

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN IN JUNE

The Ornamental Garden

It's a good time to be in the garden, for the weather in June is usually quite good with clear, frosty, sunny days.

Camellias are blooming and if you want to plant more, visit your garden centre and see the blooms, so much better than choosing from a label. Once established, camellias are very drought tolerant and are valued in the garden. New plants should not be allowed to dry out until they are actively growing in their new position.

Australian plants are putting on quite a show, and other plants such as the winter-flowering iris and the winter jasmine are also showing their worth. Many other plants are at their best in winter and some bulbs such as species cyclamen will be flowering.

Many plants are at their best in Canberra's colder months. To increase the interest of your garden in winter, look out for shrubs that flower in winter or have some other attractive feature, perhaps colourful bark or variegated foliage, plants such as cultivars of coprosma, euonymus, stachyurus, wintersweet, early flowering magnolias and cornus, to name a few.

Older hydrangeas may be pruned in the next two months for good results. Remove older grey wood completely and reduce stems which have already flowered. Hardwood cuttings can be taken now.

Plant deciduous trees, shrubs, roses, fruit trees and vines. Some staking or supports may be necessary.

Dahlia tubers may be lifted, divided, and placed in sawdust or a cheap potting mix. They can then be stored in a dark, dry area away from frosts.

Check your large established trees and your street tree for any signs of stress. Trees may be exhibiting signs of stress eg dead limbs, weeping sap and excessive leaf drop. Borers may also be evident and limbs can drop. If concerned, call an arborist for advice on your trees, while Canberra Connect is the first step if you are concerned about your street tree.

Houseplants should be moved away from sources of heat, and perhaps put nearer to a window for light, something you might not consider in summer. Avoid draughts, reduce watering and nutrients, and allow the soil to almost dry out between watering.

The Vegetable Garden

Do not allow vegetable crops to dry out. Keep weeds and pests under control.

Onion plants will be available for purchase, but best plantings are made in late winter.

Sow seeds of shallots.

Prune pome fruits, grapes (both fruiting and ornamental) and Kiwi fruit. Check for the right method from experienced growers or attend a pruning demonstration or seminar before you let loose with secateurs.

Harvest Kiwi fruit before birds attack, and store in a dark, draught-free position.

As citrus fruit begins to yellow, harvest from outside of tree, leaving stalks attached for longer storage life. Store indoors between sheets of newspaper. Fruit towards the centre of the tree can be left on the tree and allowed to mature for longer, protected by the outside leaves.

Do not prune off frost-damaged citrus foliage until spring, as it will protect the leaves within from further damage.

Plant new fruit trees and berries. Where space is limited, aim for dwarfing rootstocks which are now commonly available or try the espalier method of pruning, against a wall, fence or even as a border to a vegetable garden.

When choosing new fruit trees, check whether they are self-pollinating or will need another variety for best pollination. Another option is to buy a multi-graft tree.

Replenish stocks of manure and if you want to dig it in immediately, make sure the manure is well rotted. Continue winter digging, incorporating organic matter into the soil. Shredded prunings can be used as mulch or added to compost for quicker decomposition.

General Maintenance

Have a general clean-up of the whole garden while many plants are dormant.

It's a good time to remove dead wood from deciduous plants now that the leaves have fallen.

Time to spray fruit trees and roses with oil or copper spray.

Remove any broken or crossing branches from trees and shrubs and any which are obstructing pathways or general access by cutting flush with the trunk. Do not leave a 'clothes peg'.

Mulch will reduce frost damage.

Carry out any construction or alterations needed to improve your garden. Be sure to cover any cement work carried out late in the day to protect from frost.

Check lawns and shaded areas for unwanted moss, an indicator of poor drainage. Time to think about fixing the problem.

After pruning pome fruits, a winter spray of horticultural oil for all fruit trees is helpful, spraying right into cracks and crevices of the bark where pests love to hibernate or lay their eggs. Be sure to carefully follow directions for spraying. Wear gloves and protective clothing, and carry out any spraying on a still day to minimise drift.

Grapes and roses are particularly prone to herbicide damage, so take care. A paintbrush dipped in neat glyphosate may be applied to unwanted weeds or, alternatively, use a rubber glove within a cotton glove, and dip that into neat glyphosate and run your hand along the leaves of unwanted weeds. It's a useful method for eliminating couch grass where it has grown in and around your rose bushes.

Reduce watering but do not neglect areas under eaves or dense canopies. Remember those newly planted shrubs which should not be allowed to dry out, keeping them just moist. While growth has slowed considerably for most plants, cooler damp conditions can be the perfect breeding ground for some diseases. At this time of the year, watering is best carried out in the warmer part of the day.

Think about installing a rainwater tank.