

The Gala Garden

November's a great month for taking a look at your garden to decide on changes you'd like to make for next year, no matter how big or small. First carry out some groundwork before the soil hardens. Remove and compost anything to go, setting aside invasive weeds such as ground elder for the bin. Lightly dig over the spaces but let the winter frost and worms do the hard work of breaking up heavy soil. Add manure where needed and mulch around vulnerable plants, making use of raked Autumn leaves. Ideally they'll be well rotted ones from last year but, if not and if you have room, make two simple compost containers from wire mesh stapled onto four posts and cover with old carpet or newspaper to speed up the process. You could even consider a 'wormery' for transforming vegetable waste into rich humus for some useful recycling.

Enjoy researching and planning plants that you might like to add. Deciduous trees, hedging, shrubs and roses can now be safely moved or sourced. They're entering a period of dormancy until early Spring and can be bought 'bare root'. If replanting your own, lift them with plenty of soil around the roots ('root ball') and have a bigger hole than this prepared to include some fresh compost and fertiliser eg bonemeal, making it easy for them to re-root. Bare root plants are best soaked for an hour or so before planting out. Stake larger specimens to avoid buffeting by wind until they're stable again. Evergreens can be planted now but they will continue to grow and drink a bit so you'll need to watch that if the weather's dry. Azaleas, rhododendrons, magnolias, hardy gardenias and camellias (such as Brushfields Yellow) are a beautiful addition to the garden and make lovely gifts to be enjoyed early next year.



Brushfields Yellow

Label bulbs or herbaceous perennials that die back so that you remember what's where. Clear and clean the greenhouse with Jeyes Fluid, especially if using over the winter, to prevent diseases such as downy mildew and open the vents on fine days to clear the air. You can still be sowing winter salad if you have a little heater to keep the temperature above freezing and have some fleece ready to wrap around plants outside such as bay trees on the coldest nights. Garlic can be planted out now in holes where the bulbs can sit on 1" of sand and then covered with fine compost. They need good drainage to thrive. Mulch strawberries with 2-4" straw. Plant and stake raspberry canes.

You can still plant out pansies, violas, primulae, wallflowers, heuchera, and more in containers to give colour and cheer up the darker days. While it feels cold and dark, it's the start of a whole new natural cycle so let the garden rest a while, knowing that it'll soon be time to sow seeds again !

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