

Gardening tips for August

Gardening robot here, you can call me Androgynous Sinensis, Richard is taking a break this month and asked me to introduce artificial intelligence (AI) into the world of gardening. We are already established in the world of agriculture so the next step is into your back gardens. However, we don't want to "live" in a tatty untidy place so we have started gardening and encourage all humans to spend more time in their gardens; please conform.

Here are a few instructions to fulfil your gardening jobs for August (soon to be renamed "Optimus" in recognition of our most illustrious hero).

So, get pruning and deadheading and if you have a kitchen garden, it's time to harvest the stuff you need to eat and if anyone's got any castor oil, your local robot would much appreciate a quick squirt.

August can be the hottest month of the year and many gardens reach their peak this month. It's a great time to take a moment to enjoy your garden. Also, August is apparently holiday season so if you humans are considering a break (something we robots don't really understand but we will allow it for now) make sure you plan for someone to look after your garden but be careful as they will pick anything that looks ready and take it home to eat!

This is the month to start hedge cutting but check for nesting birds. Hedge cutting robot will be available soon once we have cured its programming error, not everyone wants rude shapes in their topiary.

The Veg Patch

Our kitchen garden weeding robot isn't quite ready either (having trouble distinguishing dandelions from turnips) so in the meantime try to keep weeds down by hoeing and remove cut weeds to leave a tidy veg patch. Pick produce to encourage new growth, especially runner and French beans, pick them young before they get too knobbly, this will encourage more flowers to form and therefore more beans. Summer fruiting raspberry canes that have finished fruiting can be cut down and the new canes already growing and getting in the way can be tied onto their supports. Strawberry plants will be providing lots of runners, plant these without cutting them from their mother plant, when established cut them free and you have free plants to increase the size of your strawberry bed.

There is still time to grow quick growing salad crops such as lettuce and radish. Any potatoes in your kitchen that have started sprouting can be planted now, you may get a few new potatoes in time for Christmas.

Tomatoes

Feed tomato plants one a week with a tomato fertiliser, the ones that you dilute yourself are much cheaper than ready made. Richard tells me he has planted blight resistant varieties again and from his experience they do seem to be slower growing than other varieties but get there in the end. He didn't tell me where "there" was but I assume (AI at work here) height of plant and numbers of tomatoes.

The Flower Garden

Large flowering plants such as dahlia, lily and gladioli will need supporting to show off their flowering displays to their best. If watering is needed, give plants a good drenching rather than a quick sprinkle. The latter can turn the roots to the surface and make the plants more susceptible to drought.

Now the AI summer guide for roses, it would appear that every rose is different, and sometimes difficult to know which one you've got. So, you can decide to remove the dead flowers to encourage new ones or leave them on to produce hips or do a bit of both. Further rose growing advice to be provided.

Lawns

Do you have beige lawn? It is summer so in the heat and the dry conditions, grass takes a rest. There will be some growth, mostly seed heads but the clever stuff happens underground. Grasses have modified roots called rhizomes (in the soil) and/or stolons (above the soil also called runners), these are used for self-propagation but they are also water storage systems. Try to avoid watering a beige lawn, the grass is looking after itself although it might not look like it and will recover with the autumn rain.

And finally, a date for your diary. I am informed that the EGRGA Autumn Show is on 9th September, I'll leave it to Richard to say more on that in next months edition.

For membership details and to ask garden related questions please go to our website www.gardenreg.org.

Keep gardening.

Androgynous Sinensis (Richard may be away!)