

The Gala Garden

December is, of course, the run up to Christmas ... there's not a whole lot to do in the garden this month but you might just like some outdoor space or to know that everything's sorted for next year! It's useful to keep clearing leaves so that birds can feast on any hiding slugs, whilst keeping rose diseases at bay (they often overwinter on fallen leaves). Roses also benefit from a third of their growth being pruned at this time.

Fruit trees, especially apples and plums, raspberry canes and other soft fruit can still be planted out for a harvest next year. If you didn't source your ornamental trees or hedging bare root in November, this can be done until February but it's easier when the ground's still soft. It's hard to imagine anything drying out with the amount of rain we've had but keep an eye on any plants recently established in pots or in your garden. Almost everything prefers to be well-drained in winter but total drought can be fatal. Some lovely shrubs to consider for winter beauty are Daphne Mezereum Rubra, Viburnum Tinus, Mahonia Winter Sun and of course trees such as Prunus Snow Goose or Kanzan which will inspire you with their blossom in the early spring.



Prunus Snow Goose

Indoors, it's worth keeping an eye on any bulbs you've planted for forcing, such as hyacinths. Once they've put on root growth they can be moved from darkness to indirect light in a cool room and then somewhere bright to be enjoyed. House plants appreciate their leaves either sponged if glossy or misted if hairy, with a spray at room temperature, when the heating's on and you can group them together for extra humidity. Indoor gardening can be greatly enhanced with a hydroponic kit which doesn't have to cost a lot but which will allow you to extend the growing season and increase your yield of salad, herbs, tomatoes, strawberries etc. You can grow with or without electricity.

Christmas has a certain magic about it. The shortest day is December 21st, the Winter Solstice and the evergreen tree and wreath have become symbolic of new growth and of the everlasting circle of life. Christianity and older Pagan cultures both celebrated this special time. A holly wreath might be associated with Jesus' crown in Christian symbolism but for more than a thousand years it was considered both a welcoming shelter for tree fairies from the harshness of winter, and as protection for the home from negative spirits. The Romans celebrated their sun god Saturn, using evergreen foliage in mid winter so that he would return to assist them with their spring planting. The Druids acknowledged evergreen trees as keeping the Earth beautiful, while deciduous trees, which shine in the summer, dropped their leaves in winter. A turning point in nature that can rekindle our dreams and our appreciation of plants!

Wishing you a very happy Christmas!

Holly

Lowood Nursery