

Gardening tips for October

The autumn chill sets in!

October is the time for clearing up – greenhouses, ponds, gutters and water butts may all need cleaning out. Wooden garden furniture will need covering or storing for the winter and terracotta pots will need bringing inside, so that they don't freeze and crack. If you don't already have a compost heap or bin, October is a great time to start one with all the leaves and cuttings to be disposed of!

The Veg Patch

Divide rhubarb to create new plants, this can be done every 5 years and can rejuvenate weak plants and creates new ones. If you haven't done this before you may be surprised at the size of a rhubarb root (actually a rhizome). Use a spade to cut the root so that each separate piece of root has at least one growing point. Plant so the growing point is just below the surface.

October is an ideal time for moving and planting trees, shrubs and climbers, as well as for planting hedges. Now is your last change to give a deciduous hedge a light trim to get them looking tidy for the winter, the same goes for climbing roses.

Divide herbaceous perennials, which flower in the spring, to ensure healthy, vigorous plants that will continue to perform year after year. It's best to do this on a dry day when the soil is not too wet. Plant some of the newly divided plants back in the ground and take others to pot up and give away to friends or keep until next spring then donate to the gardening association for their spring plant sale and coffee morning!

Plant onion sets (small onions grown for autumn planting) and garlic so they can get established before the winter, one job less for the spring when the soil is too wet to walk on without creating a mess.

The Flower Garden

Now the great autumn tidy up begins. Who had the great idea of planting deciduous trees? Now is the time to pick up all the fallen leaves before they make soggy clumps on the lawn. Talking of which, keep cutting the lawn while it is still growing, this very much depends on the weather, the last cut before winter can be in November, whenever it is if dry enough the mower is a useful tool in picking up all those leaves lying on the grass.

There is still time to plant spring bulbs, plant them at a depth equal to twice the height of the bulb. Plant out spring bedding biennials, such as wallflowers. If pots and hanging baskets are looking past their best re-plant with bedding, bulbs, grasses, cyclamen and violas for a colourful display now and into the spring.

Cut back perennials as they die down. Divide the herbaceous ones. Move tender plants under cover.

The Water Garden

Continue placing nets over small ponds and removing dead leaves. Leave anything removed from the pond in a heap next to the pond for 2 days to allow any wildlife to return home.

Lawns

There is still time to scarify the lawn and for it to recover before the winter sets in. If applying a lawn feed, ensure you use an autumn feed which is low in nitrogen; you don't want the lawn looking like a forest and having to get the mower out of the shed in the middle of winter.

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

Keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman