

1 Natural partners

Narcissus nanus under the hazels at Allt-y-bela in March, where it self-seeds prolifically. I want to keep things simple, so don't have other bulbs flowering at the same time, but you could add *Anemone blanda*, *Chionodoxa* and *Scilla* to extend the season.



2 Winter stems
The craggy stems of an un-coppiced hazel walk in winter. In my garden, they sit quite naturally in the landscape, but in smaller and town gardens, you'll need to coppice plants every five to seven years to regenerate growth and restrict height.

3 First signs
When the garden is at its bleakest and barest, snowdrops and winter aconites signal the slow return of spring, and they can be planted out in numbers, in sheets and drifts among the hazels to draw attention back to this part of the garden.



4 Spring beauty
Our pale native primrose, *Primula vulgaris*, is one of the earliest and most welcome flowers to appear in woodlands and on hedgerow banks in spring. Plant them in generous clumps among the stools of a coppiced nuttery, and let them naturalise.

1 & 4 WILLIAM COLLINSON, 2 & 3 BRITT WILLOUGHBY/DPiPER



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Nutteries

The idea of growing nut trees sounds grand, but the simple combination of hazels under-planted with spring bulbs and flowers can be beautiful and productive even in small spaces

WORDS ARNE MAYNARD

DESIGN IDEAS

5 Purple patch

The intensity of Barnhaven double primrose 'Burgundy Ice' can be used with great effect to underline the richness of a purple and copper-red nuttery scheme, but needs to be balanced and brought into focus by a sharp lime green, such as the flowers of *Euphorbia robbiae*.



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6 Dark and sultry

Evergreen *Euphorbia* Blackbird (= 'Nothowlee') has striking red stems, blue-green leaves and acid green flowers that may occasionally turn burnt-orange if planted in the sunniest parts of a nuttery. It can be used as a sumptuous ground-cover companion for a contemporary nuttery of purple-leaved hazel, *Corylus avellana* 'Fuscorubra'.



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7 Nut sundae

To take the underplanting of a purple-leaved nuttery to another level of sophistication, you might build up layers of corresponding and contrasting colours and include the gorgeously frilled and peachy-coloured Barnhaven double primrose 'Sundae'.



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8 Woodland floor

Perfect for conjuring up woodland atmosphere in a nuttery, the wood anemone (*A. nemorosa*) will naturalise and form sheets of starry white flowers in spring, before the leaf canopy emerges. *A. nemorosa* 'Robinsoniana' (pictured) has clear, mauve-blue flowers.



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My inspiration when I think of nutteries is coppiced woodland in spring, with hazel and bluebells.

I love that combination: a carpet of blue flowers in the dappled light beneath lime-green hazel leaves, whose stems emerge from the knotty stumps of coppiced trees. This is the essence of what I hold in mind when I'm designing a nuttery and for me it's an excuse to plant lots of the spring-flowering plants and bulbs that come out before the leaf-cover and then die back, so that in autumn you're left with a carpet of leaves and moss.

The nutteries I design fall into two categories: green and traditional, or rich and contemporary.

If I'm doing something traditional, I'll use the native cobnut, *Corylus avellana*; for a more cultivated look, a mix of one or two of the many filbert (*Corylus maxima*) cultivars. I would be wary of planting too many different cultivars together, because they all have contrasting growth habits, whereas what I love about the nuttery is its simple uniformity.

Normally you'll coppice hazels every few years, cutting them back to the base in order to regenerate them and get the new green growth. But at my home, Allt-y-bela, a line of old hazelnuts with gnarled, twisted stems border an old droveway, and I've chosen to leave them as they are, because I love their antiquity. Beneath I've planted winter aconites,



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9 Shape and shade

Corylus maxima 'Purpurea' has been under-planted here with ferns, euphorbias and a tree peony, all plants that have clean, distinctive leaf forms, so that the overall effect is of simplicity and clarity, an important factor when creating planting for shade.

Stockists

- A great range of filberts and cobnuts are available by mail order from the Yorkshire-based family nursery **RV Roger**, which also sells bulbs and plants for the underplanting. Tel 01751 472226, www.rvroger.co.uk

- **Barnhaven Primroses** has a wonderful range of primulas in all colours and forms. They are perfect for sophisticated under-planting in your nuttery. Tel +33 (0)2 96 35 68 41, www.barnhavenprimroses.com

- Snowdrops and aconites are best planted *en masse* – I buy mine from **Orchard Nurseries** in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire – they send them out very soon after they are lifted to ensure they are as fresh as possible. Tel 01354 638613, www.orchard-nurseries.com

snowdrops, *Narcissus nanus* and primroses, and that's about all, because I want to keep it simple.

In a large garden, a nuttery could be a walk that leads to an orchard. In a long, narrow town garden, it would be a lovely way of planting the end two-thirds, to create a bit of country in the town. Of course, a nuttery can only ever be what it is: nut trees with under-planting. But you can dress it up and plant hart's tongue ferns (*Asplenium scolopendrium*) and lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*). The wonderful nuttery at Sissinghurst in Kent is an inspirational example of this kind of planting.

To make something that looks more deliberately *designed* and contemporary, I'd use purple-leaved

hazel, *Corylus maxima* 'Purpurea', and combine it with other red and purple-leaved under-planting to give a rich and luxurious effect.

All hazels, whether green or purple, lose their leaves, but soon catch the eye again when the catkins start to develop in November, coming out in an amazing sulphur-yellow and bridging the gap until the spring flowers come out.

Whether you choose to harvest your hazelnuts or leave them to the squirrels, a coppiced nuttery has the practical function of supplying you with its by-product of pea sticks, bean poles and hazel rods for training roses and supporting herbaceous plants. □
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