

# The Gala Garden

Here we are in Spring, welcoming longer, warmer days and thankfully through THAT Winter !! There's no time to lose in making the most of the season but it's still worth just standing watching the garden come to life when you can, to enjoy Spring gently unfolding before it whizzes into Summer.

Evergreen shrubs and containerised trees can be planted out now as long as they're well watered. Hungry rabbits did some damage in the cold weather, lifted higher by the snow so it might be worth considering taller tree guards where they're vulnerable. Quite a few varieties of fruit trees & bushes are self-fertile so can be planted without a cross-pollinating variety. A mulch around the base is a good idea. This is a good time to plant roses too but be prepared to spray them fairly regularly with something like RoseClear to prevent mildew and blackspot. A general organic tonic can be found in products derived from chicken manure though it doesn't smell as sweet as the roses !

Rhodies, Camelias and Pieris start flowering now and benefit from a feed of sequestered iron to keep the soil PH acidic around them so that they don't become anaemic and lose vitality & colour. Continue lifting and dividing herbaceous perennials (try using two forks back to back) and source new ones ~ there are so many lovely varieties available and they generally do a great deal of good for birds and beneficial insects. A safe way to control unwanted visitors such as slugs and vine weevil is to water on nematodes, their natural predator but they will not be active unless the temperature's above 5c.

An excellent herb to grow as a general purpose feed and conditioner for your plants is Comfrey. It bushes out vigorously and can become a patch to cut, steep the leaves and water onto just about anything. Its first 'cut' can be laid under your tatties in the trench when you plant them out around the traditional Easter time ~ they like a good feed.

In the veggie garden, cover your soil with fleece in advance to warm it up then sow beetroot, peas, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauli, kale, chard, spinach, rocket, lettuce and radish. Artichokes, onion sets and asparagus can also be planted out. In your (nicely cleaned!) greenhouse there are plenty of seeds that can be sown and tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers & aubergines can be grown as long as you have heating available should the temperature drop below 7c. If you're using a windowsill, try placing cardboard lined with silver foil on the inside to reflect as much light back as possible and prevent seedlings from stretching.

Flowers are great to grow too and if you don't manage to sow your own, we have lots to choose from at the Nursery ~ from annuals to perennials, plus lovely baskets (to hang out when all frost is past). You're very welcome to visit us there ~ between Melrose and the bridge towards Gattonside ~ any day 10am till 5pm.

Have a great season !

*Holly.*

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