

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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M a r c h

March heralds the beginning of **autumn**, which is the optimum time for planting. The main spurt of root growth is in the autumn so new plants establish well at this time of year. Now is the best time to plant vegetables for winter harvest; or to plant out a new shrub area; or to sow new lawn. It's also **BULB time**. Bulbs have everything - colour, form, scent, variety and are easy to grow. For maximum effect in garden beds or pots, plant in groups of five or more, then overplant with annuals in complementary colours. Pansies and violas are ideal as they flower right through to the end of spring. Plant a small bowl with **crocus** for something special on the outdoor coffee table.

For the kids, place a **hyacinth** bulb in a glass vase with water and a piece of charcoal and watch it grow. It's fascinating, as it grows so quickly. Plant **daffodil** bulbs around your hostas because the bulbs flower first, then when they are fading, the hostas pop up and hide the dying daffodil foliage. Try Daffodil Accent - peach cup with white petals, or Golden Perfection - heavily scented, good for picking, multi-headed.

Tulips flower a little later and offer a wider range of colours with Queen of Night being the darkest, a beautiful mahogany black. Apeldoorn is an old favourite, large flowers of the best **red**, or Spring **Green**, a large creamy flower with green markings.

Gladioli nanus can also be planted now. It's a small growing variety, about 60cm high, available in many colours, flowers in spring and is good for picking. If you are planning on planting lots of bulbs, buy a 'bulb planting tool'. It makes the job so much easier.

LAWNS need attention in autumn. It's the right time now to apply Lawnguard Prills to kill grass grub. This grub eats the roots thus killing the grass so if you suspect you have grass grub, act now before the damage is done. Now the summer heat has passed, its time to fertilize; try Scotts Lawn Builder, easy to use, slow release fertilizer, or Dynamic Lifter Lawn Food, a very effective, organic option. Dead grass builds up in your lawn creating a layer of 'thatch' that makes it difficult for new grass to grow through. This thatch needs to be removed every year or two with a scarifier. You can hire our motorized scarifier for a quick and easy job.

LEEKs are a long maturing vegetable, but you can cut down the time by buying good strong seedlings rather than sowing seed. Leeks will withstand hard frosts but don't like dry conditions. When planting seedlings, bury so only the top 50mm is above soil for longer whiter stems.

Mound soil up as leeks grow (again, to get white stems). I've never seen a pest or disease on leeks in my garden. Leeks will be ready to harvest in about five months, an excellent vegetable for the "hungry gap" of late winter, early spring.

PUMPKINS will be ready to harvest soon. Make sure the skins are hard and the pumpkin sounds hollow when tapped. Cut a good sized stem with the pumpkin.

SHRUB OF THE MONTH **Hydrangeas**. Pick the flowers now, make a beautiful arrangement with them in a vase of water and leave. Once the water has all gone, the flowers dry out and you are left with a dry flower arrangement for rest of winter!