



ALISON MOORE

Clematis in a class of its own

Our gardens writer recommends a trip to Adswold next month to see the wondrous display of spring colour



right:
Summerhouse at the
end of the hot border.

Photo: Alison Moore



left: View across to the long border in summer

below top: Clematis 'Blue Dancer'

below middle: Camellia in spring

below bottom: See the clematis for yourself at Adswood next month.

Photos: Alison Moore



A FEW OF KEN'S FAVOURITE CLEMATIS

- Clematis alpina 'Blue Dancer'** – an 'abundance' of nodding blooms in early spring, followed by attractive nodding seed heads
- Clematis macropetala 'Markham's Pink'** – double pink flowers. Copes well in a north-facing site
- Clematis 'Tie Dye'** – large violet-blue flowers smashed with a paler lilac shade, making a very appealing tie-dye effect
- Clematis viticella 'Prince George'** – in honour of Prince George
- Clematis cirrhosa 'Freckles'** – a winter flowering variety

One of my favourite tasks early in the year is to look through the little yellow book produced by the National Garden Scheme and put some dates in the diary for garden visits. It's an opportunity to meet up with old friends, make new ones and enjoy some of the excellent home baking these events are renowned for.

One of the gardens I always earmark for spring is Adswood in Mollington, owned by Ken and Helen Black, which raised an impressive £2,000 for charity in 2023. Ken is the membership secretary of the British Clematis Society and has a real passion for growing clematis to provide colour and interest throughout the year, as well as generously sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm with visitors.

Whereas the majority of us gardeners just delight in the colour of our spring bulbs at this time of year, Ken also has an impressive collection of spring flowering clematis that bring some very welcome early-season interest to fences, trellises and pergolas.

There is a hint of what's to come as you arrive at the colourful display at the entrance to the property, and I was particularly taken

by a clematis called 'Blue Dancer', which has an abundance of nodding blooms that dance in the slightest breeze.

As you wander through to the back garden, it's worth pausing to enjoy a magnificent clematis-covered trellis through which you get a glimpse of the delights to come. In spring, the main varieties to see are 'Roz Kelly', 'Spiky', 'Markham's Pink' and

'Nodding blooms that DANCE in the slightest breeze'

'Albina Plena', which is an extremely pretty white clematis that provides a lovely contrast to the pink and purple of the others. Between them, they provide six to eight weeks of beautiful blooms.

The main terrace plays host to some pot-grown clematis varieties, which Ken swaps around throughout the year as they come into their season of interest. I was amazed to discover just how many clematis are suitable for growing in pots, and

alongside the tulips in spring, they make a stunning display.

The long border on the left of the back garden was the first one to be created by Ken when they moved into the property 24 years ago. Roses and obelisks act as supports, and as with other garden areas, there's a clematis in bloom throughout the year. While spring bulbs and hellebores create a carpet of interest, it is the clematis that gives height to the display, at a time when the roses and perennials are still in the process of waking up. The collection of acers also stands out, with their new leaves in vivid shades of pink, orange and green, with azaleas and tulips playing a supporting role.

If the clematis in Ken and Helen's garden provide so much early-season colour, then summer is truly magnificent and the whole garden is a feast for all the senses. It is divided mid-way by a discreet metal fence, which supports numerous roses and clematis, including one of my favourites, Clematis 'Étoile Violette'. An archway near the pavilion at the lower end of the garden is covered with Clematis 'Lavender Twirl', which is one of the most unusual and beautiful viticella varieties I have seen.

The lower end of the garden, past the summer house and hot border, brings you to what Ken refers to as the business end of the garden, housing the greenhouse and propagation area. This is where the magic happens and new plants are created from cutting or grown from seed.

You may have seen Adswood featured on the *Gardener's World* programme and Ken has his own YouTube channel, which allows you a glimpse into his garden through the seasons. He also gives regular talks at various venues in Cheshire and over the border at Wollerton Old Hall and the Dorothy Clive Garden in Shropshire. This year, Adswood is open for the NGS on April 6 and 7, and I'd highly recommend a visit to this wonderful garden. Full details can be found on the National Garden Scheme website. ● ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/

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