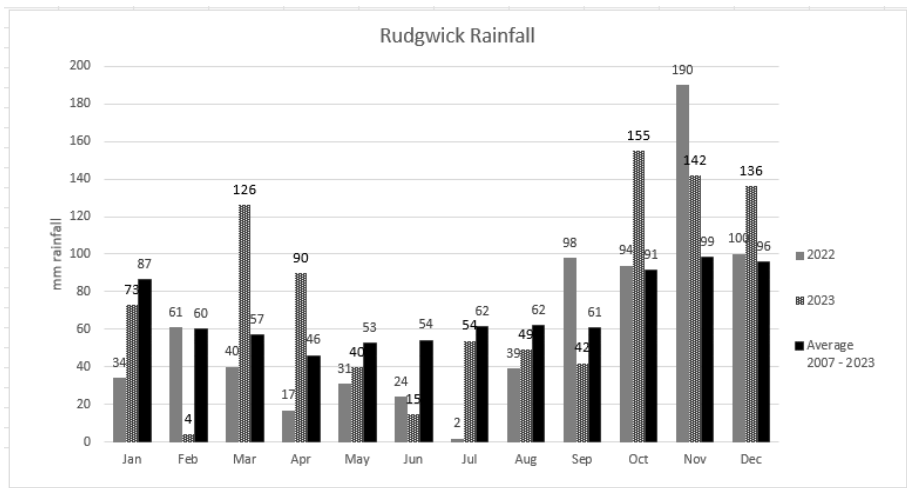


Gardening tips for February

Time for my yearly rain update. So, was 2023 a wet year? On average yes, the second wettest since 2007 (the year I started measuring rainfall in Rudgwick) but that is not really the entire picture, a problem with talking of averages, 2022 by comparison with 2023 was close to the average. The year from January to September was comparatively dryer than usual, although March and April were particularly wet. The year just got very wet from October to December with more than double the average rainfall. So, what does this mean for the “average” gardener?

If we are to have wetter autumns and winters and dryer springs and summers, invest in more water capture or adopt a beaver, either way, rainwater saved from going into the sewers will reduce the amount of sewage the water companies feel compelled to discharge into the rivers.



Last year at this time I mentioned cleaning the shed, the tools, the patio, the greenhouse; now you have done that again this year what next?

February is a good time for planning particularly if the weather is dreadful. Give priority to choosing a good location for a summer holiday and then organise your planting so there will be little to do for that stalwart neighbour of yours when looking after your garden when you are in Benidorm (other holiday destinations are available).

The Kitchen Garden

It's chitting time again! Garden centres were already filling up with seed potatoes the week after Christmas so buy them now and set aside in a light frost-free place, rub off shoots to leave the strongest three or four.

Peppers and chillies need a long growing season, sow them now and put your pots on a sunny windowsill to give them a bit of encouragement.

The Flower Garden

A good way to grow height into the garden is with climbing roses scrambling up a rose arch or trellis against the house, shed or fence. February is a good time for pruning as the plant is dormant. Rambling roses are similar to climbing roses but need different pruning especially if they were not pruned in late summer so that the rosehips could develop for winter interest. To tell the difference between the two, climbing roses flower throughout the summer and autumn and can have large flowers whereas rambling roses bloom once in summer with small flowers in abundance. When pruning aim for plenty of space between stems to allow airflow and reduce the spread of mildew.

Cut out dead and unwanted stems and tie remaining stems to supports, spacing them out evenly. Prune the previously flowered side stems to above a bud reducing the length of the shoot by about half. Suckering stems grow from the rootstock and should be removed by tearing them away from the plant, the aim being to stop them growing back.

Other Jobs

Don't forget to feed the birds especially if the weather is being unusually wintery. One essential job is clean the bird feeders thoroughly to remove all traces of mould from damp and old bird feed.

Check the pond especially if ice has formed, melt an area rather than cracking the ice, this is kinder to the fish.

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

Keep gardening.

Richard Haigh, EGRGA Comms.