

# The Gala Garden

In July we can slow down a bit in the garden and hopefully enjoy a few lazy days of sunshine. The weather's taken a long time to truly warm up this year and everything's still behind but, with a bit of luck, we'll be in for a long lasting summer too !!

Tasks are mostly about maintenance for now. Watering may be essential for anything newly planted or sown but moisture loss can also be reduced by mulching with any organic matter, moistening the soil before applying. Where you do need to water plants, it's better to give a few at a time a thorough soaking than skim over everything on a daily basis ~ this keeps their roots hydrated. Leaky pipe in your borders also targets roots and avoids wasting water through evaporation.

Generally, keep your flowers and vegetable crops producing by regularly deadheading, cropping and feeding. Roses will flower further into the autumn if you prune spent blooms back to a bud on an outward-facing leaf further down the stem and following up with specific rose food to encourage the growth of strong new shoots rather than the sappy growth more vulnerable to pests and diseases. These can become quite active in warmer weather and prevention is better than cure !! A great natural way to keep things healthy is to grow a variety of plants that create a little ecosystem which attracts beneficial insects so, for example, include perennials that attract bees & hoverflies etc (not so difficult because lots of them do!), grow herbs near your veg and even plant out some very inexpensive flowers like calendula (pot marigold), nasturtiums or borage which benefit other plants and are likely to seed themselves for next year. Experimenting this way is unlikely to do any harm so it's worth a try but if it's too late to take these steps this year and you haven't used shop bought sprays in time either, you'll need to remove any leaves infected with rust, blackspot or mildew and bin or burn them, rather than add them to the compost heap. Rust tends to affect plants deficient in potash so feed appropriately to prevent spread, mildew is usually worse with drought and affects some plants more than others eg. Asters. If you keep these moist and fed, they'll reward you with beautiful flowers late in the season when there's little else new.

It's not too late to add vegetables to the garden. As soon as you've harvested something, grow a new crop of lettuce, beetroot, carrots or turnips. Seedlings aren't expensive to source from the Nursery if that's easier ! Corn salad & rocket will provide good 'cut and come again' crops and culinary delights such as peas, oriental veg or winter brassicas can still go in the ground.

If you're going away this month, arrange for anyone looking after your garden to harvest produce or flowers that would otherwise be wasted and have a good break so you can enjoy catching up when you get back !

All the best ~

**Holly @ Lowood Nursery.**