

Gardening tips for December

December is not necessarily a lean month in the garden. If you didn't get around to pruning or planting in November, there is still plenty of time this month to get on with it or just use the weather as an excuse for staying in.

The Veg. Patch

If you planted kale earlier in the year you should now be finding it to be almost indestructible and therefore should still be producing plenty of leaves. Winter brassicas should also be at their peak and root vegetable should still be in good supply.

Also, if not done in November and providing the ground is not frozen or waterlogged give the veg plot a good digging over and incorporate rotted manure or compost therefore the bed is ready for next year's planting.

Don't let your pumpkins rot! Do you know that about half of all pumpkins/squash grown go to waste? Pick when mature (when they look the same as the picture on the packet of seeds), cure the skins in the house for 2 weeks and then somewhere cooler such as the garage/shed, somewhere airy and dry but not on a concrete floor and they should last for months. You could just make soup and put in the freezer.

The Flower Garden

I know we spend time in the veg garden trying to get rid of pests, it is also beneficial to try and encourage certain species for a bit of biodiversity. So, if encouraging wildlife is your thing try planting the following some of which will give a colourful late summer/autumn display – Pyracantha, Ribes odoratum, Buddleia, Cornus, Ilex, Sambucus, Viburnum opulus, Sorbus, Berberis, Cotoneaster.

Weeding still need to be done but the colder weather slows the growth so now is a good time to catch up and tidy those beds.

Other Jobs

The lawn will continue to grow if the temperature is above 5C, so providing the conditions are suitable (no frost forecast, lawn not waterlogged) it is not impossible to get the mower out now and again to give a light trim but don't cut to short, leave about 4cm for a utility lawn. If you do get waterlogged patches on the lawn, spike the area with a garden fork to provide drainage holes.

If you have an outside tap, protect from frost by wrapping with bubble wrap or an old towel or you could buy a purpose made cover. Ceramic pots are especially vulnerable to frost therefore you may consider wrapping them or moving under cover.

Tidy plants in the greenhouse or conservatory. Remove fading flowers and old leaves to discourage mould, ventilate when conditions are favourable.

December is a good time to plan any changes to the garden, re-designing beds, putting in paths or replacing fences.

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

May I take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and let us all hope for a Happy New Year.

And remember, keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman