

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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AUTUMN colour is in full blaze now. Deciduous trees are wonderful to keep us city folk in touch with nature. As they change throughout the year, so they remind us with their beauty, of the changes of each season and the joy of life. Unlike evergreen trees that drop their leaves all year round, deciduous drop theirs neatly all in one go, making them much easier to deal with just once a year. When choosing a tree, consider a fruit tree as it provides all the beauty of an ornamental, but with the added bonus of producing fruit for you. Some varieties are grafted onto dwarf rootstock making them ideal for the small garden or town courtyard. Planting a tree into a container will also keep the tree small. Half wine barrels are ideal and look really great, but you don't have to choose a container that big. Fruit trees that were subject to disease through the summer should be sprayed with a copper spray immediately after leaf fall. Prune off damaged, dead, diseased or crossing branches and seal all cuts with Bacseal to prevent infections entering the tree. Avoid pruning in damp weather. Remove all diseased fallen leaves and fruit to prevent disease spores wintering over around your tree.

STRAWBERRY plants are in store this month so now is the time to prepare your strawberry bed. Buy a bag of Portstone's own composted deer manure and lightly hoe it into the top layer of soil. Once you have planted your strawberries, then put a layer of peastraw round the plants to keep the ripening fruit off the damp soil which would make them go mouldy. The peastraw also suppresses the weeds, and puts nitrogen into the soil as it breaks down. Hanging baskets are ideal for strawberries, as they're easy to pick, they don't rot on the ground, the birds can't get them, and of course they look great. Plant some violas or pansies in the basket as well - for some added colour.

Strawberry plants will produce best if you treat them as an annual.

MYCORRIZIN watered into the soil or sprayed over the plants as a foliar feed, will greatly improve the yield, quality and flavour of your strawberries.

GARLIC bulbs can be planted anytime now. Plant in a sunny position in light well drained soil that has had plenty of compost added.

VEGETABLE SEEDLINGS of broad beans, lettuce, parsley, silverbeet and brassicas can still be planted. Some of these may not grow much over winter, but will be well established to take off quickly when the soil warms.

Feeding your rhubarb with plenty of chicken pellets and keep harvesting. It will probably die down by mid-winter, so tuck the bare crowns under a blanket of peastraw to keep them snug until spring. The toxic leaves can be thrown in the compost or you can boil them up in an old pot and strain to make your own insecticide.

ROSES will be instore by Queen's Birthday weekend, so now is the time to prepare the ground. Dig in compost and rotted manure which will feed the soil and encourage worms, so by the time your roses arrive, your plot will be nutritious and well draining. Ask at the counter for our rose catalogue and be sure to order early to avoid missing out on your favourite variety.

CYCLAMEN are a wonderful gift idea for **MOTHERS DAY**. They can be grown outside or used as an indoor plant, but they don't like too hot a room.

ORDER YOUR FRUIT TREES NOW AS SOME VARIETIES WILL SELL OUT QUICKLY. ASK AT THE COUNTER FOR OUR CATALOGUE.