

“There’s crimson buds, and white and blue –
 The very rainbow showers
 Have turn’d to blossoms where they fell,
 And sown the earth with flowers.”

Thomas Hood, ‘O Lady, Leave Thy Silken Thread’



Left to right:
 planting out dahlias
 in a border; a blue
 tit gathers grubs
 on a fir tree; shade-
 tolerant hostas.

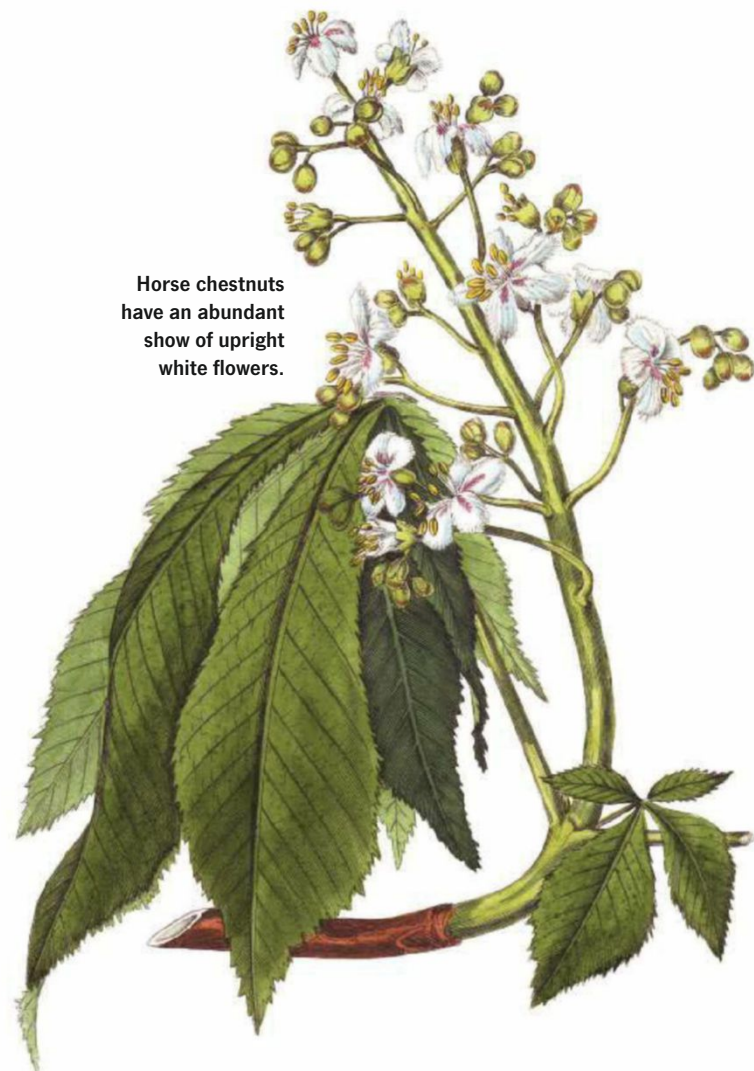
overboard on fuchsias this year.

As a child, I admired the silver and purple patterned leaves of a *Begonia rex* my gran grew in her dining room. Until recently, I had never grown these flashier types of begonia. Two years ago, I bagged a *Begonia luxurians* from Norwell Nursery. This begonia is currently more than 3ft (1m) in height, with large, heavily fingered fans of green leaves. It stops most people in their tracks when they see it. *B. luxurians* is tender, and is overwintered in the conservatory at a minimum of 5°C.

This year, more ‘cane’ begonias are being added, including ‘Little Brother Montgomery’, recommended by Dibleys Nurseries. This has heavily cut silver, dark green and red patterned leaves. I will also be firing things up with *B. boliviensis*, of which there are a few cultivars around, including ‘Firecracker’ and ‘Santa Cruz’. I am thinking of hanging them in big pots in the apple trees.

Bedding plants

Using annuals and tender perennials to mix up colours and shapes in a small way every year, in the south-facing raised beds and in pots, keeps things fresh. The beds look a little sparse for a while compared with other parts of the garden, but most of the new temporary incumbents will soon get going. >



Horse chestnuts
 have an abundant
 show of upright
 white flowers.