

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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J u n e

June is the first month of winter but already the days are getting short. We can't grumble though because the weather is still good and we have had a summer and autumn with lots of sunny, warm days. Winter is the season with the least wind. Sure, we have strong southerlies and stormy weather, but fine days are wind free unlike spring and summer that are windy everyday. So I like winter with its calm days, and it reminds me of childhood, chopping wood for the weekend fire and throwing in foil wrapped potatoes.

Roses are one of the most loved flowers in the world, not only as a cut flower, but also as a plant for the garden. Their beauty is unsurpassed and their fragrance is enchanting. Roses can be used in so many ways; mass planted to create a block of colour or mixed colours, used for hedging, or dotted through mixed planting to give a splash of colour. June is the month when the rose growers lift them from the ground and send them to the garden centres, so now is the time to compile your wish list. The trick is to select the right rose for your situation. Hybrid Teas are bush roses that have one flower to one long stem making them ideal for picking. They are beautifully shaped blooms that speak the language of love. The fragrance is unique to each variety. Floribundas are bush roses that produce large clusters of semi-double or single flowers, continuously through the season. When mass planting for a block of colour, floribundas are ideal with their multi headed stems. Old roses are a large and varied group that vary in growth habit from small bushes to ramblers. Some flower only once in the season, but many have a wonderful fragrance. Their old fashioned appearance makes them ideal for the cottage garden and informal plantings. Modern climbers are mostly the climbing form of modern Hybrid Tea or Floribundas with repeat flowering. Ramblers on the other hand, flower just once each season and produce large clusters of small flowers. They put on a most spectacular display especially when trained over the old garden shed or through a boring looking tree. Your roses have already been pruned when you purchase them, so all you need to do is make sure your soil is well dug, is free draining, and then add some manure or fertilizer.

Garlic, traditionally planted on the shortest day (22 June) and harvested on the longest day (22 Dec) but in fact you can plant it any time from mid May till the end of July. Pull off the individual cloves, (don't peel them) and plant 10-15cm apart and 5cm deep. Only plant the fattest outer cloves; eat the skinny inner ones. Plant garlic bulbs in free-draining, moist but never waterlogged soil with their pointy ends facing up. It will need full sun, regular watering and good air circulation right through summer or you'll end up with scrawny bulbs. Don't be tempted to plant supermarket garlic as this is generally imported and treated with chemicals to prevent it sprouting.

Elephant Garlic, despite its name is actually a type of leek. It has a sweeter, milder flavour than ordinary garlic, and the cloves are many times bigger. To grow them, treat them the same as garlic but plant a little deeper.

Shallots are subtle, sweet and offer a delicate onion flavour good for sauces. They can be grown from seed or grown from cloves as you would garlic, but plant with their tops just level with the soil. The leaves can be eaten raw like chives.

Onions and leeks are members of the same family as garlic that is Allium. They also can be planted now, but better planted as seedlings rather than starting from seed. All the allium herbs are packed full of health benefits as well as unsurpassed culinary flavour.

Fragrance in the flower garden! It's hard to beat the ever popular Daphne with either pink or pure white flowers. Personally, I favour the white as it contrasts well with the dark green leaves and the white flowers show up more in the shade. Himalayan Daphne has the same wonderful fragrance but flowers earlier (May, June), so if you have both then you have an extended flowering period. The Himalayan Daphne is really suitable for those awkward places where you need something tall and thin. It grows to approx 1.8 x 1m. Viburnum 'Dawn' is a semi-deciduous shrub with clusters of small pinky white flowers, dark red stems, attractive dark green ruffled leaves tinged with red and is flowering now.

Happy gardening! Rose and Fruit Tree catalogues are available at the counter.