

# The Gala Garden

There's always a bright side and, thanks to a long hard winter, we've had a beautiful slow spring. Shrubs like rhododendrons are coming into flower and there are lovely ones to enjoy in all kinds of colours. They thrive on acid soil but if yours is alkaline you can grow them in containers or raised beds, using ericaceous compost. Heathers and Pieris like that too.

With the spring show almost over, it's time to think about summer bedding plants and hanging baskets. We can still have frost in May, so take care planting these out until the weather feels more settled, using fleece as protection if necessary. Night frost can often be predicted by a clear starry sky and a sharp drop in temperature following a warm sunny day.

Keen gardeners, both beginning and seasoned, will enjoy watching the Chelsea Flower Show on TV this month. It's a great way to keep tabs on current gardening trends and learn about the best varieties to source. In the past couple of years, a lot of emphasis has been on gardening with nature and wildlife in mind. Herbaceous perennials are good for that ~ they give us a lot of pleasure and provide a haven for bees, butterflies and other insects. Also, they retreat below ground in the winter and have therefore tended to survive, where a lot of shrubs didn't. Hopefully that was a one-off!



To guarantee a succession of young vegetables throughout the summer you can sow small amounts of seeds to have a plentiful crop in even the smallest of gardens of beetroot, calabrese, carrots, courgettes, french & runner beans, lettuce, rocket, spinach, spring onions, swiss chard and sweetcorn, not forgetting your favourite herbs. Watering may now become necessary, especially if the winds are drying. Maintain a balance as over watering can discourage the plants from developing strong, deep roots in search of moisture in the ground but of course young vegetables, developing fruits and newly planted trees, shrubs & perennials will need to be regularly watered. You may consider installing a water feature in the garden which can be as simple as a half barrel filled with aquatic plants. Frogs and dragonflies will be attracted to even the smallest pool.

If you're using a greenhouse, ventilation and shading on hot days are essential. From the end of the month, it should be safe for most things to live outdoors, as long as tender specimens are sheltered from the wind. Tomatoes mustn't drop below 7C and basil will tend to do better indoors.

General tasks are to keep weeds down, prune evergreens, early flowering shrubs and clematis Montana after flowering. Divide early primulas; cut back spring flowering perennials; spray roses to prevent pests & diseases; sow annual flower seed outside and don't forget to cut and feed the lawn ready for some lovely summer days outdoors ...

Here's to a good one !!  
Holly,  
LOWOOD NURSERY.