

Gardening tips for January

Happy New (gardening) Year from EGRGA

Is the weather cold and miserable, don't really feel like gardening, looking forward to the warmer weather, it must be time to book the summer holiday. In the meantime, there are jobs to be getting on with in the garden, alternatively, watch another old film on the telly.

The kitchen garden

Time to start planning what this year's crop is going to be and buy seed packets while you still have a good choice available in the garden centres.

Turn the green house into a greenhouse by washing the glass, and while you're in the mood clean all your stored pots and tools ready for the spring.

Any netting used on brassicas should be checked to ensure it is tight and therefore less likely to trap birds. Remove any yellowing leaves.

Sow leeks, onions and broad beans under cover. Cover rhubarb with an upturned bucket or tub trug to force the stems for an early crop. You will now if you have been successful as the growing shoots will lift the bucket when tall enough.

Cut autumn-fruiting cane fruits such as raspberry down to ground level. Prune established blackberry bushes by removing a third of the older growth to ground level. Similarly, cut out the congested and unproductive branches of gooseberry bushes to open the centre.

The flower garden

This is a good time to consider improvements or changes to the garden. Established gardens can benefit from a few tweaks rather than a complete overhaul. If you do choose to make changes, aim to have everything completed within a few weeks, the idea is to enjoy the garden not have a building site. One change to consider is to prune or to lift the canopy of garden trees to allow more light to the borders below.

It isn't too late to cut back wisteria, aim to leave 2 or 3 buds on each stem. Roses can be cut back while still dormant. Cut to just above an outward facing bud and remove any crossing or dead branches.

Last summer was a bit too hot and dry for honeysuckle, as it enjoys a good hard cut back, now is the time to reinvigorate your honeysuckle, to finish off mulch with a good dollop of manure.

Remove old leaves (the lower leaves) from hellebores to show off the low growing flowers.

Keep an eye on pots of bulbs especially if they are being sheltered from the elements. Pots may need watering.

Lawns

If your lawn isn't too waterlogged, keep raking up the leaves. Otherwise fork the surface to allow drainage. This may be all you need to improve your lawn as compaction from use is one of the most common lawn problems.

Ponds

Aim to keep any area of pond surface free from ice. This can be done using an old tennis ball or a piece of wood. Don't break the ice as this upsets the fish, if necessary, use a pan of hot water sat on the ice until melted.

Don't forget the wildlife, now the fish are happy, keep going with fresh food and water for the birds. Now is a good time to wash out the bird feeders to ensure they are mould free.

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

And as always, keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman