

## WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN IN OCTOBER

*October usually brings warm days with plenty to do and to see in your garden. Enjoy the gifts of spring and plan for autumn.*

*Don't forget to visit the Iris, Rhododendron and Azalea Show at the Lancaster Hall, Wesley Centre, Manuka on 28-29 October 2017*

### GENERAL GARDEN TASKS

- Now is the time to deep water your lawn if restrictions allow. A hose-on soil wetter helps, for you will use less water and if you let your grass grow longer than usual, the soil will stay cooler with less evaporation.
- Maintain lawns and control weeds. Newly-laid turf will need to be well-established before it can tolerate heavy foot traffic.
- Increase watering as required and pay special attention to new plants as their root system becomes established in their new environment.
- Apply/top up mulch to shrubs and trees before the heat of summer.
- If using stakes for rose bushes or young trees, remember that timber is better than metal which will transfer excessive heat or cold to the plant. Whatever you choose, ties must be checked and adjusted regularly as plants grow, in order to avoid girdling.
- Wisteria should not be allowed to grow up into trees or onto roofs, where it can do damage. It may look lovely in flower, but it's best to train it early and save yourself some work in later years. Reducing rampant trailers each year will be work enough!

### IN THE KITCHEN GARDEN

- Main plantings of cabbage, carrot, leek and parsley can be made this month although frost-sensitive plants such as tomatoes, capsicum, eggplant and basil are best planted at the end of October or mid-November.
- Sow seeds of tomatoes, zucchini, silver beet, beans and cabbage.
- Make supports for peas and climbing beans.
- Plant herbs in a well-prepared spot.
- Citrus can still be planted. Existing trees should be watered and mulched and any necessary pruning done.
- All fruit trees benefit from additional moisture as their fruit develops. Drip irrigation helps.
- Compost tea or well-diluted fertiliser should be applied to strawberry plants, adding plenty of straw around the plants as berries mature.
- Vegetables use more water than lawns, but can be a productive alternative. Cover the lawn with layers of newspaper and pile compost or good garden mix at least 10cm deep.
- Even with a small space you can still enjoy growing a few vegetables and herbs, and many are 'cut and come again' rather than 'harvest and gone forever'. Vegetables thrive in deep polystyrene boxes but there are many other ways to grow veges in small spaces. Also, smaller non-spreading cultivars of most vegetables are available, and it is possible to grow strawberries, some varieties of tomatoes or a few other veges in hanging baskets.

## **IN THE ORNAMENTAL GARDEN**

- Prune flowering shrubs as they finish flowering. Thin out camellias and shorten drooping branches. Azaleas should be clipped back and all dead growth removed.
- Seeds of frost-tender annuals such as asters, zinnias, petunias, nasturtiums and bedding dahlias are best planted this month.
- Roses will respond to fertiliser and added water from mid-month. Check for fungal problems and mulch well.
- Remove last year's dead growth from bedding begonias and fuchsias now that frosts are less frequent. Divide bedding begonias for a good border display in summer and autumn.
- Nip out the tops of sweet peas when they reach the top of their support to encourage lateral growth and flowers.
- Plant dahlia tubers later in the month, putting in stakes before planting to avoid damaging tubers.
- Gladiolus corms can be planted at two-weekly intervals, remembering that they flower in about 90–100 days.
- Deadhead flowering annuals and spring bulbs. Spring bulbs should be given a fertiliser high in potash and well watered while foliage is green and healthy to improve next year's flowers. Do not cut the foliage from spring bulbs until leaves die down in early December.
- Sow seed of summer and autumn annuals ready for planting out by mid-December.
- Buy new rhododendrons and azaleas while in flower so that you can see their flower colour.

**HAPPY GARDENING!**