

Gardening tips for January

Happy New (gardening) Year from EGRGA

Only on the mildest days are gardeners likely to venture into the garden, instead, time to look at those seed catalogues and plan for the year ahead.

The veg patch

Hopefully the ground isn't waterlogged or too compacted. If it is you can try draining the soil by forking and lifting, also adding compost or manure. There are seeds that you can sow now but indoors. These include broad beans, cauliflower, leeks, onions, peas, radish and spinach. Give garlic a try if soil isn't frozen, otherwise wait until next month. To give onions and leeks the longest possible growing season, plant in modules, keep indoors at a minimum of 10°C, plant out in March or April.

If you have an outdoor grape vine, this is the time to prune while the plant is dormant. Cut last year's growth back to a bud.

The flower garden

If you have alpine plants, check that they don't become smothered by fallen leaves. This applies to any other plants, remove remaining dead leaves from the rest of the garden. If you have the space, leaves can be composted on their own to make leaf mould, don't mix with other garden waste.

If conditions allow, keep weeding borders and surface dress with compost.

Plant new, bare-rooted trees and bushes while they are dormant. Prepare the ground in advance by clearing weeds and digging in plenty of manure. If conditions are too cold, put the plants in a shed and wait until next month.

Prune apples and pears, aim to remove about 20% of the tree and to a good shape, prune too hard and watershoots can develop. These won't support the weight of fruit so if you get these later in the year, either remove completely or cut back by a third to encourage branching.

Plant summer bedding such as Begonia, Lobelia, Salvia and Pelargonium in a heated greenhouse or propagator to provide early plants.

Sweet peas can be sown this month. If sown in the autumn they can be potted on taking care not to disturb the roots. Place them on a sunny windowsill, or on a high shelf in the greenhouse that gets plenty of light.

Remove old leaves from hellebores to show off the low growing flowers in full view.

Lawns

Having spent the last 2 or 3 months keeping the lawn clear of leaves you may find earthworm casts sticking up all over the surface. This isn't a problem, just unsightly to some, the answer is to rake them to break them up and disperse over the lawn. A job best done when the casts are dry.

Ponds

Check the level of water in your fishpond particularly if there have been severe frosts as these can damage the pond lining. Always try to keep an area of surface free from ice. Goldfish don't eat much when the water is cold, but you never know, they may just fancy a nibble but don't overdo it or food waste will encourage the dreaded blanket weed when the weather started getting warmer.

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