

AUTUMN GROWING TIPS

AUTUMN TIP 1



Whilst AUTUMN is usually associated with harvesting, clearing + tidying and preparing the ground – it is also a good time to get ahead with sowing and planting. There are many varieties that can be put in the ground at this time of year, including garlic, broad beans, bare root fruit stock, rhubarb sets and some of the hardy winter salad crops. If you've got a greenhouse then even more varieties can be considered – and its certainly worth keeping herbs in the greenhouse so as to have them available for the kitchen well into Autumn and even Winter.

AUTUMN – SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER



By the time SEPTEMBER arrives most of the early crops will be coming to an end – worry not – because early Autumn is the time for all the lovely squashes, apples and pears, autumn raspberries, damsons and staple vegetables including main crop potatoes, leeks and some of the later greens. There's always plenty to do in the garden or down on the allotment!

As some of the earlier plants get past their best the autumn tidy up can begin, and alongside the clearing up and cutting back the compost heap can be added to with vigour – to become a great soil conditioner ready for next Spring.

September for many is also the month where the last of the summer vegetables and those that you have had enough of fresh, can be turned into chutneys. There are many exciting recipes for chutneys and its great to experiment ! Also, if made now your chutneys will be just matured by Christmas for consuming and for giving as presents.

The introduction of frosts followed by warm days marks a dramatic change for the garden and allotment in OCTOBER. Whilst the winter crops start to come into their own and the main focus is on tidying up, if your'e still lucky enough to be cropping tomatoes, peppers, aubergines, courgettes – then now is really the time to protect them with cloches or in the greenhouse.

As the trees turn and shed, the spent leaves can be crammed into bags or wire bins

where it will breakdown to form a crumbly leafmould. This is a great addition to the vegetable plot or herbaceous border as it will improve the soil structure immensely. Now is also the time to take down the pea, bean and tomato supports and clean them before storing away.

This month is also an opportunity to think about green manures. If you've grown a crop over the summer and it is not frost hardy – then now is the time to dig it in. Being green matter it will quickly rot and become incorporated into the soil. You can also start thinking about covering any beds with polythene, as this will keep down the weed growth and allow the soil to warm up for earlier sowing next Spring.

The mantra for NOVEMBER must surely be “we get from a garden only what we put into it” and that is why NOVEMBER is a good month, after all the clearing up has been done, to start on preparation for next year. Nothing warms you up on a chilly day more than a spot of digging. There are three types of digging – simple digging, single digging and double digging. There is something known as no-dig gardening, but that doesn't count as digging ! Simple digging involves just turning the soil over in situ, and is good to use around permanent plants. Single digging is good for soil that is regularly cultivated and involves digging a trench and removing the soil to the other end of the area to be dug. Manure or compost is added to the bottom of the trench and then dig out a second trench next to the first one and drop the soil removed into the fill the first trench. Carry on until you reach the last trench, where the soil from the first one is used to fill. Double digging is good for uncultivated or poorly drained land. This technique is very similar to single digging, except that it involves digging to a depth of two spades as opposed to one.

No-digging gardening does sound appealing as it doesn't involve as much physical work. However, don't be fooled in thinking that it is a do nothing option. Quite simply the soil is left unturned and organic matter/compost is spread over the top and left for the worms to take down into the soil. In order to help the soil structure it is important to avoid walking on the beds and to manage everything from paths along the side – not recommended for smaller plots as too much space has to be left 'avoided' for nature to take its course.

If you want to get ahead with pruning then November is also a good month to cut back fruit trees and bushes. If you miss out now, it will be March before this job can be done.

