

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR GARDEN *for autumn and winter*

Your garden may be winding down now, with the days and nights becoming cooler - but there are plenty of tasks to do in preparation for the coming seasons.

Autumn is the ideal time to plant trees, so they can become established before winter sets in. There is a huge choice of trees for your garden, so make sure the ones you choose are suitable for the size of your garden and, ideally, water-wise. Remember to never plant trees close to walls or paved paths.

All established plants will benefit from a thorough feeding now to help strengthen them after the long, hot season, and to cope with the rigors of winter. Container plants and hanging baskets will also need a boost.

Autumn is the ideal time to move any shrubs and small to medium sized trees to a new position. Always prepare the new planting hole with some good compost and a handful of bonemeal. When the shrub or tree is in its new position, make a small 'dam' around the base to ensure that water will soak down to the roots.

It is also a good idea to split and divide Agapanthus, Cannas and Day Lilies. Replant them around borders or in containers.

Tidy up evergreen bushes and hedges with a trim, but avoid cutting back any that bear flowers or berries in spring.

If an irrigation system is installed in the garden, adjust the timings for oncoming winter season watering and reduce manual watering as the weather cools.

As always, mulch is an invaluable factor in all gardens - and autumn is the perfect time for spreading it around flower beds, trees and shrubs, while the soil is still warm. A good mulch will help conserve water and keep weeds at bay.

Choose some spring-flowering bulbs to plant as the soil cools, so they can develop roots to establish themselves before the cold season. Bulbs can be planted in containers or flower beds. Always check the depth required for different varieties before planting. Plant bulbs in groups if possible for the most effective display. Top tip! Mark where you have planted the bulbs to avoid accidentally digging them up. Freesias, Sparaxis, Bubiana, Ixias, Tritonia, Ornithogalum and Lachenalia are all beautiful, colourful and indigenous bulbs. Daffodils and Narcissus are a must-have in any garden, along with the dramatic deep blue, yellow and purple colours of the Dutch Iris.



Lightly dig over bare soil in the flower borders, and add plenty of good compost mixed with bonemeal before sowing seeds or planting seedlings of Calendula, Cornflowers, Larkspurs, Linaria, Nasturtiums, Nemesias, Pansies and Asters.

Hellebores are lovely, reliable plants to add to a shady border. Penstemon is an amazing drought-resistant plant with colourful flowers for an autumn garden, as well as Salvias, with their aromatic foliage and wildlife-attracting flowers.

In the vegetable plot, Kale, Cauliflower, Peas, Carrots, Broad beans, Broccoli, Parsnips, Onions and Swiss Chard can be sown in prepared beds, ready for some delicious, warming meals through the winter.

Plant herbs such as Coriander, Parsley, Thyme, Chives and Oregano - all of which are hardy winter plants.

Simply because autumn and winter are colder, drier seasons, it doesn't mean that your gardens have to be barren or devoid of colour. Use these tips to ensure that your green spaces flourish all year round.

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