



Left to right: scarlet pest, the lily beetle; pale lilac flowers of verbena 'La France'.

fuzzy heads, the later summer flowers looked dirty against whiter whites. One of two large clumps of cirsium 'Mount Etna' also came out, replaced by a much taller growing, 'looks like a cirsium', white form of *Serratula lycopifolia*.

Single dahlia 'White Honka' already adds a fairly solid presence from July onwards, now joined by dahlia 'Star Child'. This has finer white petals than 'Honka's' gold-bossed, white propellers.

The border ideally needs soft linking plants in the mix. Umbellifers should hit the spot. I have previously experimented with annuals dill and ridolfia, which have not worked out. From seed, I only managed to produce a few weedy plants, rather than abundant patches, and in hot weather they faded early. Annual umbellifer *Ammi majus* did not thrive either. A lovely group of perennial umbellifer, *Selinum wallichianum*, was supposed to bring coolness and sophistication to the border, but died out after a couple of years. So, this year, to achieve a waxy, wavy effect, plain, ordinary green fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare*, is going in instead.

Patrinia scabiosifolia, a Siberian native with loose yellow flower panicles, is another plant which is new to me. It is said to be short-lived, but easy to raise from seed if I want to grow more in subsequent years. Persicaria 'White Eastfield' and *Veronicastrum alba* have also been added as mid-border fillers.

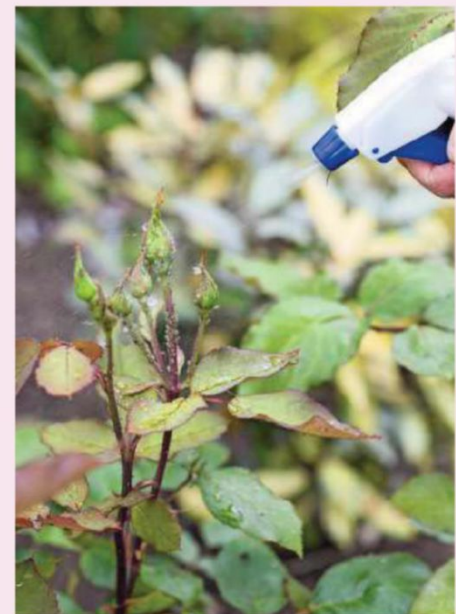
For the moment, sweetly scented *Hesperis matronalis* 'Alba', dame's violet, has claimed the space vacated by the selinum. *Hesperis* is an enthusiastic seeder, but a lovely addition to the May/June border nonetheless. ■

TREAT THE ROSES

A lesson learned last year is to spray roses in May to ameliorate the impact of diseases and deficiencies. Magnesium deficiency shows as yellowing of the leaves, and is caused by a combination of clay soil and dryness, which means that some plants cannot take up sufficient nutrients. I will spray a solution of Epsom salts onto the leaves.

I do not like spraying for bugs, as birds are still feeding their young. Capsid bugs are a menace. Unfortunately, the damage they do emerges later. At the moment, on the surface all looks rosy, but they work away inside new shoots. The result is no flower buds, and holey chewed leaves to be revealed later on.

One alien bug quite at home and very obvious at the moment is the scarlet lily beetle. I plunge into flower beds to squash the adults and, with gloves and newspaper, wipe off the faeces-covered larvae currently making short work of lily foliage.



Roses are best sprayed with Epsom salts in May to reduce the effect of disease or weakness.



Kari-Astri Davies started gardening in her twenties with pots of roses, geraniums and sweet peas on a parapet five storeys up in central London. She's now on her fifth garden, this time in the Wiltshire countryside. Inspiration includes her plant-mad parents, as well as Dan Pearson, Beth Chatto, Keith Wilely and the Rix & Phillips plant books. Kari describes her approach as impulsive, meaning not everything is done by the book.