

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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A p r i l



HARVEST TIME

Many crops are ready to harvest now, and it can be a busy time in the kitchen making jams, relishes and freezing the excess. Tomatoes crops are coming to an end and you are often left with green tomatoes, these can be picked and ripened inside in the warm. Blanch, skin, then freeze whole your excess tomatoes, and then they are ready at any time to make salsa, relish, soups etc. Pumpkins and squash can also be ripened inside by cutting the vine with semi ripe fruit on and placing it in a jar of water with a little sugar where it will continue to ripen. Once ripe, store in an airy, dry, shady place out of reach of rats and mice. Apples, pears and passionfruit are ready now, also walnuts. There are many walnut trees in parks and on roadsides that you can gather enough nuts to last you the year.



BERRIES are a feature of many autumn gardens, and while they are highly ornamental and colourful, many of them are also an important source of food for birds in the winter months. Pyracanthas, skimmias and viburnums, keep their berries for a long time. Pyracanthas are easy to train against a wall, do not mind poor soil and will produce a mass of autumn colour with red, yellow or orange berries. Cotoneaster horizontalis is similarly hardy, growing in full sun or light shade and is indifferent to poor soil. It can be trained on a wall, down a bank or used as ground cover and erosion control.



SHRUB OF THE MONTH .

A shiny, purple-black leaved cabbage tree that is multi-headed and clump-forming, that grows to only about a metre. It has fragrant flowers in spring and summer. Its architectural foliage and dramatic colouring, make it the perfect choice for the modern garden and for in containers on the deck.

Birds will eat the berries of both these plants, but not usually until late winter. Craetagus (hawthorn) and Prunus (crabapple), Golden Hornet, Jack Humm and Gorgeous, give a beautiful display of blossom in spring and then have both ornamental and edible fruit. The hawthorns berries are called haws, and again can be found in abundance on roadsides. Some roses will grow ornamental hips that make lovely syrup (children love it and its good for them) and they're also good food for your cockatoo.

PEST and DISEASE control in the garden during April should concentrate on the destruction of any diseased fruit and leaves that have fallen. Brown rot on apples and pears etc, can be reduced by following the rules of good garden hygiene. This is particularly so with roses. Destroy all leaves with black spot and rust, because otherwise these will winter over and be a source of infection next summer. Also many pests can winter over in fallen vegetation to return refreshed and eager in the spring. Codling moth is beginning the next stage of their life cycle by dropping to the soil where they will pupate to return the following spring. Aphid and white butterfly caterpillars can cause a lot of damage to ornamentals and brassicas so need to be sprayed with a general insecticide; coated with derris dust, or squashed by hand.



An application of a copper spray to all fruit trees and roes at leaf fall is good gardening practice. If your citrus has black sooty mould, then spray with **Conqueror Oil**.