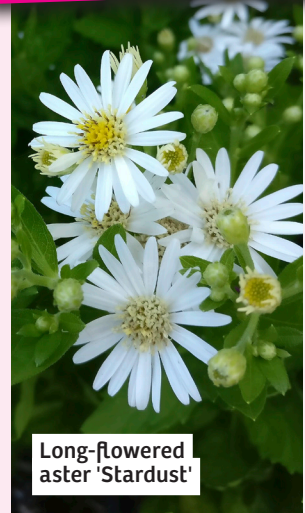




David loves propagating all kinds of plants

**BE A PLANT HERO**

Grow your own!



Long-flowered aster 'Stardust'

## 'Cottage gardening led me to grow rare plants'

Gardening is such a big part of my life," says David Simpson, who embraced it with gusto after taking early retirement aged 57. "I do it to keep fit and healthy. It also fulfils my artistic creativity and I love painting with plants, which gives me real satisfaction." He and wife Cathy downsized to their current home



**David Simpson**  
Retired sales and marketing director for a national house builder, inveterate compost maker and plant propagator

in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, with its ¼-acre tree-fringed garden to indulge their favourite hobby. It's divided into three; a kitchen garden with raised beds for fruit and veg, a social space for patio gardening and, his pride and joy, the front garden. It's laid out in informal cottage style for colour and scent and in which he loves growing roses and sweet peas, and was a winner in the annual Cheltenham in Bloom competition.

The garden's on heavy clay soil and run on 'reasonably organic' lines, with plants cared for holistically and wildlife encouraged.

"I was keen to improve my gardening and plant knowledge, so immersed myself in the horticultural community," said David. This included visiting nurseries and joining the Cottage

Garden Society, eventually becoming chair of his local branch. He also contributed to GN's 'Over the Fence' section between 2011 and 2014.

After joining conservation charity Plant Heritage he became a Plant Guardian, looking after a number of rare plant varieties. David currently has three hardy daisies in his care; chrysanthemum 'Romantica', symphyotrichum 'Claudia' and aster 'Stardust'. He's particularly fond of 'Romantica', a sturdy 90cm (3ft) tall perennial covered with double, pale-pink flowers for many weeks from late summer. He also likes aster 'Stardust' for its neat, compact habit and long flowering period.

"I don't know why it isn't offered more often," said David. "It deserves to be more well-known and feel I'm doing my bit as a Plant Guardian to help keep it going."

### Galaxy of flowers

*Aster ageratoides* 'Stardust' is a pretty plant with light green foliage and a spreading habit, achieving 60cm (2ft) high and wide. Sprays of small, white flowers produced from late summer last for weeks, and are attractive to bees and other pollinators. 'Stardust' will thrive in most moist, well-drained soils in sun or semi shade, but will tolerate drier shade once established. It's an ideal partner for shorter forms of hardy chrysanthemums. Available for collection only from Hoo House Nursery, Gloucestershire; tel: 01684 293389.



Chrysanthemum 'Romantica'

### How you can be a plant hero

You can help preserve rare and unusual plants in your garden. The Plant Heritage charity works to conserve the nation's garden plants through the National Plant Collection® scheme and individual Plant Guardians®,

and is looking for Garden News readers to get involved with its crucial work. Contact [collections@plantheritage.org.uk](mailto:collections@plantheritage.org.uk) for information or visit [www.plantheritage.org.uk](http://www.plantheritage.org.uk).



Are you growing any rare or unusual plants? Let us know – see our contact details on page 3

#GNREALGARDENS

