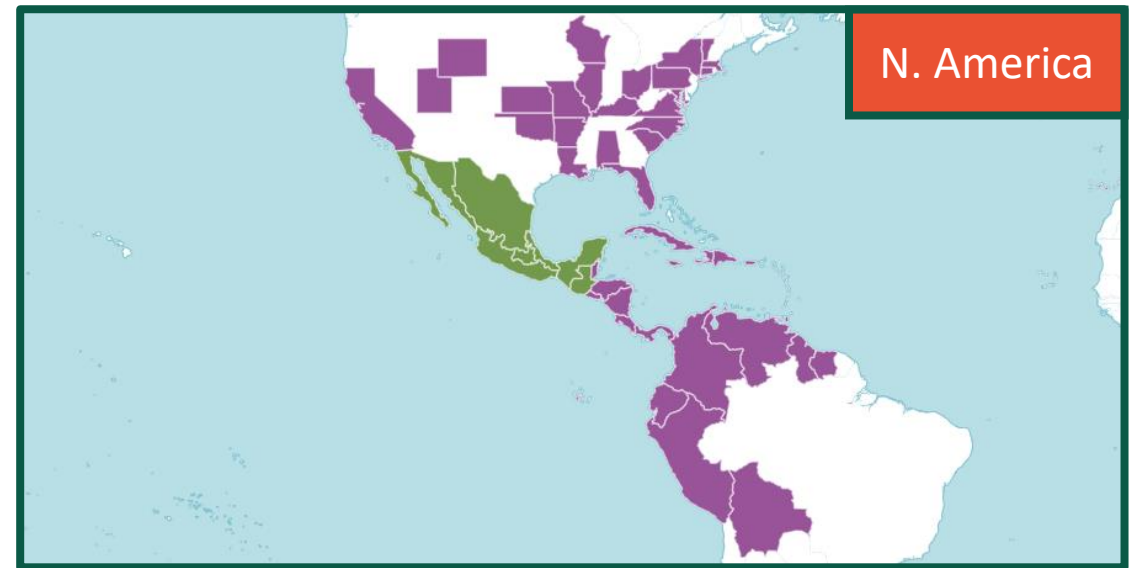
Summer ☀️

Lamiaceae
Mint Family

2ft Annual

Tagetes erecta

Mexican Marigold



'Inca series'
'Perfection series'



Early Summer
- Mid Autumn

Asteraceae
Daisy Family

1ft Annual

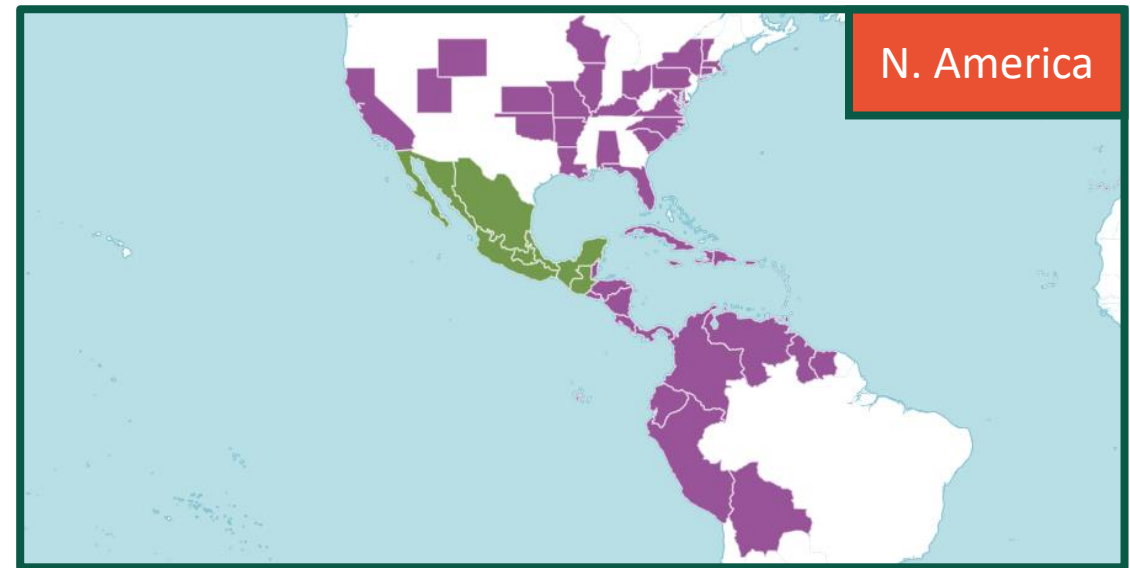
NB: Will not survive a frost, only half-hardy

Tagetes patula

French Marigold



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Taco Witte



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

Tithonia rotundifolia

Mexican Sunflower



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Tim Waters



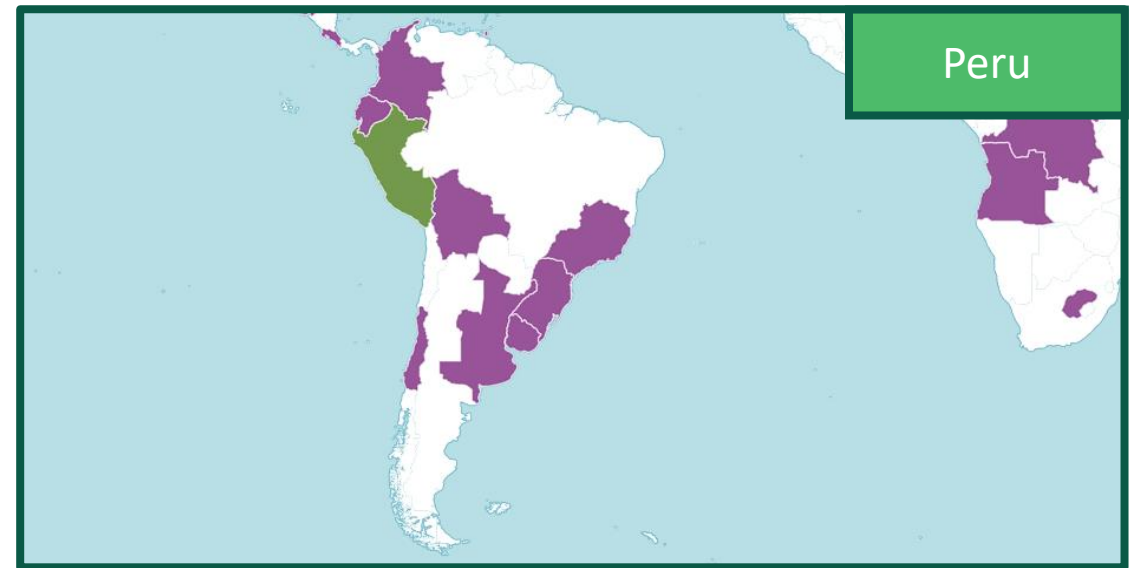
* Will not survive a frost, only half-hardy

Tropaeolum majus

Garden Nasturtium



Photograph from Flickr (CC) Mayank Sharma



'Alaska series'
'Whirlybird series'



Midsummer
- Early Autumn

Tropaeolaceae
Nasturtium Family

1ft Trailing Annual

* This plant will not survive below -5°C night temperatures

Verbascum nigrum

Black Mullein



Photograph © Thomas McBride

'Cotswold series'
'Tropic Sun'



Early Summer
- Early Autumn

Scrophulariaceae
Figwort Family

4ft Biennial