

The Gala Garden

October is a good tidying up month for the garden. Time spent now will really pay off over the winter and spring. First bring in any geraniums, begonias or fuchsias that aren't fully hardy before the first frost. These can be kept indoors or in a cold frame until the weather warms up again with just a touch of water. Remove and compost your other annuals.

Spring flowering bulbs such as daffodils, dwarf iris, anemone or crocus should be in the ground quite early in the month. Adding bonemeal or bulb fertiliser will give them a boost. Tulips can still be planted into the beginning of November with a lovely range to choose from. Note that some bloom much later than others.

Alpines are a treat in the Spring and it might be worth considering making a mini gravel garden with them, using an old sink or shallow planter to place somewhere that you pass often and can enjoy when the garden looks bare in early spring.

You may have divided or moved some of your perennials last month. If so, keep an eye out for slugs and make sure that the plants are well watered if there hasn't been a lot of rain. Mulching them lightly will keep the soil warm for longer giving them more time to root. Another, thicker mulch will help to protect them once the ground freezes over. Make sure that everything's well watered before the weather turns really cold and there's a chance of botrytis (fungal spores) setting in. Prune and cut back where appropriate.

There's still time to plant out winter pansies, violas, wallflowers, primulae, ornamental kale & cabbage and autumn chrysanthemums. These will give you colour. Evergreen perennials look great in planters too such as Heuchera 'Peach Flambe', the dark red 'Can Can' or the striking trailing Vinca 'Illuminations'.



Start browsing through some seed catalogues and make sure that your trays and propagators are clean and ready to go. Bird feeders should be cleaned out and refilled for our feathered friends. Clean water is important for them too !

Shrubs, trees, roses and some perennials can now be sourced in their dormant period which runs from October to March. You can buy them bare root (ie. with nothing around the roots). This is very satisfying for those who like some instant garden because they can be sourced cheap at an advanced size, making this an ideal way to install hedging etc. They are best ordered in advance from the nursery and planted out from November onwards. It really is a joy to see them springing into life again come the spring.

Another couple of things to do this month would be to test your soil for its acid/alkaline balance. This will help in deciding which plants would thrive best in your garden. The other is to start a garden journal which can include 'before & after' photos, seed packets, labels along with comments. It'll remind you that you've really made progress !!

Holly