

Portstone

GARDEN CENTRE

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May 2011

It is now more than 2 months since the big earthquake in February and I hope that you are managing to get back to some sense of normality. Gardening is for many people a relaxing and therapeutic pastime and with so many of us having gardens that are in some way "broken", it makes sense to spend some time outside now, before winter comes. Silt is a major problem for many, but unfortunately, there is nothing that it is good for. It is too fine to be used for gardening so all you can do is dump it! Many pots, statues, water features and shrubs were damaged in the quake so replace them by taking advantage of the many sales now on.

Come May we have usually had the odd frost or two so frost tender plants will need some protection. Frost cloth (Mikroclima is a good quality brand) is the obvious solution but Vapogard is another, perhaps easier choice. Spray it all over the plant and it acts like Scotchguard on fabric, it puts a protective covering over the leaf, reducing transpiration. Spray it on at the beginning of winter, it lasts for 3 months. For young plants, and frosts below -3°C, it is recommended to cover with frost cloth as well.

May is the time to prepare the soil for winter. Either plant a green manure crop or cover with peastraw because Mother Nature hates bare soil.

First though, cover the soil with manure, sheep pellets or Kinpack, then the mulch. This will put plenty of nutrient in the soil ready for the next planting, be it vegetables, fruit trees or roses. Talking of fruit trees, it is time to spray the stone and pip fruit. Apply a dose of copper immediately after leaf fall. Then during autumn/winter prune off (not on wet or very damp days) branches that are damaged, dead, diseased or crossing over each other or simply prune to your desired shape. Seal all cuts with Bacseal to prevent infection entering the tree. The new

season's fruit trees will arrive in July.

You can still plant spring bulbs this month. Daffodil and tulips are wonderful for heralding the start of spring. Plant them around hostas so that the new hosta growth will come up and cover the dying off bulb foliage, so you are not tempted to cut them off. Cyclamen make a great gift for Mothers Day. They can be kept inside to brighten the house for winter or put outside under trees to add colour to the winter garden. Mothers Day is also the time for Daphnes to arrive in store and they also make a wonderful gift for Mum. There are pink and white varieties but the fragrance is the same.

Flowers for the winter garden are polyanthus, primulas, pansies and violas. Keep these looking good by feeding them with dried blood every month. It's not too late to plant vegetables, but plant them with plenty of nutrients in the soil so they can get a good start before the soil temperature drops. Then cover the soil with peastraw.

Brassicas can be planted now along with broad beans, silver beet, onions and lettuces. Water the garden with "Vermisol" a concentrated liquid vermicast, made from fresh organic worm castings. It's cheap and easy to use but the benefits are great. It encourages high density flowering, fat succulent fruit, healthy pest resistant leaf growth, thick strong stems and vigorous root formation. With regular use, the soil will have much greater moisture retaining qualities.

Take the time to enjoy May, the last month of autumn, the trees are changing colour and the shrubs are covered in colourful berries.

IF YOU NEED ADVICE ON YOUR GARDEN -
ASK ABOUT OUR LANDSCAPE SERVICE.