

# Mood boosting in the garden this Autumn

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*Gardening has been proved to benefit our mental health and physical well-being, helping to turn any negative mood into a positive one. Whether you have a small or large garden, a patio, or a balcony you can create your own little piece of paradise! If you do not have access to any outdoor space, houseplants are a wonderful way to bring the outdoors inside. You can even grow some salad leaves, if you have room!*



As Summer moves toward Winter it is easy to feel cheerless, but Autumn is a busy time for gardeners and to ensure a glorious Spring and Summer garden there are tasks to be done.

A garden with gorgeous, scented indigenous plants, shrubs, climbers, and trees is beautiful, relaxing, and therapeutic. Each different variety will release its fragrance at different times, either in the morning, during the day or at dusk so you can enjoy the scents whatever time you are in the garden. Ideally, mixing and matching an array of plants will result in a perfumed paradise! Trees and shrubs can be planted in Autumn as the soil temperature is still warm and they can quickly establish their roots by Spring. You can also plant new roses now, allowing them to "settle in" during Winter, to be ready in time for Spring. April is the best time to move and transplant any shrubs or trees. Remember to prepare the soil in the new position by adding compost and fertiliser, watering well after transplanting.

Dig over your vegetable beds and add a layer of compost with some fertiliser to provide essential nutrients to the soil, then you can sow some broccoli, beetroot, carrots, cabbage, parsnips and peas for healthy, home-grown meals.

Watch out for pesky slugs and snails who will still be happily munching on any tempting leaves.

For some Spring colour, plant salvias, osteopermums, scabiosa, delphiniums, virginian stocks and diasca seedlings. Indigenous Spring-flowering bulbs, like *Watsonia trilonia*, *ixias*, anemones, *spraxia*, and *ranunculi* can also be planted in April.

Keep on top of the weeding which can be a very satisfying and rewarding task!

Split any large clumps of *agapanthus*, *dietes*, and wild garlic, and divide perennial plants like *gaura* and *phlox*. Replant the outer growth in a new prepared position.

If you have trees that are shedding their leaves, gather up the leaves and put them on the compost heap, if you have one. Alternatively, put the leaves in a large plastic bag and leave to decompose. This could take up to a year, but you will be rewarded with some amazing, nutritious compost for your garden!

The sounds of nature can be very calming and therapeutic so grow plants rich in pollen and nectar that will attract wildlife, such as *calendula*, *foxgloves*, *borage*, *rosemary*, *lavender*, *bottlebrush*, and *buddleia* that will attract bees. Butterflies will enjoy visiting *verbenas*, *Cape honeysuckle*, *daisies*, and *gazanias*. Birds are attracted to grasses as they provide food and nutrition plus excellent nest-building material. Fruit-bearing trees like *aloe*, *acacia* or *searsia crenata* provide essential food and nectar for birds.

