

April Newsletter

Autumn is a time to prepare for the shorter days and longer nights and less growth in the garden.

There is still time to get vege seedlings into the ground and its also a good idea to feed your herbs with a liquid fertiliser to give them a boost.

Save any healthy vegetable matter for the compost, but get rid of any that are diseased. Gather pumpkins and marrows, and dry well in the sun, before storing away. Some say a frost or two enhances the taste of a pumpkin... a pumpkin will sound hollow when ready, you need to knock knock to find out!

Fertilise your asparagus bed with sheep pellets, seaweed and compost.

Break a few leaves over the heads of maturing cauliflower to protect from frost.

April Gardening Tasks

- Fertilise garden beds with sheep pellets, compost and mulch with peastraw
- Prune back any perennials and leaves of summer flowering bulbs that have finished flowering
- Lay Quash to protect young seedlings from slugs and snails
- Plant up autumn baskets, pots and window boxes
- Collect autumn leaves for composting. Use hydrated lime for speeding up the decomposing
- Lime can also be used to neutralise acidic soils.

Bulbs galore

Plant the treasures now – in pots, for gifts, in the garden, in drifts and under trees or in lawns.

The sight of the first leaves pushing through bravely out of wintered soils following by the cheer of flowers in spring will warm the cockles of your heart.

Most bulbs enjoy a sunny spot and all like well drained soil.

Simply plant bulbs to the depth of one bulb length, pointy end upwards.

Use bulb mix if you are planting bulbs in pots, making sure the bulbs don't touch each other.

Leave pots in a cold place in the garden until leaves appear.

Daffodils, freesias, hyacinths, blue bells, crocuses, ranunculas are all suitable for pots as are tulips, especially the miniature ones. Once flowering pots can be moved around the garden or patios to please.

If you are planting bulbs straight into the garden, plant them in bold groups or drifts especially in larger gardens, Daffodils can be planted in lawns – just don't mow for six weeks after flowering.

Feed garden planted bulbs with Sulphate of Potash or bulb food in July and October and again after flowering has finished so the bulbs can feed and store energy for the following spring.



Anemones



Ranunculus



Freesias

Lawns

Autumn is the ideal time for sowing a new lawn or to repair an existing one, the work done now will set up your lawn for the rest of the year. When sowing a new lawn good soil preparation is paramount. The area needs to be firm and level. Tap it down hard with your feet and the head of a rake, as high and low spots will result in the mower scuffing the high part and leaving the area vulnerable to weeds. Once it is firm and level, give it a light rake to loosen the surface for the small seeds to germinate. Thoroughly soak the area before sowing then sprinkle the seed evenly in two different directions as that you don't get lines of seed, or sprinkle a light cover of lawn mix over it if this is feasible. Choose the right seed for your requirements, eg hardwearing for kids and dogs; fine grass for a lovely show lawn, or something in between. Coated seed is better as it protects against insects, birds and diseases. It also germinates faster. If it is a small lawn you are sowing covering it with shade cloth protects the tiny grasses as they emerge, from the harsh effects of sun and wind, and retains the moisture in the soil for longer. But you will still need to water every day for at least a week and maybe up to a fortnight depending on the weather.

Mow for the first time when the grass is about 7cm high and only take off a little. An autumn sown lawn will put down good roots before the cold of winter then when spring arrives, it will be ready to take off.

Green Manure Crop

Time to think about planting green crops as these help prepare soil for next seasons crops.

Any preparation you do now helps put nutrients and improve structure of planting beds.

The main green crops are Mustard which helps prevent wire worm and adds organic matter, Blue Lupins add nitrogen and organic matter, Barley oats and wheat all add protein and improve soil structure beneficial to repeat a couple of weeks later.

Any of the seeds are best sown late summer to autumn and let them grow for about 7-8 weeks then dig them in well. Or try Morton Smith Dawes seed mix which have all the seeds in and they suggest 2 weeks after digging re-dig the area to turn it over well. If you don't intend to plant any winter veges you could cover beds with peastraw to help keep weeds down and help protect soil from frost and wind damage. Dig in when you are about to plant new crops.

Love your garden