

The Garden in September

The 23rd September marks the autumn equinox and summer is officially over. There is no other month quite like September for heralding a new season. It is the month of mists and mellow fruitfulness. In addition it is characterised by its distinctive smell. Not the heady fragrance of the summer garden but a crisp earthy smell. At the same time September hosts the grand finale in the garden with the last of the seasons plants coming into flower, fruits and berries ready to harvest, many plants having a second flush of flowers (especially if they were cut back earlier in the year) and the distinctive colours of the autumn leaves.

Dahlias, chrysanthemums, Japanese anemones, rudbeckias, echinacea and asters provide much of the new colour in the herbaceous or mixed border and Rowan can provide berries in red, pink, white, orange and yellow which often look as though the tree is laden with blossom..

September Notes

A must have purchase in September is a cyclamen house plant. If bought now it should flower well into next March. This plant has a reputation for being difficult, but the secret is to keep it on a windowsill out of direct sunlight and to water thoroughly from underneath as soon as the flowers wilt slightly, usually about once a week. Don't buy from the supermarket where it is likely to have been watered from above as this will kill it in days.

It is time to think about next year's spring display, much of which is provided by bulbs. Now is the time to think about buying new bulbs especially if you want something a little different. They don't have to be planted just yet if kept in a cool dark place, but it's a good idea to buy them now whilst they are fresh and there is greater choice. Mice love crocus corms and will dig them up to eat. Chicken wire on top of the bulbs under the soil can be a deterrent.

Lawns

A good month for repairing established lawns and sowing new ones. Bald areas can be spiked with a fork to relieve compaction, and patched with turf or seed. Lawns that have suffered from drought or too much wear and tear can be given an autumn feed, which will get them into good heart before the winter, and set them up well for next spring.

Pruning and Training

September is the month to plant evergreens and heathers, so they can root into the surrounding soil before winter comes. Keep them watered for a few weeks if the weather is dry and windy.

Check tree supports to see that stems that have fattened over the summer are not now too tight in their ties.

Flowers

Divide old or congested clumps of perennials now, so that the roots can re-establish before the winter. No need to wait for them to be absolutely leafless. Cut the tops down if it makes life easier, but retain a few inches of flower stalk to

mark the position.

Keep dead-heading patio pots. If you move them close to a warm wall, they may go on for weeks yet.

House Plants

Houseplants that have stood outside for the summer on a patio should come inside now before the frosts. Give them a cool but light position.

Kitchen garden

Pick any remaining outdoor tomatoes before the frosts spoil them. They can be ripened indoors on a warm window ledge.

Start closing greenhouses at night, but remember to open them again during the daytime, or sunshine will send the temperature soaring.

Enjoy your gardening

Nadia