

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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Newsletter for December

Summer's here at last and with it comes the need to water, mulch and nurture your garden. Then you can sit back and enjoy your creation. Flower gardens should be looking good right now and starting to put on a good show for Christmas.

Decorate indoors with a Christmas red **Poinsettia**, only available at this time of year. Put a wreath round the bottom of it and make it into a table centre piece. Buy a living Christmas tree, from Portstone, as it grows so it just gets better and better each year. We have different varieties and sizes for you to choose from. They can be placed in a festive pot and decorated with baubles from our gift range.

Most **roses** will be finishing their first flush of flowers, so dead-heading now keeps the bushes clean, open and healthy, ready for the next flush of growth to come through. A liquid feed now will assist the new growth to be strong and healthy. Keep them well watered over the dry summer. We still have many roses at Portstone for you to choose from, maybe for a Christmas present. They are all looking very strong and healthy as we spray them each week with Ocean Organics and Bio Feed. Check your roses for signs of pests or disease and control with Tui Organic Eco Pest or Eco Fungicide. These can be used safely on both ornamentals and edibles, has no withholding period, is safe for bees, and insects won't become immune to it.

Dahlias are in store now with many different ones to choose from. When planting them, prepare the soil well with plenty of rotted manure or a good slow release fertilizer, as dahlias need lots of food to sustain all that lush growth they produce each year. Protect the plants from attack from slugs and snails.

Lavenders are a versatile plant. They don't require much water over the dry summer, are wonderfully fragrant, are edible, make a stunning display when mass planted, and can be used as a hedge ranging in height from .3m to 1.2m depending on the variety that you choose. They are not susceptible to pests or disease making them easy care plants. They just need a cut back after flowering.

The **vegetable garden** should be well planted by now but it isn't too late if you still have some gaps to fill. If any plants, particularly **tomatoes**, pumpkins, courgettes and cucumbers, have succumbed to any pests or diseases and are looking decidedly dodgy, then it is better to discard the plant and start with a new one, something that can't be done later in the season. Liquid feeding regularly will improve the flavour of your crops. Tomato food can be used for most of the vegetable garden and is fine for the flower garden too.

Irrigation will be the hot topic shortly, with hot weather coming and holidays looming. It's a good idea to install an irrigation system well before you go away so that you can test it thoroughly first and avoid the disappointment of dead or dry plants when you return home. Mulch the vegetable garden well to conserve moisture and in the flower garden, plant ground covers or plant lots of plants closely so that there is no bare soil showing. This will reduce weeds as well as evaporation.

Chris and the team at Portstone
wish you all an enjoyable and safe
Christmas

