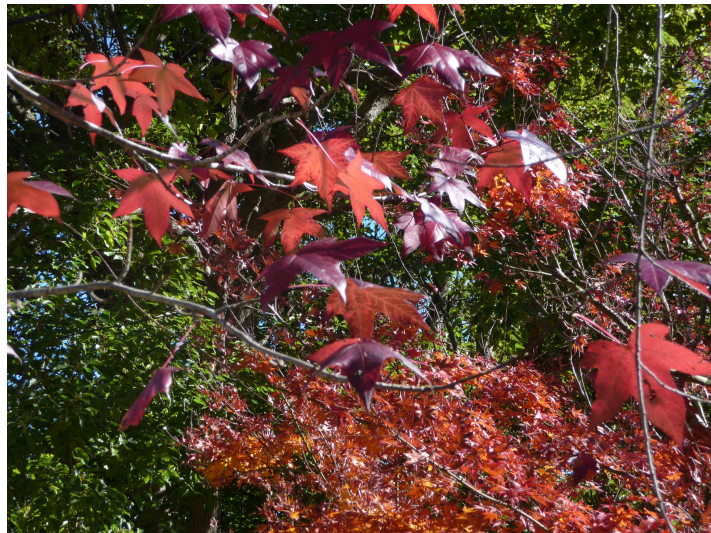




# **A Year in the Garden**

## **Cool Climate**



**Written freely by Curt Christensen for Garden Friends**

# To the gardener

*A Year in the Garden* is intended to be a helpful memory list of things to do in the garden throughout the year without telling you what to do, how to do it and when; it is merely suggestions, because it is entirely up to you how much time, money and effort you want to spend on this wonderful project.

If you spend a lot of time in the garden, and spend it right, it will give you and those close to you a lot of pleasure and satisfaction in life, and you will be able to reap the reward of going into your garden and picking flowers with an abundance of colour, shape and beauty, not forgetting harvesting the best, healthiest and most wonderful-looking and tasting vegetables and fruits that anyone could ever imagine. Furthermore, working in the garden is very healthy for your body, mind and heart.

The suggested methods and ways are reflections of my 60 years in gardening and my readings of numerous books and magazines, plus input from other gardeners. But do not think what you know is not right; it is up to you to be the judge of which way to go, because we must remember one thing: what goes for my garden may not be any good in yours as so many factors play a vital role in making this whole world go around, and that includes growing plants satisfactorily. So take it all with a grain of wheat, plant it and see what happens.

Most importantly, do not become a slave of your garden, but plan it to suit your time, health and mind, and if you do that you will receive an abundance of joy and pleasure and most likely live long. So ...

Happy gardening.

Curt Christensen

## ***Editor's Note***

*I'm not sure when this document was first written, or, in fact, who Curt Christensen was. In some ways it is a museum piece, giving a very clear picture of how gardening used to be. There are some references to superseded methods and some plants are listed that you may have trouble finding at your local 21<sup>st</sup> century nursery.*

*But having said that, on the whole it contains a lot of very useful advice, because plants and their requirements haven't changed that much over the years. The appendices about pH levels are particularly useful.*

*I hope you enjoy reading his rather idiosyncratic style, and that you learn as much as I did.*

*Caroline Stanton*

*March, 2014*



# JANUARY

This month in the garden is mainly a repeat of the work done last month and we must keep **watering the garden** as this can be a very hot month. To be sure you do the right thing use a **moisture meter**, as looking at the ground to determine its moisture content isn't the answer. You may be good, but not that good. The moisture meter will tell you if there is moisture at root level. There are **watering probes** on the market that will water trees and deep rooted plants right down there where the roots are looking for water. Make one or get one!

Maybe we should give **indoor plants** a mention here. I have often been faced with the question: 'How often should I water my indoor plants' and my answer is always the same: 'I don't know' After all, how long is a piece of string? Indoor plants are a varied mob and they nearly all have different requirements when it comes to water, but more plants are killed by overwatering than drought. Apart from **ferns** most plants should be kept fairly dry. Since ferns have a crook circulation system, they won't tolerate drying out at all, so keep them moist, but not soaking wet. It is a good habit to mulch pot plants and I use my finger to determine whether the pot needs watering or not. Dig your finger about 1 cm into the soil and if a little dark soil sticks to the end of your finger it is too early to water. In the winter water less unless your pot plants are in a heated room where they could easily dry out, so keep an eye on them.

When your **strawberry patch** has been picked completely clean of berries, it should be cleared for mulch and all weeds removed and the best of the runners, if ready and big enough, should be separated from their parent plant and carefully planted out into their new home, which is a bed somewhere else carefully prepared and manured long ago. If you want to keep the old bed going for another year, the ground should be loosened without disturbing the roots (don't dig!) and then some fertiliser added and raked in. Replace the mulch. Strawberry patches which have outlived their usefulness can be levelled and planted with another crop. If the old strawberry plants are disease free they can go to the compost bin, but if you are in doubt let them go to the tip. If you have diseased strawberry plants, do not take runners from them; get new plants from certified growers and plant them in a new area.

While you are doing all this don't forget the **compost bin**. It may need to be turned and a new one started. Keep pouring it on. If you want to sieve the content of the bin to remove sticks and other coarse material you can easily make it cheap sieve by nailing wire mesh to the bottom edges of a wooden box where you have removed the solid bottom.

If you see **water shoots** coming up from below ground on such plants as **roses, lilacs** and various **prunus sorts** and others, you should dig down and remove them at the source. Make sure to use a sharp clean knife.

**Cabbage, celery, leeks and rhubarb** can do with a little help so give them a side dressing of fertiliser or liquid chook poo – on the ground please, not the plants. If you haven't put **stakes with tomatoes** yet it should be done now and tied. Remove lateral shoots in leaf corners.

If you closely check the **potato plants** you may find some odd looking **lady birds**. Try to identify them as they could be 28 spotted lady birds and they are harmful critters and should be eradicated. (Between fingers works!). However not the ordinary lady bird, which is very useful in the garden and they love to eat **aphids** so protect them.

There should by now be **berries** to pick, such as **raspberries, black and red currants** and perhaps **gooseberries**. That's if you have covered them with netting to keep birds out. Do keep weeds under control and don't forget watering. How we will ever keep the birds off cherry trees I will never know.

Ups! It's time to cut the lawn again and when you do, don't cut it too low as it will just dry out, so leave about 40 cm of grass there, and it actually looks better. **Green lawn cuttings** should not be put in the compost bin fresh, as they will cake it up and make a stinking mess, and they should not be used for mulch either while green as it forms a matt which rain water has trouble penetrating. Spread it on the ground somewhere, like on walkways in the vegie garden, to completely dry out. You can now place a little in the compost bin now and then and a thin layer can be used for mulch, perhaps around seedlings.

The **flower garden** needs to be looked at about once a week and some **perennials** will need a little attention and tidying up. Some may need to be pruned back. Anywhere there is a vacant spot in the flower beds we can

plant a few **annual seedlings** to pretty things up a little. We should by now be able to remove the dead tops of **spring flowering bulbs** and thereby clean some beds up.

We should still have some success planting or sowing the following vegetables: beans, beetroot, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, lettuce, parsley, parsnip, radish, silver beet and sweetcorn. What have we got to lose? Those Brussels sprouts are going to be lovely in the winter. It is most likely not worth planting seed potatoes any more, as you only get smaller crops, but go ahead if you want to have new potatoes.

If you are really bothered by a few **clover patches in the lawn** you can kill them with fertiliser. In early morning spray the clover with water to which you have added a little detergent to make the water hang on to the clover leaves. Now get some **Sulphate of Ammonia** and spread it like salt onto the clover so it stays on the leaves and wait a few days, then have a look. Don't water it in! While we talk about Sulphate of Ammonia don't forget to spread some out over the beds you have mulched and water it in as the mulch removes a lot of Nitrogen from the soil and we must replace that or you will have yellow-looking plants.

If you like **propagating** this could be a good time to take cuttings from **azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons** and various **native plants**. Take medium size cuttings and strike them in boxes with a mixture of sand and shredded peat moss. Some will take a year to develop roots, but it is fun. You can dip the ends in a **hormone powder** to promote root development, but you can also dip the ends in a solution of **vegemite** and water or **honey** and water. It works!

The secret behind a beautiful garden is **planning well ahead**, so your flowers and vegies are sown at the right time of year. It is a demanding job, but rewarding.

#### **Flower seeds to sow this month:**

Calendula  
Gypsophila (Baby's breath)  
Tropaeolum (Nasturtium).

#### **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Can't think of any!

# FEBRUARY

If you are forcing your bulbs such as **tulips, crocus, hyacinth** etc. by placing them in the fridge crisper (not the freezer) make sure they do not share space with fruit, because fruit release ethylene gas during storage, which may prevent the flower embryo from developing fully, so you will get smaller or distorted flowers or worse still no flowers at all.

I have made the following observation regarding bulb forcing: If you place the bulbs in the fridge around this time and leave them there for the recommended period of about 2 - 2½ months and take them out for planting in April-May, they will think spring has come and will emerge too early and flower in the middle of winter. With a snowstorm raging they will almost be destroyed and 8° of frost is not too good either. If you don't believe this, why not try half your bulbs one way and the other half the other way next year. This month we should start to prepare the ground for later plantings of bulbs by adding compost and well rotted manure to the soil, and perhaps a handful of fertiliser. Do mark the spots so you know where to plant later.

Watch **liliums**, and if bulbs are to be lifted and replanted, this should be done as soon as the stems have withered. Do not delay, as they usually start new growth fairly soon.

Be careful if cutting flowers at dusk. Blossoms are a favourite napping spot of **sleepy bees**.

It is now again time to fertilise your beloved **citrus trees**, as they are hungry little blighters. I do prefer to use chook poo and plenty of it, but ordinary citrus fertiliser will do a good job and should pay back with lots of juicy fruit. Keep mulch, fertiliser and manure away from the stem of the tree, or you will get collar rot.

If **petunias** are cut back early this month after their first flowering and watered with a **liquid seaweed solution** fortnightly, they will produce another colourful display. Liquid seaweed can safely be given to many plants with good result such as **roses, fuchsias, dahlias and begonias**. Some of your **pot plants** may need to be repotted now, so they can re-establish before the onset of winter, and it should in most cases be into a larger pot. After a few weeks give a little fertiliser.

**Pelargoniums** can be cut back this month fairly hard to within two or three nodes of this year's growth. Do take cuttings of the prunings if you want pelargoniums next year. They should be established in pots to grow on, so they can be brought indoors in winter to protect them from frost. Do the same with **fuchsias**.

If the old canes of **raspberries and loganberries** have not been cut back yet now is the time to get the job done, unless they are still cropping.

If you are into growing **garlic and shallots**, they can now be lifted and stored in a dry, cool, airy spot. One layer will do just nicely, but you can also use onion bags and hang them up in a shed or other dry, cool and dark place!

**Rotation of crops** is important for successfully grown vegetables. At this busy planting and sowing time keep the following points in mind. Do not grow the same crop in the same bed year after year. Preferably follow an above-ground crop like lettuce or cabbage with a below-ground crop like carrot or parsnip. Do not follow with a member of the same family, such as following cabbage with broccoli or tomatoes with potatoes. Peas, beans and broad beans are all legumes and should not follow each other. This is important because members of the same family are usually subject to the same diseases which may be carried in the soil, and they also like the same food. Furthermore, as root crops do not thrive in newly manured beds, sow them in beds previously manured heavily for another crop. You may have to mark your beds or keep a record. A suggested rotation for any one bed could be: (a) a legume – peas, beans or broad beans; (b) a leaf crop - cabbage or lettuce; (c) a root crop - carrot, parsnip or beetroot; (d) a fruit crop - tomato, eggplant, cucumber, melon or squash. After that is back to the beginning again.

It should still be fairly safe to sow or plant the following crops: **Beetroot, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Carrot, Celery, Leek, Lettuce, Parsley, Parsnip, Radish, Silver Beet and Spinach**.

Planting out **leek seedlings** it is best done in a trench, and as the plants develop, soil is scraped into the trench around the plants progressively, as they grow so as to get longer portions of white stems. Be sure not to totally cover the plants at any time!

Hydrangeas can be thinned and shortened now and cuttings can be potted if you want more plants. Canes that have flowered can be shortened to a plumb bud or pair of buds. Thin canes can be cut right out to open the plant a little. Cuttings can also be taken of **azaleas and camellias** at this time, but you can also wait till March or April.

Don't forget to **stake chrysanthemums** and other tall plants if it wasn't done at planting time. Wind and rain will soon lay them down if they are without support.

As this is usually a warm month it is important not to forget to **water fruit trees and bushes** and just prior to watering apply some fertiliser to build up their reserves for next season's fruit crop, but that is also the last fertiliser for them this season. Also check for bugs and diseases. Gather fallen :fruit and place it in the compost bin if it is disease free.

Hungry vegies such as **celeriac, celery, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and leeks** can do with a good feed including some liquid chook poo.

If **petunias** are cut back after their first main flowering and watered with a liquid seaweed solution, they will produce another colourful display.

If your **strawberry bed** hasn't been prepared yet, it must be done now, as the manure we are adding must linger in the ground for about four weeks or more before planting.

Do go through the flower garden and remove all **spent flowers**, check the mulch and always bring a moisture meter when walking about, because looking and guessing won't do it.

**Currant and gooseberry bushes** can be thinned out at the end of this month by removing old and congested growth. If you want to use the cuttings for propagation it is better to leave this job till the end of April or early May.

#### **Flower Seeds to sow this month:**

Alcea rosea (Hollyhock)  
Anemone coronaria  
Aquilegia  
Campanula (Canterbury bells)  
Cheiranthus (Wallflower)  
Dianthus (Sweet William)

Digitalis (Foxglove)  
Gypsophila (Baby's breath)  
Myosotis sylvatica (Forget-me-not)  
Oenothera rosea (Evening primrose)

Papaver (Poppy)  
Primula (polyanthus and malacoides)  
Ranunculus  
Sturt's desert pea

#### **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Bluebell  
Bulbinella (Golden wand lily)  
Colchicum autumnale (Meadow saffron)  
Crocus (Autumn flowering)  
Cyclamen  
Daffodil

Hyacinth  
Ixia (Corn lily)  
Jonquil  
Leucojum (Snowflake)  
Muscari (Grape hyacinth)  
Nerine

Oxalis  
Scilla (Cuban lily)  
Stembergia (Lily of the field)  
Trillium grandiflorum (Wake robin)

# MARCH

The first month of autumn and many of us don't mind being rid of the worst heat, and autumn is not that bad if the weather behaves. In fact it can be very beautiful with many colours changing. Someone said that there is no bad weather, you just have to dress differently.

This is not the month for heavy sowing, but it may be worth your while to find a sheltered spot or a pot to put in a few **cauliflower seeds** for later transplanting, as I have found that they will over-winter quite well and it gives them a good start in spring for an early crop. During winter they grow very slowly but survive. Be on look-out for the **female bower bird** as she likes to nibble at your veges, so it is sometimes necessary to cover them. Snails are there to help you all the time so the hunt goes on.

Working the ground this month is more or less limited to keeping the surface loose and weeds at bay, and it is getting too late to apply fertiliser, except perhaps a little help for **celery and leeks**. There is most likely quite a lot of material to go to the **compost bin** and it may be a good idea to turn it now. Add a little fertiliser or, better still, some manure.

This is a good month to start thinking about **autumn planting** of such things as spring and summer flowering perennials, and it is still possible to plant quite a few bulbs. A lot of perennials in the garden can benefit from being divided, but it is also nice to have a few new ones.

If there is space under a weeping cherry or some other low tree, why not try to make a **woodland area** with lots of different spring flowering plants. They could include **daffodils, tulips, lily-of-the-valley** (without morning sun), **anemone nemorosa** (in white, blue and yellow), **bluebells, freesia, hyacinth, jonquils, primula, erantis, crocus, fritillaria meleagris** and whatever else takes your fancy, as long as they are not too tall. If you do it right it will no doubt look spectacular. Check the correct planting time for each species and mulch the ground with leaves to protect plants and make it look like a real woodland.

As **planting of bulbs** will go over several months do mark the spots where you have planted already or it will be a real mess.

Picking of **Brussels sprouts** can begin now if large enough, but they are at their best if they get a little frost, so the late plantings should benefit from that. **Leeks** are still growing, and they will also stand quite a lot of frost. It is still worth hilling some soil up around them to get more white stem, but try not to get soil down amongst the leaves, as it is pretty hard to get out, when you have to clean them in the kitchen. If leeks are in your way when fully grown, they are easy to move and will sit for month in a trench with soil covering the white part of the stem.

**Cuttings for propagation** can be taken from several native plants and from spring and summer-flowering trees and shrubs. These are stuck in a sand and peat moss mixture of about half of each. Varieties may include **pelargonium, azalea, hydrangea, buddleia, camellia, magnolia, forsythia, photinia, weigela, abelia, fuchsia, cotoneaster, carnation, rhododendron, pittosporum, correa, banksia, callistemon, prostanthera, grevillea, leptospermum, junipers and conifers**. We can also take cuttings of **currants and gooseberry**, but they should be ripened shoots of this years growth. Aerial and peg layering can still be done on your favourite shrubs.

**Repotting of indoor plants** should be done before the end of the month to allow the plants to get established before the dormant period.

**Tulips** can be planted this month, but it may be better to wait until April, because we don't want these little beauties to come up too early and get spoilt by bad weather in spring. Do watch out for them drying out or shooting too early. Discard any bulbs that are soft or mildewed.

If you are planning to establish a **new lawn**, that area should be worked on now and made ready for sowing by the end of this month while there is still a little warmth in the ground.

Early flowering **gladioli corms** will be ready to be lifted and hung in a dry cool place. Give **cymbidium orchids** a feeding with an all purpose slow release fertiliser and keep the potting mix moist, not wet. If you keep your orchids under a bush in the garden, they must be brought inside before frost comes. If they need repotting don't

do it now, wait until after flowering in spring. Do not repot orchids too often as they like to be crowded, and it is worth remembering, that they usually don't flower the year after repotting.

The **vegie patch** should still be productive and with a little bit of luck the following can still be planted and produce a crop: **radish, carrot, beetroot, lettuce, cabbage, silverbeet, kohlrabi, leek, onion, cauliflower and broccoli**. If you are into **green manure crops**, it is now time to sow some in spare unused vegie beds, so it can be dug into the soil to add humus and nitrogen.

To regrow last years **cyclamen corm**, try and clean it of all old roots and other growth and start it in new potting medium, keeping the crown above soil level. It may work if you don't drown them.

If those **strawberry runners** did not get planted last month, it should be done now as a matter of urgency. Remember to be very careful when planting strawberry runners, so that the crown of the plant is not too deep in or too high out of ground. If the roots are very long, it is better to trim them of a little, otherwise they could easily bunch when being planted. All old leaves may be pruned off as they do no good any longer. Always make sure to plant disease-free strawberry plants in a new position, where there has not been strawberries growing for 4-5 years, otherwise disease could be transferred to the new plants. If you suspect there is disease of any kind in your strawberry plants, do not deposit them in the compost bin, and it is better to be safe than sorry! Into the garbage they go.

When you have finished with the **sweetcorn** plants, it is best not to put them in the compost bin, unless they are shredded very fine. If you put them in whole they will annoy you for the next 2-3 years, because the fibres are tough like rope and rot very slowly.

#### **Flower seeds to sow this month:**

Aquilegia (Columbine)	Dorotheanthus (Livingstone daisy)	Lupin
Calceolaria (Ladies purses)	Helipterum (Everlasting daisy)	Myosotis (Forget-me-not)
Campanula (Canterbury bells)	Hollyhock	Oenothera (Evening primrose)
Clarkia (Godetia)	Limnanthes (Meadowfoam)	Primula (polyanthus)
Dianthus	Lunaria (Honesty)	Schizanthus (poor man's orchid)

#### **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Anemone	Cyclamen	Thysanotus (Fringed lily)
Anomatheca (Lapeirousia)	Freesia	Trillium (Wake robin)
Babiana stricta (Baboon flower)	Iris xiphium (Dutch iris)	Triteleia (Brodiaea)
Blanfordia grandiflora (Christmas bells)	Ranunculus	Tulip
Bulbinella (Golden wand lily)	Sparaxis tricolor (Harlequin flower)	



# APRIL

It is getting late in autumn and we can only sow a few things in the vegie garden such as **onions**, and they will grow very slowly during winter, but they will have a good start when spring arrives. If there is a spot under a tree not being used why not try and plant some **woodland anemone** (*Anemone nemerosa*). They form a beautiful groundcover in a cool moist climate and naturalise easily. They flower from early to mid spring. They have small rhizomes and should be planted about 4 cm deep with good drainage, and don't let them dry out. They come in white, blue and yellow.

If you want to really impress your friends and neighbours, why not try to make a **wisteria standard**, if you already have a wisteria in the garden or access to one. It is quite easy as wisteria strikes well, and all you need is a pot and time to wait. First select a runner laying somewhere on the ground and it should be about 2-3 m long. Have a 19" or 12" pot and enough good ordinary soil to fill it, and take it to the runner. Now carefully break the runner half way through about 1.8m from the end of the terminal shoot without separating the two 'ends' and insert the broken part into the pot and fill it with soil and compact. It may be safer to make a small cut into the 'wood' opposite to where you bend the runner, and that will also help rooting to start at that point. If you wish you can dip the cut in hormone powder to promote root formation. You may have to place a stone or half a brick on top to ensure that the cutting does not come out of the pot. Keep moist and more or less leave alone until spring, when the cutting should have rooted.

When you are sure roots have been formed, sever the cutting from the main plant and insert a stake into the pot. The stake should be the length you want the standard to be high. Now tie the cutting to the stake in several places to keep it straight, and if it is too long prune off the end above 3 or 4 buds. When the plant start shooting leaves, remove all but the top 3 or 4 and keep doing this as long as it wants to shoot leaves on the lower stem, and that won't take too long. Now let it grow on for a couple of years to develop a good strong stem. It can now be planted in its permanent spot. Dig a hole for it and hammer in a **star picket** of the right height to support the stem. It will have to stay there for 10 to 15 years before the plant has become big enough to support itself, but you won't notice it. As the plant grows you will have to prune it to give it the form you like, such as a nice round totally purple head in spring. If you want a fairly large 'head' on the standard it is best to have the star picket about 1.12 m above the top of the standard, so you can support the branches with wires strung from the top of the post. Do not feed or water a wisteria to excess as it won't flower. Regard it as a hobby and enjoy people's admiration.

I have tried with success to sow **cauliflower** in a pot at this time of year, say early April, and they will germinate and when planted out grow very slowly during winter, but it gives them a flying start in spring and can be harvested in October, when not many things are ready yet. If you never try something new, you will never discover anything. If it hasn't already been done by now then the **strawberry, rhubarb and asparagus beds** must be cleaned, but don't dig. Just chip the soil to loosen it and remove weeds, then supplement the mulch. This is also an ideal time to plant **deciduous trees and shrubs** and that includes spring and summer flowering perennials.

Over the next month or three there isn't a great deal to do, so why not get busy and make a **cold frame**. It will allow you to get your seedlings started early and they will be protected from frost. It is very simple and you may even be able to use an old window of a reasonable size and make the frame to suit. Later in the season when the frame is no longer required, the window can be removed and stored for re-use next season, and you can grow just about anything in the open frame to use the space.

Well, if you are so keen let's made two frames, but use one as a **hot frame**. The only difference really is that the hot frame has some nice warm fermenting manure underneath the roots and that will make the seedlings grow like rockets. It is not known if it is the heat that makes them go or are they just trying to escape the smell of the manure. The manure must be fresh horse manure and you can mix a little straw and/or dry leaves with it. This mixture will create heat and carbon dioxide, which is of benefit for the plants.

## **Flowers to sow this month:**

Aquilegia (Columbine)  
Clarkia (Godetia)

Dianthus  
Heliptenun (Everlasting daisy)

Myosotis (Forget-me-not).

## **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Just Tulips.

# MAY - JUNE

**Dieramas** can be dug up and divided in June. They are such a gracious plant with their **Fairy Fishing Rod** flowers in pink or white and they require little attention, and in the summer they are just standing there 2 m tall swinging in the breeze in full sun.

There isn't a whole lot of work to do this time of year other than keeping everything tidy and of course weeds are with us forever. It may be worth **redesigning the whole vegie garden** in an effort to make it easier to manage and more practical and winter would be a good time to tackle such a job, as it will keep you warm.

Do make sure to measure your wheelbarrow or cart so it will fit in the walkways. You can have as many or few boxes as you wish. When you decide on box dimensions bear in mind that timber is sold in multiples of 0.3 m in length. If you make the width of the boxes to be much wider than 1200mm it will be hard to reach the centre for sowing and weeding, but you be the judge, they're your arms. It is very important that you use treated timber, otherwise the timber will rot very soon. *[But avoid timber treated with arsenic. Editor's note.]*

Make the boxes first, then place them where you intend them to be and use a string line to line them up; that includes the boards as the timber may well have a bend in it. Now hammer the pegs into the ground so the top is flush with the top of the timber. When you nail the boxes to the pegs use a large hammer as support on the opposite side of the nails, otherwise the pegs will be knocked loose in the ground. When the boxes and pegs are in position spray the ground inside the boxes with weed killer and wait a few days *[or cover with newspaper or black plastic for a week or two – editor]*. Then dig or till the soil inside the boxes and when that is nice and crumbly buy, beg or steal the best soil you can get hold of and mix it into the soil already in the box until the boxes are full. This is also an ideal solution to vegie gardening on a sloping block of land, as you can terrace the boxes and keep them level. If you like to keep control of your little farm it may be worth painting numbers on the ends so you can keep a log of what has been and will be growing there, and also what fertiliser was used last as our memory *could* possibly fail.

If you like to make **round or oval beds** in the flower garden it is very simple if you know how and here is a hint how to do either. It may take a little experimenting in the beginning to get the sizes right, but you will have a lot of fun trying and practice makes perfect. For a circle, hammer a peg into the centre of where you want it to be, make a loop of twine the length of your desired radius, loop one end round the peg and the other round your spade. Then go round the circle, digging a mark with the spade. For an oval, use two pegs.

Now that we are so busy and clever with hammer and nails, it may be an idea to get a few one inch battens of treated timber and knock up one or two **shade frames**, as they are very handy for protecting your young newly planted seedlings when the sun gets stronger in spring. When not in use they can be stored behind the shed for next year and when they are already made, you are more likely to use them. Whatever size you make them is up to you.

If you keep your seeds in the shed, keep them in a box with lid on, as mice love to get to them in winter, when there isn't much else to eat.

## **Flowers to sow in May (none in June):**

Agrostemma githago (Corn cockle)	Clarkia (Godetia)	Helipterum (Everlasting daisy)
Aquilegia (Columbine)	Delphinium	Myosotis (Forget-me- not)
Bellis perennis (English daisy)	Dianthus	Nemophila (Baby blue eye)

## **Bulbs to plant in May (none in June):**

Allium	Liliums
Anemone	Morea (peacock iris)
Convallaria (Lily-of-the-valley)	Ornithogalum (Chincherinchee)
Crocus (Springflowering)	Rhodohypoxis (Rose grass)
Dierama (Fairy fishing rod)	Romulea
Fritillaria	Tritonia
Galanthus (Snowdrop)	Watsonia
Ipheion uniflorum (Spring star flower)	

# JULY – AUGUST

**Fertiliser** should be brought out and raked in by the end of August, but don't overdo the fertiliser. If in doubt, have the soil analysed. There is no doubt that **chook poo** is the very best anyone can get to serve for the plants, so if you love your plants go and get a bit of the good stuff. Remember that this strong product needs time to linger in the ground before you stick the plants into it. So be patient for 2-3 weeks.

If you have **chlorine sensitive plants**, such as strawberries, currants or raspberries, use Potassium Sulphate instead of Potassium Chloride (also known as Muriate of Potash). Do not spread **lime** indiscriminately over the whole garden as some gardeners do. Much soil is over-limed so check several areas with a **pH-meter** – they are invaluable and reasonably priced. Get one now! [See supplement covering pH values and their meaning and how to correct.]

July and August are good months to plant **deciduous trees**, including fruit trees. Don't just dig a hole and throw them in; read up in a good book how to do it properly and succeed. If you are a **Raspberry** fan, August is a good time to cut back last year's fruiters and plant out suckers for next year's harvest of this delicious berry. Cover against birds!

Do not forget to check the **mulch** in the whole garden and top up as required. It will protect plants against cold and prevent excessive evaporation in spring and summer.

This may also be a good time to turn the **compost bin**. If it appears too wet, cover with a sheet of plastic to keep winter rain out. It needs to be moist but not soaking wet, as the valuable worms will go walkabout then. Wouldn't you? Do not deposit **diseased plant material** in the bin and avoid woody branches as they take too long to rot. If you have that sort of material, send it through a mulcher, or run the lawn-mower over it a few times on low and it is now good to place in the compost bin. A compost bin is not a rubbish bin, so no fat, meat or fish should be deposited there. Yes, egg shells are very good calcium, so in they go! This is also a very good time to go into the streets and parks with bags and collect the mountains of **fallen leaves** there; they make excellent compost and mulch – well worth the effort, and the price is right.

It is now time to do the **pruning** where necessary, including fruit trees and bushes, but remember the harder you prune, the more they grow – but fruit setting may suffer. If you have currant bushes it may be worth trying to strike the prunings. That's if you want more bushes.

Pruning in the **flower garden** is mainly a matter of tidying up and getting rid of died-down plant material.

The end of August is a good time to start thinking about **hot frames** for your early **seedlings**. Polystyrene boxes make good and cheap hot boxes and with a Perspex covering they are perfect. The boxes you can get free from your greengrocer. It is nice to have early tomatoes, but the seeds will not germinate at temperatures much under 20°, so you may as well wait a little while.

If you like to have some very **early spring flowers** inside, thin out Forsythia, Ribes, some Japanese Cherries and Spiraea sorts, and place them in a vase inside and wait. Keep the water up to them!

As **plant diseases** are with us all the time, there will no doubt be some **spraying** and **powdering** to do this winter. Read up on this subject in appropriate books. When it comes to identifying diseases, **Allan Seale's Garden Doctor** can be strongly recommended – if you can find it.

Keep an eye on **soil moisture** and, if it is a dry winter, do a little watering as required. No drowning, please! Don't forget all the lovely **bulbs** sitting just below the surface; they need a little moisture and perhaps a feed of mixed fertiliser with some blood and bone when they start appearing. Any **newly planted trees or bushes** must not dry out, but shouldn't be drowned either.

The lawn should have been cut for the last time before spring and now you give the **lawn mower** a clean and check-up.

When it comes to **sowing and planting**, we will have to just read about it for now as it is too early for most things. If the weather is mild, **carrots** will germinate, but they are slow-growing. **Artichoke tubers** can be planted in early August and at the end of August it is time to think about sowing **celery and celeriac**. End of

August is a good time to start hunting for **seed potatoes**. Lay them out in a single layer in airy boxes in a light place (not direct sun), so they will develop short and thick shoots. They will not tolerate any frost!

If you can't wait with sowing, go ahead and put in a few **sweet peas** in a sunny spot, as that may well be all that will survive at this time. If you want a little colour in winter, then **pansies** are worth trying, as they appear to tolerate even frost and snow – if it is not too severe.

**Asparagus crowns** can be planted late winter, but instead of paying lots of money for crowns, it makes sense to raise them from **seed**. Sow seeds in spring and let them grow until they flower next year. Those that produce orange berries are females and should be discarded (sorry, ladies!), as the male plants produce larger shoots for you to eat. Let them grow on this year and plant them out into their permanent position late the following winter. That season a few spears can be harvested, but go slow until the following year – then enjoy a feast. They are free of disease and bugs don't bother with them, and you can harvest for 20 years or more. Could you possibly ask for a better plant to grow?

In late August you can divide **rhubarb crowns** and when you replant them, give plenty of fowl manure as they are very hungry and you won't kill them. Reap the harvest.

In July we can plant or divide corms of the wonders '**Fairy Fishing Rods**' (*Dierama*). **Torch lily** (*Kniphofia*) and **iris rhisomes** can be planted at the end of August. Cover for frost.

There seems to be some benefit gained from removing most of the leaves on **Brussels sprouts** plants at this stage – just leave a good crown. It also makes it easier to see the sprouts for picking.

Don't go to sleep because next month will be more busy than this one, so get ready for a lot of work and enjoyment with plenty of fresh air.

#### **Flower seeds to sow this month:**

Arctotis (Aurora Daisy)  
Centaurea (Cornflower)

Eschscholzia (Californian  
Poppy)

Mimulus.

#### **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Agapanthus (African Lily)  
Alstroemeria (peruvian Lily)  
Amaryllis (Belledonna Lily)  
Canna  
Convallaria (Lily-of-the-Valley)  
Eucharis Lily  
Eucomis (pineapple Flower)

Gladiolus (Sword Lily)  
Gloriosa (Climbing Lily)  
Gloxinia  
Hemerocallis (Day lily)  
Hippeastrum (Fire Lily)  
Kniphofia (Torch Lily)  
Lilium - Lycoris (Spider Lily)

Nerine (Spider Lily)  
Polyanthes (Tuberose)  
Polygonatum (Solomon's Seal)  
Sprekelia (Jacobian Lily)  
Trigida (Tiger Flower)  
Valotta (Scarborough Lily)  
Zephyranthes (Autumn Crocus)

# SEPTEMBER

It is a matter of careful judgment when to seriously start gardening this month, as the weather is the governing factor, but if the rain stays away, we can start to **prepare the ground** with the help of a **cultivator** or very coarse rake. The old fashioned way of deep digging is out according to those who know, as it will bury the valuable bacteria found in the top layer of soil. If you want to loosen the soil deeper down, use a fork without turning the soil over. Never dig or till wet clay ground, as you will destroy its texture for a long time to come. If you have **clay soil** don't give up yet, but try and mix some **gypsum** into the soil at the rate of 1 kg per m<sup>2</sup> and add lots of **humus and compost**. **Wood ash** can be spread out and raked in, but not coal ash. Take care not to spread wood ash near acid loving plants, as it contains some lime.

There may still be some **pruning and tying up** to do before the leaves appear, but do it now before the sap starts running. Any large cuts should be painted with vinyl wall paint to prevent disease. Most prunings are best in the garbage bin in case of disease. If not already done last month it is time to tie up **raspberries** and prune them back to about ½ m high. Remove last year's fruiting canes and weak shoots at ground level. It is advisable to erect some kind of cover against birds. A few stakes and plastic netting will let you have some delicious raspberries and black currants.

**Geraniums** can be pruned fairly hard now and the prunings will strike readily if you leave them to dry for a few hours before potting and don't overwater! **Deciduous clematis** can be planted this month in a sunny position, but it prefers cold feet so mulch heavily. When mulching never mulch close to the plant stem as it promotes fungus and other diseases such as collar rot.

If **seed potatoes** have not already been placed in boxes, it is high time to get on with the job. Depending on weather it should be fairly safe to sow such plants as **parsley, early carrots, lettuce, spinach, onions, radish, celery, parsnip, silver beet, spring onions, beetroot, leeks, chervil** and possibly a few **peas**. Put some **cabbage and green kale** in a hot frame for later planting out. Why not try a few **red cabbages** to give colour to your salads and coleslaw?

**Carrot seeds** have a lot of trouble breaking through the soil surface, so make a drill like normal and spread the seeds thinly but don't cover them with soil. Cover with about 3 mm of dry sand, then place a 10 cm wide strip of hessian, shade cloth or the like on top of the row full length to stop evaporation. Now water and keep moist until the plants appear, then remove the covering. This method can be used for any small seeds and it is important to keep the . moisture to the seed at all times, because if they have started to germinate and dry out, they will not regrow and you are back to square one. If you sow carrots in heavily manured soil, they are likely to split or be malformed (multiple roots).

If you have a **hotbox**, it is worth sowing your first **tomatoes**, but they may have to be inside as they will not tolerate any frost at all. Keep the soil temperature at about 20° C for germination .

It is also a good time to rake the entire **lawn** with a sharp rake to remove all moss and old grass. If there are any bare spots, it is worth scratching the spot and mix in some seeds and pack down. Keep moist until grass grows well.

If the **perennials** need renewing or dividing, it is best to do the autumn flowering now and wait with the spring flowering till autumn. If **dahlia**s were dug up before winter, you can now put them back in the ground after dividing them. Make sure each tuber has at least one shoot visible, or there may not be any plant.

**Deciduous trees and bushes** (including some **roses**) which can be planted in spring, must be obtained now and planted before bud swell. Planting of **evergreens** is usually best left until March.

Any **perennial vegetables and herbs** can be given a side dressing of mixed fertiliser.

If you like the taste of **celery**, why not try a little used root vegetable called **celeriac**. It has a root the size of a beetroot and will need to be peeled and cut into reasonable sized cubes and then cooked to your liking, perhaps with a white gravy.

I consider **chokoes** a waste of time and space, but if you like them, now is the time to chuck a few down near the

fence, and they will grow for sure.

Birds just love the buds on **currant bushes** so wind some cotton around the branches or even better cover with thin white plastic bird netting from your hardware store. Leave the cover on as the birds also remove all the half ripe berries before you will get to them. Make a bird feeder and buy seeds!

To keep neighbourhood **cats** away from your plants, it may be worth trying to plant a small patch of catnip in a corner. Once the cats find this, they may ignore other plants. If you want something more effective, buy a low electric fence; it works for cats and for possums, bandicoots and wombats as well.

Use a salt shaker to sprinkle **very small seeds** evenly across the nursery bed or mix the seeds with dry sand.

Late this month is a perfect time to fertilise your **citrus tree**, if you are so lucky to have one to love. Don't grow anything else under citrus trees, just mulch them and not close to the stem, as you are sure to kill it with collar rot. Check the bark now right at ground level.

There is an old saying about trees and bushes telling us that what is planted in autumn will grow and what is planted in spring may grow.

It is well worth putting some stakes in the **raspberry** bed now before the shoots really get a go on. You can then later run wires or strings between the stakes to support the heavy canes.

#### **Flower Seeds to sow this month:**

Agrostenuna Githago (Corn cockle)  
Arctotis (Aurora daisy)  
Bellis perennis (English daisy)  
Consolida (Larkspur)  
Dahlia  
Echinacea (Coneflower)  
Eschscholzia (Californian poppy)  
Helichrysum (paper daisy)  
Helipterum (Everlasting daisy)

Impatiens (Balsam)  
Lavatera (Rose mallow)  
Limonium (Statice)  
Linaria  
Lobelia  
Lunaria (Honesty)  
Malcomia (Virginian stock)  
Molucella (Bells of Ireland)  
Nemesis

Nemophila (Baby blue eyes)  
Nigella (Love-in-the-mist)  
Papaver (Shirley poppy)  
Reseda (Mignonette)  
Scabiosa (pincushions)  
Senecio (Dusty miller)  
Viola (pansy)  
Viola tricolor (Heartease)

#### **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Crocus  
Eucomis comosa (Pineapple lily)  
Habranthus (Rain lily)  
Hymenocallis (Spider lily)  
Iris

Iris unguicularis (Winter iris)  
Kniphofia (Torch lily)  
Sandersonia (Chinese lantern lily)  
Sprekelia (Jacobian lily)  
Triglochin (Jockey's cap lily)

Tulbaghia violacea (Society garlic)  
Zantedeschia (Arum lily and calla lily)

# OCTOBER

The weather should by now be just fine and if you have not got the **ground worked** and ready for planting and sowing, it is definitely time to get going. As you need the space for planting, go to it with a cultivator and not a spade. Keep going until you have a **fine tilth** and then rake it over with a rake, so you can see the lines drawn for sowing or planting.

This is probably the prettiest month in the garden, with the glory of ornamental fruits, especially cherries. rhododendrons, azaleas, lilacs, magnolias, callistemons, prostantheras, viburnums, wisteria and many other plants look wonderful. When spring-flowering plants have finished blooming, give them a trim to maintain good shape and promote next year's flowering wood. Spring can be very dry so keep an eye on your **new plants** and don't forget to check **fruit trees and bushes**, because lack of **water** at this time could result in very little fruit setting, even if there are a lot of flowers.

**Strawberries** would benefit from fertilising this month and keep the water up to them to guarantee good runners next year – and don't forget to **mulch** them to preserve moisture and keep the berries clean.

If you haven't pruned the **roses** yet now maybe a good time and add a little feed for beautiful blooms.

If **potatoes** have not been planted yet, it is worth taking the risk, because there is nothing like early potatoes. Once they are up, and it looks like frost at night (clear skies and full moon) go to the trouble of covering the young shoots with plastic pots at night, but remember to remove them every morning.

Towards the end of the month it is worth sowing some **sweetcorn**, because they are so nice if picked at the right time and cooked 10 minutes later. Don't sow them in a row but in ever increasing circles as that helps pollination, and they support each other in the wind.

Unless you have heating facilities, it may be best to buy seedlings for **tomatoes and capsicum** as seeds need about 20° to germinate. They may need cover for frost!

**Cymbidium orchids** should be fertilised this month with a mixture of half **blood and bone** and half **Epsom Salts**. Sprinkle on lightly in October, November and December and water in well. Give **slipper orchids** very little Dynamic Lifter and water to keep moist, not wet.

Don't be tempted to lift **spring-flowering bulbs** such as ranunculus, tulips and daffodils until they have died down. **Dahlia tubers**, which have been stored in the shed during winter, can be planted into enriched soil and covered with mulch to preserve moisture and slow down the weeds.

By late October it should be safe to plant either by seed or seedling any of the **summer-growing crops** such as basil, beans, beetroot, cabbage, capsicum, carrots, celery, chervil, chives, cucumber, chives, garlic chives, gherkins, green kale, leeks, lettuce, lovage, parsley, pumpkins, radish, silver beet, tomatoes, celeriac, celery, sweetcorn, thyme and zucchini. If you have a sheltered warm spot it can be fun to try **rockmelon and watermelon**.

**Rhubarb** may be sown now Or buy one good wine-red plant and divide next year. Established plants can be divided now and can be replanted in a hole with a lot of chook poo. They are very hungry and tolerate strong feeding. They should be planted, so the buds are covered with about 3 cm of soil.

**Radishes** should be sown little and often to have continuous supply of top quality crop and they must not dry out. They should be sown at least 5 cm apart or thinned out, as they will otherwise not develop a swollen root.

If you haven't anything else to do, be on the look-out for **snails** as soon as we have some moisture. If none are to be seen, it is because they hide during the day but come out at night to gobble up your crops and seedlings. If you don't want to use snail bait, a little **beer** will do, if you can spare some. Dig a saucer down level with the ground so they can get into the saucer easily for a drink. They are alcoholics and drink themselves to death.

**Gooseberry bushes** must be watched all the time for signs of **fungus**, as it can kill them very quickly, so keep up the spray.

It is also a good time to check flower beds with **perennials** as many needs dividing every two to three years, when they may encroach on other plants. They could possibly do with a little feeding too.

**Flower seeds to sow this month: (Some early some late)**

Ageratum (Floss flower)	Iberis (Candytuft)	Nemesia
Antirrhinum (Snapdragon)	Impatiens (Balsam)	Nemophila (Baby blue eyes)
Calendula	Lathyrus (Sweet pea)	Papaver (Shirley poppy)
Carnation	Lobularia (Sweet alicia)	Petunia
Comprena globosa (Globe amaranth)	Lunaria (Honesty)	Rudbeckia (Black-eyed Susan)
Coreopsis (Calliopsis)	Linaria	Salvia
Dahlia	Limonium (Statice)	Scabiosa (Pincushion)
Echinacea (Coneflower)	Malcolmia (Virginian stock)	Senecio (Dusty miller)
Helianthus (Sunflower)	Marigold (African and French)	Tagetes
Helichrysum (paper daisy)	Matthiola (Stock)	Tropaeolum (Nasturtium)
Helipterum (Everlasting daisy)	Molucella (Bells of Ireland)	Verbena
	Nasturtium	Viola (pansy)

**Bulbs to plant this month:**

Begonia, Tuberous		
Gladiolus	Trigidia (Jockey's cap lily)	Zephyranthes (Zephyr lily)
Hymenocallis (Spider lily)	Tulbaghia violacea (Society garlic)	
Sandersonia (Chinese lantern lily)	Zantedeschia (Arum lily & calla lily)	



# NOVEMBER

Now enjoy it as the garden should be looking its best with everything bursting out, and it is now possible to start harvesting lovely fresh vegetables, berries and beautiful looking and nice smelling flowers. This month can be very dry, so there is good reason to watch all the new seedlings and of course all other plants as well.

Don't forget any newly planted trees or bushes either, so keep up with **watering**. A lot of water can be saved if the soil surface is kept loose so as to break the siphoning effect. It is also necessary to watch the plants now to determine if they are in need of **nutrients** of any kind. Don't fertilise the carrots! The **lawn** will however benefit from feeding and watering, and that is best done at night, when the sun is low. Deep water and less often is the way to go for a nicer looking-lawn, and it will save on water. An automatic sprinkler system could just be the answer.

There might be some vigorous shoots coming up from the base of **rose bushes** which look different to the host. These shoots are from root stock below the grafting point and should be removed with a sharp knife right at the stem from where they came.

There may be several **seedlings** that will need **thinning out** to the appropriate growing distance. It may be possible to replant some of the better plants, but do water them straight away. It is also time to hill up soil around the **potatoes** to prevent the tubers from getting sunlight, as that will turn them green, and they are then poisonous and should not be used for eating, but are fine as seed potatoes. There is no reason for not planting potatoes right up to Xmas to stretch the season of this lovely produce - that's if you can get the seed potatoes at that time.

There will be a great deal of **spraying and dusting** to be done now that bugs are on the move and diseases flourish in the warmer weather, so it is time to do some study of this subject. Do check that the **bird protection** is working satisfactorily otherwise there won't be many berries to eat.

If the **strawberries** are setting too many runners at this stage, it is quite all right to cut some off to promote more berry setting. Let the runners grow after Xmas and, after all, there is a limit to how many runners one can use. A side dressing of liquid fowl manure will do wonders if you water in after application to avoid burning, and there is no need to pour it all over the berries. **Weeds** will no doubt be sticking their heads above ground, so they must be removed and **mulching** attended to, as that will save on water and work later.

Some of the **early flowering annuals** will be on the way out and should be removed to give room for other seedlings.

If **dahlias** have not been put in yet, it may be time to do so. Make sure to discard any that shows sign of rot or disease. They should be divided, but make sure that each tuber has part of the stalk or a bud, otherwise they will just rot in the ground. When the hole is dug for planting don't forget to hammer a good stake in to support the full grown dahlia. A little **blood and bone** in the hole will do wonders.

Some of the **spring flowering annuals** will by now be looking a little sad and should be replaced by new seedlings after the ground has been loosened. After planting apply a good layer of mulch and water well.

**Bearded iris** will by now possibly have finished flowering and congested clumps can be lifted, divided and the healthy sections replanted into soil enriched with organic matter and a slow release fertiliser. Keep the top of the rhizome above soil level and plant in a sunny position.

Plant out **chrysanthemums** grown from cuttings or by dividing clumps and selecting those with the best root system. Disbud and cut back **carnations** as required for better blooms.

When **philadelphus and weigela** has finished flowering, they should be cut back to get more flowers next year. Use cuttings for new plants as they strike easily.

Keep an eye out for **white wax scale** as it is time for them to hatch now, so it is necessary to spray with White Oil, but not in the heat of the day.

If **lawn weeds** are a problem try adding 10% powdered iron sulphate to your lawn food (100gm to each kg of lawn food). This not only inhibits the growth of some weeds, but also tends to produce a darker, better green colour. If digging out **oxalis and nut grass** do not delay because with the onset of summer weather, the numerous bulblets about to develop now tend to separate and scatter everywhere when an attempt is made to dig them out, and you are back where you started or even worse off.

This is also a good time to sow **cauliflower** and the first lot of **Brussels sprouts**, and by now your hotboxes may be empty, so we can sow **melons, cucumbers and gherkins** in them for a quick result. The same vegies sown last month can be continued in November.

If **rhubarbs** try to go to seed, cut the flower stalk off at base. Give them a good helping of liquid fowl manure now and then, and they will pay you back with a juicy crop.

In areas where bulbs such as **daffodil, jonquils, tulips, snowdrops**, etc. have finished flowering, the leaves must not be removed, and that means they are going to look pretty awful for the next couple of months. Do not remove the leaves until they have completely died back. Why not plant or sow some annuals around them or in between to cover the mess, and it can look very pretty then.

**Strawberry plants** produce best when harvested regularly. Look on the underside of the berry to make sure it is ripened all the way through to a deep (not light) red colour. To minimise disease in strawberries, rotate them every 3 to 4 years.

We must not forget to remove the small lateral shoot appearing at the leaf base on **tomatoes**. Some gardeners leave them there and think it gives a larger crop. You be the judge!

If you haven't tried to grow **chervil** why not give it a go. The leaves can be used for soup and salads, and it is a very interesting and unusual taste.

#### **Seeds to sow this month:**

Ageratum, (Floss flower)	Gypsophila (Baby's breath)	Phlox
Antirrhinum (Snapdragon)	Helianthus (Sunflower)	Rudbeckia (Black-eyed susan)
Aquilegia (Columbine)	Helipterum (Everlasting daisy)	Salpiglossis (painted tongue)
Calendula	Iberis umbellata (Candytuft)	Salvia
Cleome (Spider flower)	Impatiens (Balsam)	Tagetes (Marigold)
Coreopsis (Calliopsis)	Kochia (Summer cypress)	Torena
Cosmos	Lathyrus (Sweet pea)	Tropaeolum (Nasturtium)
Delphinium	Lunaria (Honesty)	Verbena
Echinacea (Coneflower)	Malcolmia (Virginian stock)	Viola
Euphorbia (Snow-in-summer)	Matthiola (Stock)	
Gomphrena (Globe amaranth)	Petunia	

#### **Bulbs to plant this month:**

Begonia	Dahlia	Zephyranthes (Zephyr lily)
Tuberous	Gladiolus	
Crinum moorei	Lycoris (Golden spider lily)	

# DECEMBER

Now that it is nice and warm we must not forget **watering and weeding**. I don't think we know what we did before Roundup (Glyphosate), and used right it is a wonderful product [*if you don't mind polluting the planet – editors' note*]. For precise spot-weeding I find Selecta Spray bottles most useful. They are reasonably priced and hold ½ litre which goes a fair way, and you can adjust the nozzle to different spray patterns.

In early December we can still sow some **tomatoes** hoping to get a later crop. Sowing's after Xmas will most likely not ripen, unless you have a glasshouse, but they can be preserved green and taste lovely.

We can also sow the following vegies this month: **beans, beetroot, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, lettuce, parsley, parsnip, pumpkin, radish, silver beet and sweet corn.**

If it is possible to get **seed potatoes**, I would be prepared to take the risk of putting some in, as they should be ready for harvest well before the frost comes. I fail to see why we, as a rule, only plant this wonderful crop in early spring. What are we going to live of the rest of the year? Planting **basil near tomatoes** may keep many insect pests away saving you some spraying.

If you have **outside flower boxes** place a layer of coarse gravel on top of the soil to prevent the soil from splattering on windows during heavy rain.

Make your **fresh cut flowers** last longer by dropping an Aspirin or copper coin into the water and remove the leaves below the water line in the vase, as the decaying leaves may poison the flowers.

If and when you buy **fertiliser**, have you ever wondered what those N:P:K's are and what they mean? Well, N stands for **Nitrogen**, P stands for **Phosphorus** and K for **Potassium** and the amount of each substance is given in proportion on the bag. And what does it do, I hear you say! In general you will find, that Nitrogen will produce leafy growth, and Phosphorus and Potassium promotes flowering and the growth of roots and tubers below ground. For example: a fertiliser high in Nitrogen (N:P:K of say 6:1:1) will produce lush top growth, not many flowers and poor root development. A fertiliser low in Nitrogen (N:P:K about 1:4:6) will produce stunted leaf growth yet lots of flowers, fruit and roots. There are many different mixtures of N:P:K, so you will have to decide, what your ground is lacking and buy the mixture that will compensate for the deficiency in your case. When you buy a 50 kg bag of fertiliser you are not getting 50 kg of N :P:K as more than half of the bag's content is some useless stuff they can't economically separate from the goodies, but you have to live with that fact.

Be careful not to use too much fertiliser on **native plants** as it may kill them. There it is fairly safe to use **blood and bone**. We must also now and then add **trace elements**, as they are important. Have your soil checked to find out what's missing!

If you feel your **lawn** is getting too uneven and bumpy, you may need to **top-dress** it, but that is not something that should be done every year, as some people think. If you are buying material for topdressing, make sure you inspect the product before buying, as you can get some awful junk that may be full of weeds, sticks, rocks and other unwanted materials. Once you have spread it the supplier is not likely to come and rake it all up and take it back for a refund.

If you are a very tidy gardener, you may want to remove all the dead **rhododendron flowers**, but do it carefully so you don't damage next year's buds already being formed.

**Ground work** this month mainly consists of keeping weeds down before they seed and keeping the soil surface loose to prevent evaporation. If you have established **asparagus**, cutting can stop now so the plant can be allowed to grow and prepare for a crop for next year. Give a good dressing of **nitrogenous fertiliser** or a general mixed fertiliser. What about chook poo?

If you are into **cucumber** growing, it may be worth building a **simple frame** and covering it with galvanised chook wire. Place the frame on the ground and support it with a stick, so the frame is at about 45° and the surface facing North. Plant the cucumber seedlings at the base and make them run up the frame. When the cucumbers develop, they will hang nicely and cleanly under the frame for you to pick. The frame can be used again next year, so in the shed it goes. **Cucumbers and gherkins** like a fair amount of water!

If your **celeriac** has become hollow in the centre it could be due to lack of **borax**. Give it a little. When planting **celeriac and celery** and in fact also **strawberry plants** it is very important that they be planted at exactly the right level in relation to soil surface. Too deep and they will rot, too high and they will dry out or not give a good crop, so be careful.

I am often asked the question: "What will I do with my **garden tools**, because I always get **splinters** in my hands from the-wooden handles when raking or digging?" I can only say, it is your own damn fault, because you will leave those valuable tools out in the rain or overnight. When the moisture gets to the wood it swells and fibres begin to stick out, and when you run your hand up and down the handle, the hard fibres dig into your hands and break off, and you feel the pain. The remedy is as follows: As soon as you get a new handle, or fix an old one, buy some 80 or 100 Grid **sandpaper** and give the whole handle a good fine sand until protruding fibres have disappeared. Then paint the entire handle with **undercoat** and, when that is dry, do a little fine sanding and then a coat or two of **gloss paint**. When that is dry your problem has vanished, but still bring them in at night. After a couple of years you may need to give another coat of gloss paint if it has worn off, but that will allow you to change the colour scheme. Go to it!

Recycling garden refuse into **compost** or mulch, **soil preparation, adequate moisture and water conservation** are all vital to the well-being of the garden. It is better to water deeply and less frequently, and water in the evenings to enable the plants to absorb that moisture before the next day's heat. The beating of the rain and water from your hose will make the soil surface hard, and a lot more moisture will evaporate from a hard surface than from a nice loose one, so it pays you to keep it that way.

**Flower Seeds to sow this month:**

Gypsophila (Baby's breath)  
Calendula

Coreopsis  
Tagetes (Marigold)

Tropaeolum (Nasturtium)

**Bulbs to plant this month:**

Amaryllis belladonna  
Lycoris aurea (Spider lily)

Zephyranthes candida (Zephyr lily)

# KNOW YOUR SOILS pH AND BECOME A SUCCESSFUL GARDENER.

SWEET OR SOUR SOIL means alkaline or acid soil. respectively, and just as a thermometer measures temperature, the pH scale gives the degree of alkalinity or acidity.

THE RH SCALE is divided into 14 points: half-way is 7.0 pH 'neutral': The term does not altogether mean the soil is neither acid or alkaline, but that the two conditions are exactly in balance - soils below 7.0 pH are acid, above 7.0 pH alkaline.

THE RELATIVE ACID OR ALKALINE STRENGTH changes tenfold for each unit change in pH reading. A soil of 5.0 pH is ten times more acid than one of 6.0 pH' one of 4.0 pH is one hundred times more acid than one of 6.0 pH .

## **WHY SOIL pH IS IMPORTANT**

PLANT STARVATION is not always caused by absolute lack of minerals but often because the soil is too sweet or too acid When plants do not respond to fertilizers it suggests that the soil pH may be unbalanced. Only a favourable lime condition guarantees the full effect of Phosphate, Nitrogen and Potassium Fertilizers.

THE FULL RETURNS FROM SUPERPHOSPHATE AND OTHER FERTILIZERS are only available in near neutral soils - where the most desirable pasture species can best absorb plant nutrients. It is highly desirable to correct the pH reading before adding fertilisers.

DIFFERENT PLANTS thrive best on different soil pH levels. In general vegetables prefer a higher pH than many flowers.

SOME PLANT DISEASES AND WEEDS are controlled to a considerable extent with the correct pH reading. Wide differences in pH (more than one unit) from the recommended level often reduce the amount of mineral nutrients available to the plant. Deficiency diseases can result from an incorrect pH. This applies to the trace elements - copper, zinc, iron boron manganese, molybdenum, and to the major plant nutrients, phosphorus, nitrogen calcium, magnesium, potassium, sulphur. etc.

SOIL pH has a strong effect on soil structure and therefore on ease of cultivation and water-holding capacity.

SOIL BACTERIA. Acid soils reduce the life and effectiveness of nitrogen-fixing bacteria. Legume nodules do not develop in strongly acid soils, and bacteria, which normally take nitrogen from the air and convert it into-nitrate fertilizer do not function efficiently, or at all.

TO APPLY LEGUME BACTERIA TO YOUR SEED, AND FERTILIZER TO YOUR SOIL WITHOUT A KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOIL pH; IS LIKE "FARMING IN THE DARK"

## **HOW TO CORRECT SOIL pH**

LIME will correct acidity where soils are too acid for successful plant growth

"FLOWERS" OF SULPHUR will reduce alkalinity of the soil.

THE AMOUNT OF LIME required to raise the pH value of the soil one unit, as from 5.0 to 6.0 pH, depends largely on the type of soil, organic content and the fineness and type of material used for liming. For soils with high organic content, the recommended amount of lime or sulphur is usually doubled. Some caution is needed in liming acid soils which are low in trace elements, for raising the pH excessively makes most trace elements, except molybdenum, less available.

THE REPEATED USE OF SOME FERTILIZERS, e.g.: ammonium sulphate, can change soil pH to an undesirable acid level

FOR SANDS it normally takes about 230 g pulverised limestone or "shell" lime per square yard, to move the pH UP one unit or 85 g 'flower' of sulphur to DEPRESS the pH one unit.

FOR HEAVY CLAYS three times these amounts may be required.

FOR PEATS five times these amounts may be required. BUT REPEATED LIGHT APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE USED. DO NOT APPLY ALL AT ONCE. Addition of PEAT MOSS has a strong acidifying effect on soils.

TEST WITH pH METER BEFORE SUCCESSIVE APPLICATIONS.

RECOMMENDED DOSES (repeated monthly or as may be required)

TO RAISE THE pH Apply "shell" or pulverised limestone at the rate of:

CLAY: 280 g per sq m

LOAM: 210 g per sq m

SAND: 140 g per sq m

And water in lightly

TO LOWER THE pH Apply "flowers" of sulphur at the rate of:

CLAY: 13 g per sq m

LOAM: 10 g per sq m

SAND: 6.5 g per sq m

And water in lightly

AFTER 2 TO 3 WEEKS test again for pH value and if still incorrect, repeat process immediately and as often as required until correct pH reading is shown by meter.

Dolomite limestone, burnt lime and hydrated lime are also used to neutralise acid soils. The last two are too alkaline for safety, except for special uses. There are several other agents which will acidify alkaline soils. The common ones which may be dug in are:

Fresh plant refuse, e.g. leaf mulch, pine needles or well rotted sawdust.

Aluminium sulphate at not more than 25 kg per 100 sq metres.

Tannic acid diluted 1 part acid to 50 parts water and spread liberally.

RECOMMENDED pH RANGE		PAGE 1	
FLOWERS AND ORNAMENTAL SCRUBS		cont.	
Abelia	5.1 - 7.5	Gloxinia	'5.5 - 6.5
Ageratum	6.0 - 7.0	Gordonia	6.0 - 6.5
Alyssum	6.0 - 7.0	Grape Hyacinth	6.0 - 8.0
Arnaranthus	6.0 - 8.0	Hibiscus	6.0 - 7.0
Amaryllis	5.0 - 6.0	Hyacinth	6.0 - 8.0
Anemone	5.5 - 7.0	Hydrangea	4.5 - 7.5
Antirrhinum	6.0 - 7.0	Iris	5.5 - 7.0
Aquilegia	5.5 - 7.0	Kniphofia	6.0 - 7.0
Aster	6.0 - 7.0	Larkspur	6.5 - 7.5
Azalea	4.5 - 5.5	Lilac	5.5 - 6.5
Balsam	6.0 - 7.5	Liliums	5.5 - 7.0
Begonia	5.5 - 6.5	Lily of the Valley	5.5 - 7.0
Boronia	5.5 - 6.5	Lobelia	6.0 - 7.5
Bottle Brush	6.0 - 7.5	Lupin	5.0 - 6.0
Cactus	7.0 - 8.0	Magnolia	5.0 - 6.0
Ca/ceolaria	6.0 - 7.0	Mignonette	5.0 - 8.0
Calendula	6.0 - 7.5	Morning Glory	6.0 - 7.5
Calla	5.5 - 6.5	Narcissus	16.5 - 7.0
Camellia	4.5 - 5.5	Nasturtium	5.5 - 7.5
Canna	6.0 - 8.0	Nemesia	6.0 - 7.5
Campanula	6.0 - 7.0	Oleander	6.0 - 7.5
Carnation	6.0 - 7.5	Orchids	5.0 - 6.0
Centaurea	6.0 - 7.5	Pansy	5.5 - 6.5
Chrysanthemum	6.0 - 7.0	Passion Flower	6.0 - 8.0
Cineraria	5.0 - 6.0	Perlargonium	4.5 - 7.0
Clematis	5.0 - 6.0	Peony	6.0 - 7.5
Coleus	6.0 - 7.0	Petunia	6.0 - 7.5
Cosmos	6.0 - 7.0	Phlox	5.5 - 7.5
Cotoneaster	6.0 - 7.0	Poppy	6.0 - 7.5
Crepe Myrtle	5.0 - 6.0	Portulaca	5.5 - 7.5
Crocus	6.0 - 8.0	Primula	6.5 - 7.5
Cyclamen	5.0 - 6.0	Ranunculus	6.0 - 8.0
Daffodil	6.0 - 6.5	Rhododendron	4.5 - 5.5
Dahlia	6.0 - 7.0	Rose	6.0 - 7.0
Daisy	6.0 - 7.0	Salvia	6.5 - 7.5
Daphne	5.5 - 6.5	Saxifrage	6.0 - 7.5
Delphinium	6.0 - 7.0	Stock	6.5 - 7.5
Dianthus	5.5 - 6.0	Sweet pea	7.0 - 8.0
Diosma	5.5 - 7.0	Sweet William	6.0 - 7.5
Erica	4.5 - 5.5	Syringa	6.5 - 7.5
Ferns	5.0 - 6.0	Tea Tree	5.5 - 7.0
Foxglove	6.0 - 7.5	Tuberose	6.0 - 7.0
Freesia	5.5 - 7.5	Tulip	6.0 - 7.0
Fuchsia	5.5 - 6.5	Veronica	5.0 - 6.0
Gardenia	4.5 - 5.5	Viburnum	5.5 - 7.0
Gentian	6.0 - 8.0	Viola and Violet	6.0 - 7.5
Geratton Wax	5.5 - 6.5	Weigela	6.0 - 7.0
Gladiolus	6.0 - 8.0	Zinnia	6.0 - 7.5

ORNAMENTAL TREES		VEGS cont.	PAGE 2
Acasla	6.0 - 7.0	Onion	6.0 - 7.0
Alder	5.5 - 6.5	Parsley	6.5 - 7.5
Ash	6.0 - 7.5	Parsnip	6.5 - 7.5
Beech	5.5 - 7.0	Peas	6.0 - 7.5
Birch	5.0 - 6.0	Potato	4.5 - 6.0
Cedar	5.0 - 6.5	Pumpkin	5.5 - 7.0
CrabApple	6.0 - 7.0	Radish	6.5 - 7.5
Elm	6.0 - 7.5	Sage	6.0 - 7.0
Fir	5.0 - 6.0	Shallot	6.0 - 7.0
Flowering Apple	5.5 - 7.0	Spinach	7.0 - 8.0
Flowering Cherry	5.5 - 7.0	Squash	5.5 - 6.5
Flowering Plum	5.5 - 7.0	Swede	6.0 - 7.5
Flowering Quince	6.0 - 7.0	Sweet Corn	5.5 - 7.5
Juniper	5.0 - 6.0	Thyme	6.0 - 7.0
Larch	6.0 - 7.0	Tomato	6.0 - 7.0
Locust	6.0 - 7.5	Turnip	5.5 - 7.0
Maple, Japanese	5.0 - 6.5		
Oaks	5.0 - 6.5	<b>FRUIT</b>	
Pines	5.0 - 6.5	Almond	6.0 - 7.0
Plane	6.0 - 8.0	Apple	6.0 - 7.0
Poplars	6.0 - 7.0	Apricot	6.0 - 7.5
Spruce	5.5 - 6.5	Banana	6.5 - 7.0
Sycamore	5.0 - 6.5	Cantaloupe	6.0 - 6.5
Tulip Tree	6.0 - 7.0	Cherry	6.5 - 7.5
Wattle	5.5 - 7.0	Citrus	6.0 - 7.5
Weeping Willow	5.0 - 6.0	Currants	6.0 - 7.5
Yew	5.5 - 6.5	Fig	6.0 - 7.0
		Gooseberry	6.5 - 7.5
<b>VEGETABLES</b>		Grape	5.5 - 6.5
Artichoke	6.5 - 7.5	Melon	7.0 - 8.0
Asparagus	6.5 - 7.0	Nectarine	5.5 - 7.0
Bean	5.5 - 7.5	Passion Fruit	6.0 - 8.0
Beetroot	7.0 - 8.0	Peach	6.0 - 7.5
Broccoli	6.5 - 7.5	Pear	6.5 - 7.5
Brussels Sprouts	6.5 - 7.5	Pineapple	5.0 - 6.0
Cabbage	6.0 - 7.0	Plum	6.5 - 7.5
Carrot	6.5 - 7.5	Raspberry	6.0 - 6.5
Cauliflower	6.0 - 7.0	Rhubarb	5.5 - 7.0
Celery	6.0 - 7.0	Strawberry	6.5 - 7.5
Chervil	7.0 - 8.0	Walnut	6.0 - 8.0
Chive	6.0 - 7.0	Watermelon	5.0 - 5.5
Cucumber	5.5 - 7.0		
Endive	6.5 - 7.5		
Garlic	5.5 - 8.0		
Horseradish	6.5 - 7.5		
Leek	7.0 - 8.0		
Lettuce	6.5 - 7.5		
Marjoram	6.0 - 8.0		
Mushroom	6.5 - 7.5		