

Gardening tips for December

December is as good as any other month for getting out into the garden. Weather isn't really a problem, just dress accordingly. Day light is the only thing in short supply meaning that if you are gardening you just need to get on with it otherwise it will be too dark!

The Kitchen Garden

If you have earthed up your brassicas to give them support it may be worth tying them to a cane especially if the plants are heavy, this should stop them getting blown over. Remove yellowing leaves to help reduce fungal infection (on the brassicas, anything else try the GP) and when picking Brussels sprouts, start on the lower stem and work your way up, and if you have picked the last sprout don't despair, pick the top of the plant.

Dig over the beds so that the winter weather can work for you, helping to break down the soil, while you're at it, consider incorporating large quantities of compost/manure.

Time to prune apple and pear trees. Aim for an open structure without crossing branches. Selectively remove or shorten branches to thin out the tree to a good shape. Avoid the hair cut look, this will lead to multiple flimsy stems called water shoots and you will end up repeatedly cutting these off every year.

The Flower Garden

Container plants are particularly susceptible to winter weather. Pots can easily dry out in winter. If they have been frozen, they will freeze dry, so try to find a spot in the garden where they will see out the winter with little discomfort.

Slugs and snails will shelter in leaf debris so keep the borders clear.

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.

The Water Garden

Has that Heron cleared off yet? Keep an eye on the defences. At this time of year fish won't be very active, spending most of their time at the bottom of the pond. If the weather has turned unseasonable cold and ice has formed on the pond (remember winter of old with frost and ice and snow and everything appearing to be black and white) try a saucepan of hot water to melt the ice, this saves breaking the ice and upsetting the fish.

Other Jobs

If you do get waterlogged patches on the lawn, spike the area with a garden fork to provide drainage holes.

Don't net holly to stop the birds pinching the berries. A few sprigs of holly with berries may look Christmassy in the house but the birds have a much better use for them. 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.

December is a good planning month. If you are considering crop rotation, record what you planted and where and move things around for the new year.

And finally, one of the most important jobs for December is to sit down in the warm with your favourite tippie and congratulate yourself on another successful year in the garden, whether successful or otherwise there is planning to do for next year, so aim for a good one.

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

Merry Christmas and keep gardening.

Richard Haigh EGRGA Chairman