

...And now for something completely different

Nick Macer is always falling in love with new plants, and what started out as a private passion has become a thriving Cotswolds nursery, with a range that offers rare exotics

PHOTOGRAPHS CHARLES HAWES WORDS ANNE WAREHAM



Nick Macer is a man who believes in balance, as well as being a man obsessed by plants. So his aim when he set up a nursery was not only to offer truly rare plants - some unobtainable elsewhere - but also to ensure that his plants were what he calls 'desirable': good, garden worthy plants with a 'wow' factor. These include trees, shrubs, grasses, herbaceous plants, bamboos and exotics.

He tells me that when he was 21, he became fascinated by plants. It started with trees and, from there, went through shrubs and then on to herbaceous plants. At each point, he explored his particular current interest until he felt he had got a full knowledge of it, before moving on to the next. And it is this private rigour, rather than his training in arboriculture at college, which informs his work.

After college, and a gap year at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Westonbirt Arboretum, he took a job as head gardener at Cowley Manor, where his responsibilities included planting several hundred trees. At the same time, he was collecting and propagating everything he could find room for in his parents' greenhouse - and, inevitably, running out of space.

When a friend pointed out that he was ideally located for a nursery, being easily accessible for customers from a wide geographical area, Nick recognised his vocation. He says that the hardest part of going commercial was that he felt it was 'a bit rude asking for money'.

His first nursery was at Painswick in

Gloucestershire, but three years ago, he moved to a larger site within the walled garden of a large estate, Frampton Court. Customers drive through a small wood to find the nursery and, from the entrance, there is a view of an elegant 18th century orangery.

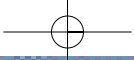
Within the walls, where Gloucester Old Spot pigs once grubbed, is both an embryo garden and what appears to be acres of immaculate plants. Nick insists that this is his own personal garden, planted for pleasure, not a showcase for plants he has for sale, and, indeed, there are plants to be seen there that he does not yet offer for sale.

However, the nursery does sell a wide range of plants, and is particularly strong on bamboos, magnolias and hydrangeas. Every year so far, when he has come to fill in his form for *The RHS Plant Finder*, Nick has been pleased to note that he is offering at least one plant not obtainable elsewhere. But with his concern for balance, he also makes sure he is offering a good mix: 'I want to be an emporium, if that doesn't sound too pretentious, where you can get all sorts of lovely things.'

Euphorbia x pasteurii 'John Phillips' is a good example, a shrub Nick describes as 'like *Euphorbia mellifera* on steroids'. *Euphorbia mellifera* is a classy evergreen shrub with honey scented small flowers in early summer, while Nick's *x pasteurii* 'John Phillips' - named after 'a very fine Wiltshire plantsman' - is a new form that makes a solid, ground-covering dome which is absolutely smothered with flowers, ►



THIS PAGE, TOP LEFT Nick Macer, the driving force behind Pan-Global Plants. **CENTRE LEFT** From the polytunnels, visitors can see the outline of an 18th century orangery. **BOTTOM LEFT** An impressive *Agave americana*. **FACING PAGE** Part of Nick's garden area, planted with grasses and a drifting mass of orange and white arctotis, with the house behind.



in the nursery





Nick likes to make sure that he offers a good mix:

and has longer, fatter leaves than mellifera. Nick describes it as 'a fab plant which looks fantastic all year round.'

Another special love is the shrub *Indigofera pendula*, which Nick says will flower for a full five months, producing 'very, very long, pendent racemes of pink pea flowers which turn out, on closer inspection, to really be lilac-grey and deep carmine'. It is a plant which sells on sight. The hydrangeas include the classy asperas, and usefully small serratas - many not much more than a metre tall - which should feature in every small garden that finds itself in need of mid- to late colour. But Nick doesn't despise the good old mopheads, especially if they are the more unusual varieties.

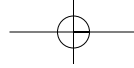
Nick's pan-global outlook includes trips

abroad to discover new specimens and see how plants grow in their native countries - most recently, to Mexico. An account of the trip on his website communicates some of the passion he feels for the plant kingdom.

His nursery catalogue (available for four 1st class stamps) manages to be both informative and entertaining, with a frontispiece of a signboard declaring 'Pan-Global Plants: over priced and under watered'. Neither of which statements is true, of course.

Pan-Global Plants, The Walled Garden, Frampton Court, Frampton-on-Severn, Glos GL2 7EX. Open 11am-5pm, Wed-Sun (by appointment only in Nov, Dec & Jan; closed 2nd Sun in Sept). Tel: +44 (0)1452 741641. www.panglobalplants.com

THIS PAGE, ABOVE A path winds through South African annuals and a gravel area where Nick is trying out new plants. **LEFT, FROM TOP** Vibrant pink flowers of *Senecio pulcher*, which Nick describes as having 'a loony colour'; a trial planting of *Ecballium elaterium*, known as the squirting cucumber; a very British shed gains an exotic touch from the fanned leaves of *Trachycarpus fortunei*. **FACING, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The seed pods of *Cercis racemosa*, a rare Chinese form of the Judas tree; the deep red flowers of the sought after *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Merveille Sanguine'; pineapple lily, *Eucomis comosa* 'Sparkling burgundy'; an old cherry tree in the walled garden; polytunnel with frothy *Acacia baileyana* 'Purpurea' to the left.



in the nursery



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