



Heathers 9

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The Heather Society
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One hundred recommended heathers 2012

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This describes a choice of heathers selected from the large number of named cultivars (cultivated, or garden "varieties") which are listed in nurserymen's catalogues. It updates, but retains the relevant descriptions from, the list originally compiled by Ron Cleevely and the late David Small and published in booklet form in 1999. New recommendations are indicated by * after the name.

These 100 heathers are recommended by The Heather Society as a collection of the best heathers. They have been carefully chosen as a result of wide practical experience in different parts of the world and after taking into account the findings of The Heather Society's Trials at Harlow Carr during the 1970s, the National Collections® at the Royal Horticultural Society's Garden, Wisley, Surrey, England, and those which were formerly established at Cherrybank Gardens, Perth, Scotland and the Royal (formerly Northern) Horticultural Society's Garden at Harlow Carr, Yorkshire, England, the trials by the Royal Boskoop Horticultural Society in The Netherlands after 1990, and experience in other gardens in North America and elsewhere.

Although some old favourites have been omitted, a serious attempt has been made to combine the outstanding old varieties with those newer introductions which have clearly proved their garden-worthiness or offer outstanding colour breaks, taking into account availability and climate change.

They provide a wide choice for different soils, with varied foliage and flower colours and habits suitable for ground cover, containers, rock gardens and other purposes.

Choosing heathers for your garden

Heathers are so versatile that no hard and fast rules can be laid down for choosing plants, or for planting heather to achieve the best effects.

Before making a choice of plants, it is important to remember that most of the summer-flowering heathers need acid soil conditions. A decision has to be made as to the style of heather garden that is required. Beds can be planted to give a dazzling spread of colour for a limited time, or groups of cultivars with different flowering periods will produce a prolonged, if less striking, display. It is possible to make a choice of heathers which will give flowers throughout the year, and by inter-planting coloured foliage varieties with the flowering cultivars, added interest will be provided in the non-flowering periods. In a large garden drifts of 20 or more plants of one cultivar can give a dramatic effect, but it is generally accepted that plantings of groups of 5 or 7 plants will

give very satisfactory results. A quite different effect can be created by planting a mosaic of one, two or three of each cultivar in a patchwork pattern. This is more suitable in the setting of a small garden, and because of their compact habit, the winter-flowering *Erica* are best for this type of planting.

As a general guide, allow five plants to the square metre (or four plants to the square yard) but always aim for variation in height and form by including a tree heath, taller heathers, slow-growing or dwarf conifers or other ericaceous shrubs.

THE RECOMMENDED LIST

This list gives basic details of flower colour, height, average spread and flowering season, to help in the planning of a heather garden.

There are many other good cultivars which can be used to augment or replace those in the list, to make the heather bed an individual creation.

The Heather Society will continue to evaluate new heathers. If worthy and when generally available, they will be included in subsequent recommendations (the list is also available to download from The Heather Society's website: www.heathersociety.org).

CALLUNA VULGARIS: LING

'Alicia'

Masses of white buds which fail to open, resulting in a long "flowering" period, from August to December. It has bright green foliage and a compact upright habit, up to 30cm high and 40cm broad.

'Amilto' *

Deep magenta flowers in late summer, with yellow foliage in summer turning bronze to orange-red in winter; spring growth is bronze yellow. Broad upright habit. Very hardy and requires a harsh environment for maximum foliage colour.

'Annemarie'

An outstanding heather producing long sprays of double rose-pink flowers in early autumn on dark green foliage, reaching a height of 50cm, spreading to 40cm.

'Anthony Davis'

The green-grey foliage makes a good foil for the long sprays of white flowers in late summer, reaching 45cm high and 50cm wide. An ideal plant for flower arrangers.

'Athene' *

Upright with stiffly erect shoots, to 40cm tall, with dark green foliage throughout the year; the flower buds never open and are red to cerise (H5–H6) from September into November. Similar to 'Aphrodite' and 'Alexandra', but the buds are redder.

'Con Brio' *

This has an erect habit (35cm tall, 45cm spread) and ruby flowers in late summer with a noticeable and pleasant scent. The gold-green summer foliage turns bronze in winter and brilliant red in cold weather making this one of the few with such foliage colour and deep flowers.

'County Wicklow'

One of the best compact double-flowered cultivars, bearing masses of beautiful pale shell-pink flowers in late summer on dark green foliage. It grows to a height of 25cm and spreads to 35cm.

'Darkness'

Masses of attractive crimson flowers, in late summer, in dense spikes on dark green foliage. This neat, compact, upright plant reaches a height of 35cm with a spread of 35cm.

'Elsie Purnell'

This outstanding plant has beautiful long stems of double lavender flowers in late summer on grey-green foliage. Ideal for flower arranging as it reaches a height of 50cm and spreads to 75cm.

'Firefly'

The lovely terracotta foliage in summer turns to a striking brick red in winter. The deep mauve flowers in late summer give a peach effect when viewed from afar. A distinctive upright habit, 45cm in height and spread of 50cm.

'Kerstin'

The colourful tips of pale yellow and red in spring give a very pleasing effect on the downy, deep lilac-grey foliage. As the tips disappear they are followed by mauve flowers in late summer. A very hardy, vigorous, upright plant reaching 30cm in height and spreading to 45cm.

'Peter Sparkes'

The superb long spikes of double rose-pink flowers in early autumn on dark green foliage makes this an outstanding plant which grows to 40cm spreading to 55cm.

'Red Beauty' *

Upright heather with erect shoots; foliage dark green; flowers "double" in dense, long "spikes". Similar to 'Dark Beauty' but with lighter green foliage and redder flowers.

'Red Favorit' *

This very hardy plant has double crimson flowers over dark green foliage in late summer and early autumn. It has a spreading habit with a height of 25cm and a spread of 50cm.

'Robert Chapman'

A very popular plant with striking golden orange summer foliage, turning flame-red in winter with a height of 25cm and a spread of 65cm. It has lavender flowers in late summer and early autumn. The plant has a rounded compact habit.

'Silver Queen'

Outstanding downy silver-grey foliage in summer, turning dark grey in winter with lavender flowers in late summer. The 40cm high plant is broad and spreads to 55cm.

'Silver Rose'

This plant with its delicate stems of silver-grey foliage is outstanding with its lilac-pink flowers in late summer. It has an upright habit reaching to 40cm and spreading to 50cm.

'Sister Anne'

This semi-prostrate, compact plant has mauve flowers in late summer on grey-green foliage, which turns to bronze in winter. A low spreading habit, height 10cm, breadth

25cm.

'Spring Cream' *

This compact plant has yellow tips to the mid-green foliage in winter and bright cream new growth in spring, with white flowers in late summer and early autumn; height to 35cm and spreading to 45cm.

'Tib'

A distinctive plant with double heliotrope flowers from early summer to early autumn on a background of dark green foliage. A rather open spreading habit which grows to 30cm high and spreads to 40cm.

'Velvet Fascination'

An outstanding plant with striking silver-grey foliage, topped with white flowers in late summer. An erect habit reaching a height of 50cm and a spread of 70cm.

'White Coral'

Spectacular double white flowers in late summer on bright green foliage, which stays bright all through the winter. This plant is compact only reaching a height of 20cm and a spread of 40cm.

'Wickwar Flame'

A sturdy plant with gold foliage in summer, turning superb shades of orange then red in exposed conditions in winter. The flowers in late summer and autumn are mauve. This vigorous plant reaches a height of 50cm and spreads to 65cm.

'Yvette's Gold' *

The bright yellow foliage sets off the white flowers from late summer to mid-autumn. It has a robust erect habit reaching 30cm high with a spread of 60cm.

DABOECIA CANTABRICA: **ST DABEOC'S HEATH**

'Blueless' *

Clear rose-pink (without a trace of blue) flowers throughout summer and early autumn, on a compact spreading plant to 30cm tall and 45cm wide. This beautiful plant has dark green foliage and will thrive in an alkaline soil as long as it is free-draining.

'Cinderella' *

This attractive plant has abundant, large white flowers, flushed shell-pink at base, over dark green foliage from early summer to the autumn frosts. It has an upright habit reaching 30cm tall with a spread of 35cm.

'Charles Nelson'

This fascinating plant has mauve flowers from early summer through to early autumn on mid-green foliage. It is unique in that although the first flowers of the season are single, the later ones are double and do not drop when finished. It has an open, sprawling habit growing to 30cm high and spreading to 45cm.

'Hookstone Purple'

This long-flowering plant has large amethyst flowers from early summer through to late autumn on mid-green foliage. It is useful for tall ground-cover as it reaches 45cm in height and spreads to 85cm.

'Waley's Red'

The deep glowing magenta flowers from early summer to early autumn have a slight trace of blue, with mid-green foliage. It reaches 35cm in height and has a spreading

habit, reaching 50cm.

DABOECIA × *SCOTICA*: **HYBRID ST DABEOC'S HEATH**

'Katherine's Choice' *

Cerise flowers from late spring to mid-summer, over mid-green foliage. Compact, erect habit, reaching 20cm tall with a spread of 25cm.

'William Buchanan'

The deep crimson flowers during summer and early autumn on dark green foliage, make this a popular plant. It will continue flowering until the first frosts, and grows to 35cm with a spread of 55cm.

ERICA ARBOREA: **TREE HEATHER**

'Albert's Gold'

A spectacular tree heather growing up to 2m high with bright gold foliage in winter becoming golden green in summer. The few white flowers are displayed in late spring. Spreading to 80cm.

'Estrella Gold'

This tree heather with a height of 1.2m, has white flowers in profusion during late spring, on lime-green foliage. The new growth is tipped yellow in spring and early summer. Broad, compact habit, spreading to 75cm.

ERICA AUSTRALIS: **SPANISH HEATH**

'Riverslea'

An outstanding tree heath with a height of 1.2m, spreading to 85cm. The flowers in late spring and early summer are lilac-pink on dark green foliage.

ERICA CARNEA: **WINTER HEATH**

'Adrienne Duncan'

This superb plant has deep heliotrope flowers in late winter on dark green foliage tinged bronze. No more than 15cm high, spreading to 35cm.

'Ann Sparkes'

The orange foliage of this plant turns crimson in very cold weather with bronze tips during the rest of the year. A compact plant up to 15cm, spreading to 25cm, with rose-pink flowers in late winter darkening to heliotrope in early spring.

'Eva' *

Deep pink flowers from late winter until mid-spring over dark green foliage which turns bronze in winter. Compact habit, reaching 15cm tall with a spread of 30cm.

'Foxhollow'

The superb yellow and bronze foliage deepens to orange-red in late autumn and winter. A vigorous, spreading plant reaching 75cm high and 40cm broad. Shell-pink blossoms in late winter and early spring.

'Golden Starlet'

The golden yellow foliage glows in summer and turns lime-green winter. The white flowers in late winter and spring make this plant shine. A neat 15cm-high carpet of

colour spreading to 40cm.

'Hilletje' *

Deep lilac-pink flowers, throughout winter, with greenish gold summer foliage that turns a beautiful orange in winter. Compact habit, to 15cm tall and spreading to 30cm, this plant is disease-resistant tolerating humid heat as well as severe cold.

'Isabell' *

Abundant white flowers in late winter and spring; bright green foliage. Erect, spreading habit reaching 10–15cm in height and with a spread of 45cm.

'King George' *

An old favourite with masses of pink flowers from early winter to early spring over dark green foliage. This reliable plant has a neat, compact habit to 15cm tall, spreading to 25cm, and tolerates hot humid conditions.

'Loughrigg'

An outstanding plant with rose-pink flowers in late winter and early spring on dark green foliage tinged with bronze. A vigorous plant which grows to 75cm and spreads to 50cm.

'March Seedling'

An excellent free-flowering plant with pale heliotrope blooms in spring on mid-green foliage. It grows to 15cm high and spreads to 50cm.

'Myretoun Ruby'

The outstanding deep magenta flowers in late winter and early spring on dark green foliage make this plant an excellent companion to any of the white-blossomed *E. carnea*. It reaches 15cm high and 45cm wide.

'Pink Spangles'

An excellent plant displaying large shell-pink blooms in late winter and early spring, on mid-green foliage. A vigorous, spreading habit, reaching 15cm high and spreading to 45cm.

'Rosalie'

Bright pink flowers in winter and early spring with bronze-green foliage. The low, upright flowering stems make it suitable for growing in pots. This plant reaches a height of 15cm and spreads to 35cm.

'Rotes Juwel' *

An excellent plant with bright, beetroot flowers from late autumn into early spring over dark green foliage which turns bronze in winter. It has a compact habit 15cm high with a spread of 30cm making it ideal for rock gardens and edging.

'Springwood White'

Masses of white flowers in winter and spring, with bright green foliage. Vigorous, trailing habit making it ideal for hanging baskets, reaching 15cm high and spreading to 40cm.

'Westwood Yellow'

An excellent, compact plant with yellow foliage throughout the year, with a few shell-pink flowers, deepening to heliotrope, in late winter and early spring. It reaches 15cm high with a spread of 30cm.

'Winter Snow' *

Masses of white flowers, blooming later than most whites from late winter to late spring. The foliage is bright green and it has a bushy, spreading habit reaching a height of 20cm with a spread of 45cm.

'Wintersonne'

This distinctive plant with bronze foliage produces attractive buds in late summer and autumn which open to display lilac-pink flowers darkening to magenta in late winter and early spring. The plant reaches a height of 15cm and spreads to 35cm.

ERICA CILIARIS: **DORSET HEATH****'Corfe Castle'**

This distinctive plant produces long spikes of large, bright rose-pink flowers during late summer on mid-green foliage. It reaches a height of 20cm and spreads to 35cm.

'David McClintock'

Very distinctive bi-coloured flowers, white at the base with pale beetroot tips, in late summer and early autumn on grey-green foliage. Loose, open habit, reaching 30cm high and spreading to 45cm. Suitable for planting in a tub with ericaceous compost.

'Ram'*

An excellent plant with beautiful magenta flowers, in late summer, over light yellow-green foliage. It has a neat habit reaching 15cm tall with a spread of 40cm.

ERICA CINEREA : **BELL HEATHER****'Celebration'**

Intense golden foliage in summer and autumn, turning lime-green in winter, with white flowers in late summer. An interesting plant owing to the rare combination of white flowers and yellow foliage in this species. Prostrate habit, reaching 20cm high and spreading to 40cm.

'Cevennes'

A very good carpeter with mauve flowers in late summer and early autumn on mid-green foliage. Compact spreading habit reaching 30cm high by 65cm wide.

'C. D. Eason'

The bright magenta flowers, in mid- to late summer, glow against the backdrop of dark green foliage. It provides neat ground-cover, reaching a height of 25cm and spreading to 50cm.

'Eden Valley'

A lovely plant with mid-green foliage, displaying bi-coloured lavender flowers shading to white at the base in late summer and early autumn. It has a tidy, prostrate habit growing to 20cm high and spreading to 50cm.

'Lime Soda'

An outstanding plant with soft lavender flowers in profusion during summer and early autumn on lime-green foliage. A very attractive plant, reaching a height of 30cm and spreading to 55cm.

'Pentreath'

The beetroot flowers look superb against the dark green of the foliage. The plant is a neat carpeter, reaching 30cm in height and spreading to 55cm.

'Rosita'*

Compact, bushy, upright heather, about 30cm tall and with spread of about 40cm, with rose-pink bells throughout summer, and grey-green foliage.

'Stephen Davis'

The intense magenta flowers are produced in profusion throughout the summer on

dark green foliage. An erect, compact plant, reaching 20cm high and 45cm broad.

'Velvet Night'

The striking combination of deep beetroot flowers and dark green foliage make this a colourful summer-flowering plant of erect habit. It reaches 25cm in height and spreads to 55cm.

ERICA × *DARLEYENSIS*: **DARLEY DALE HEATH**

'Arthur Johnson'

Beautiful long stems of pink flowers which deepen to heliotrope throughout winter and early spring. The flowers are slightly scented. The mid-green foliage is tipped cream in spring. A tall bushy plant which reaches 60cm and spreads to 75cm.

'Eva Gold' *

Magenta flowers from mid-winter into spring are borne over bronze-gold foliage that holds its colour throughout the year. This attractive plant has a spreading habit attaining a height of 35cm and a spread of 50cm.

'Furzey'

An outstanding plant with lilac-pink flowers, deepening to heliotrope, in late winter and early spring. The dark green foliage is tipped with cream, pink and red in spring. Bushy habit, reaching 35cm high by 60cm wide.

'Jenny Porter'

The pale lilac flowers in winter and early spring are followed by pronounced pale cream young growth on mid-green foliage. The plant reaches 45cm in height and 60cm spread.

'J. W. Porter'

Heliotrope flowers in winter and spring on dark green foliage, which is tipped with cream and red new growth in spring. A spectacular plant which reaches 25cm high by 40cm wide.

'Kramers Rote' [KRAMER'S RED]

An outstanding heather with magenta flowers in winter and spring with dark bronze-green foliage, brightening the darkest of winter days. It reaches a height of 35cm, spreading to 60cm.

'Lucie' *

This outstanding plant was the first heather granted The Heather Society's Premier Award. It has magnificent, large, brilliant magenta flowers in broad spikes from early winter to late spring, over dark green foliage. A bushy, erect habit reaching 45cm high and spreading to 60cm.

'Moonshine' *

This has outstanding bright golden foliage which does not scorch or go bronze in winter, with brilliant yellow new growth in spring; The shell-pink flowers, from early winter to spring, deepen with age. It has a dense bushy habit with a height of 25cm and a spread of 45cm.

'Silberschmelze'

An attractive plant with ashen white flowers from early winter to late spring on dark green foliage, reaching a height of 35cm and a spread of 80cm.

'Spring Surprise' *

This beautiful plant has masses of deep rose flowers throughout spring, on dark green foliage. It has a broad, upright habit reaching 40cm tall and 60cm across.

'White Perfection'

An outstanding plant with pure white flowers from early winter to spring, with bright green foliage tipped yellow in spring. A vigorous plant, with an erect habit, reaching 40cm high and spreading to 70cm.

ERICA ERIGENA : **IRISH HEATH****'Irish Dusk'**

A very attractive plant with salmon buds opening to rose-pink flowers in winter through to late spring on grey-green foliage. It has a bushy upright habit and attains a height of 60cm and spreads to 45cm.

'Thing Nee' *

An outstanding yellow-foliage plant with a broad, erect habit reaching 2m tall (after 27 years) with a spread of 1m. The dense foliage remains golden throughout the year. This Irish heath bears mauve flowers from late winter to mid-spring.

'W. T. Rackliff'

This plant makes an attractive rich green rounded bush, completely covered in white flowers in spring. It is slow growing and reaches 75cm high and spreads to 55cm.

ERICA × *GRIFFITHSII* : **GRIFFITHS'S HEATH****'Jacqueline'** *

This attractive plant produces long spikes of scented, lilac-pink flowers from mid-summer to mid-autumn, over dark greyish green foliage with an erect habit reaching 1m tall with a spread of 60cm.

'Valerie Griffiths'

The yellow foliage in summer deepens to a golden yellow in winter, with pale pink flowers in summer and early autumn. A tall bushy plant growing to 40cm high and spreading to 55cm.

ERICA LUSITANICA : **PORTUGUESE HEATH**

An elegant, erect shrub with mid-green foliage. The pink buds open to white flowers from late winter to spring. It reaches a height of 1m and spreads to 70cm.

ERICA MACKAYANA : **MACKAY'S HEATH****'Galicia'** *

This attractive free-flowering plant has deep magenta blooms from mid-summer to mid-autumn that darken to amethyst with age. The foliage is dark green, and it reaches a height of 30cm spreading to 55cm.

'Shining Light'

Masses of large white blossoms in late summer and early autumn on mid-grey-green foliage. It reaches a height of 25cm and spreads to 55cm.

ERICA × OLDENBURGENSIS : OLDENBURG HEATH**'Ammerland'**

This very attractive plant has soft pink flowers carried on erect spikes during spring with mid-green foliage. The new spring growth is vivid orange. It has a compact habit and reaches a height of 70cm and spreads to 70cm.

ERICA × STUARTII : PRAEGER'S HEATH**'Irish Lemon'**

A neat rounded plant grown for the brilliant lemon colour of its new spring foliage, which persists until after flowering starts. The large mauve flowers are borne from late spring to early autumn. It reaches a height of 25cm and width of 50cm.

ERICA TERMINALIS : CORSICAN HEATH**'Thelma Woolner' ***

This erect evergreen shrub is hardiest of all the tree heaths. It has lilac-pink flowers from July to November on mid-green foliage. The faded bells provide an attractive russet hue all winter. It grows to 1.5m tall and spreads to 1m. This is an ideal plant for a decorative hedge.

ERICA TETRALIX : CROSS-LEAVED HEATH**'Alba Mollis'**

Attractive white flowers in summer and early autumn on grey-green foliage tipped silver-grey. This compact upright plant grows to 20cm and spreads to 30cm.

'Pink Star' *

This plant is unusual having the flowers held horizontally rather than hanging downwards. The lilac-pink flowers show up well against the grey-green foliage. Flowering from early summer until early autumn, the plant has a compact habit reaching 20cm tall and with a spread of 35cm.

'Riko' *

This is an attractive, compact plant reaching 40cm in height with a spread of 35cm, with grey-green foliage. The new growths have silvery tips. The striking ruby flowers that appear in summer are its outstanding feature.

ERICA VAGANS : CORNISH HEATH**'Birch Glow'**

An outstanding plant with masses of deep rose-pink flowers in late summer and autumn, with dark green foliage. It reaches a height of 30cm and spreads to 50cm.

'Fiddlestone'

Superb deep cerise flowers during late summer and early autumn on mid-green foliage, reaching a height of 30cm and a spread of 60cm.

'Golden Triumph'

A very attractive plant with mid-green foliage which has bright golden tips in spring. The flowers in late summer and early autumn are white. The height is 40cm and

breadth 65cm.

'Kevernensis Alba'

This plant has abundant creamy white flowers from late summer until mid-autumn over bright green foliage. The short flower spikes and good neat habit make the faded blooms less conspicuous; reaches 25cm tall with a spread of 40cm.

'Mrs. D. F. Maxwell'

A most attractive plant bearing masses of deep rose-pink flowers in late summer and early autumn, with dark green foliage. It reaches a height of 35cm and spreads to 45cm.

'Yellow John' *

A showy plant with a dense, bushy habit and bright yellow foliage, forming a neat dome around 45cm across. The lilac flowers appear from late summer into autumn.

ERICA × *VEITCHII* : **VEITCH'S HEATH**

'Exeter' *

This very floriferous plant has sweetly scented white flowers throughout spring over light green foliage. A tree heath up to 2m high with a spread of 65cm, it makes a strong architectural statement in the heather garden, but needs protection from very cold winds.

'Gold Tips'

The bright green foliage of this tree heath is tipped gold in spring. The white flowers appear in late spring and early summer. It reaches a height of 65cm and spreads to 60cm.

ERICA × *WATSONII* : **WATSON'S HEATH**

'Claire Elise' *

A compact plant reaching 20cm tall with a spread of around 45cm. The deep magenta flowers appear from mid-summer into autumn, while its deep red ‡, springtime shoot tips are striking.

'Pink Pacific' *

A most attractive plant with a spreading habit, to 25cm tall spreading 35cm across, and grey-green foliage. In spring and early summer it has distinctive orange-red new shoot-tips. The salmon-pink buds opening to beautiful clear rose pink flowers through summer and well into autumn.

ERICA × *WILLIAMSII* : **WILLIAMS'S HEATH**

'Ken Wilson'

Clear magenta flowers in summer and autumn, without a trace of blue, fading to shell-pink, with mid-green foliage. Compact spreading habit with a height of 30cm and a spread to 50cm.

‡ When registered in 2006 this was inadvertently stated to have “golden” shoot tips in spring. Thus the original description (see *Heathers* 4: 71 (2007) is erroneous. The tips are red.