

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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J u n e

Winter has arrived and you can see clearly what structure your garden has. Now that the perennials are cut back, summer annuals are long gone, roses are bare and the leaves are off the trees, you are left with the 'bones' of the garden. You may see that you could do with a little more evergreen framework or height. Conifers are the answer, particularly in narrow areas, because there are some lovely tall but narrow varieties available. Cupressus sempervirens (pencil cypress) is the thinnest conifer for its height and is used a lot to create a Mediterranean style. 'Totem' is the best green one and 'Gold Rocket' or 'Swanes Golden' are two lovely yellowy ones. 'Silver Queen', a conifer of silvery greenish-white foliage, is at its brightest while making new growth in the early summer; but at any time of year, it provides excellent highlight colour among darker evergreens. Thuja 'Smaragd' is the most popular, with a curly, textural form and a vibrant green colour.

Cryptomeria 'Elegans' has soft, non-prickly needle type foliage with a single well defined trunk. But its best feature is the winter colour, a rich purple-brown that lasts well into spring, providing the winter garden with unusual standout colour. Japanese Umbrella Pine gets its name from the way in which the 'leaves', in whorls of ten to 30, radiate outwards from the stem like the ribs of an umbrella. Slow-growing when young, it can be treated as a dwarf for ten years or more, but will eventually get going (unless its grown in a container) and make a fine pyramidal tree. For anyone wanting to add that 'Ice Blue' colour to the garden, you can't go past the blue spruce, Picea pungens 'Thomsen'. It's superb whitish silvery-blue foliage is more intense than that of any existing glaucous cultivar. Its long, substantial leaves are twice as thick as those of many other forms, and its erect, stately growth habit typical of the best of this group. Conifers can be given a light prune each year to keep them to the size and shape you want, but often this is not required, making them a truly low maintenance plant. Many of them are great for growing in pots, particularly in pairs either side of an entrance. Their easiness and elegance are under used.

June is rose month when they are available instore. We have five new varieties this year.

They are-

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS Floribunda. An exceptional rose of butter gold, appealing old fashioned form, a strong fragrance and wonderful health.

JANICE WALLIS Floribunda. Bright pink large blooms, semi-double cupped form, with glossy foliage that is healthy and strong. Named as a tribute to Sir Tim Wallis's mother.

SUNDANCER Climber. Luminous orange flowers on a healthy climber of moderate vigour. Hybrid Tea shape flowers, loosely double. A brilliant rose.

SUMMER SONG David Austin. Beautiful fully double and cupped blooms of burnt coppery-orange. Scented. Tall arching branches with healthy foliage.

TEA CLIPPER David Austin. Fully double, richly scented, informal rosettes of apricot fading to a creamy golden-parchment. Healthy, almost thornless growth.

Prune roses from mid June through to the end of July. Once pruned, spray them immediately with spraying oil to seal the cuts. This will also kill white scale that often appears on the stems. Then, a few hours or days later, spray with copper. This will help prevent fungal problems in the next growing season. Never prune in wet or damp weather, because disease will enter the fresh cuts more readily. Plant your new roses into good soil with compost and slow-release fertilizer added.

If you have room in your garden for just one more plant, Daphne is a must. Only one metre by one metre, it's suitable for any size garden, or fine in a pot, but of course its real attribute is the wonderful fragrant flowers in late winter. Now is the time to buy them.

Don't forget to plant garlic and shallots on (or around) the shortest day.

House plants will need less watering as temperatures drop and growth slows. Be really kind to them and take the chill off the water before applying.