

Flower Garden

{dropcaps on}

Cut back faded herbaceous perennials and add to compost heap.

Lift and divide poor flowering or overcrowded herbaceous plants such as Achillea, Artemisia, Aster, Campanula, Crocosmia, and Phlox. This will revive them for next year. Division is also a cheap way of increasing your stock of favourite plants.

Wait for first frosts to hit dahlias and cannas before lifting the tubers or rhizomes. They may overwinter in the ground in warmer regions if covered with a protective layer of straw or bracken, but flowering may be late and/or poor next year.

Lift tender bulbs if you live in a cold area; Galtonia and Tigridia bulbs, for example, need lifting and storing over the winter.

Any remaining summer bedding plants struggling on in milder areas are best cleared and replaced, for a fresher display. They

make excellent additions to the compost heap, but avoid composting diseased material.

Don't neglect hanging basket maintenance - a little deadheading, watering and feeding can keep them going until mid-autumn.

Once they are past their best, then re-plant with spring-flowering bulbs, winter heathers, trailing ivies and spring bedding plants.

Pick over alpines regularly, removing any autumn debris and covering died-back patches with extra grit to encourage their regrowth.

Lilly bulbs can be planted up in pots this month. Next year, they can either be brought inside for an early display in spring, or left outside as summer patio plants.

Continue to plant spring-flowering bulbs, but leave tulips until November.

Plant wallflowers, forget-me-not, Bellis, Primula, Viola (including winter pansies) and other spring bedding plants in prepared ground or pots. Keep them well watered if no rain is forecast, using stored rain or recycled water wherever possible.

Now is a good time to plant new herbaceous perennials, as the soil is still warm, but moister than it was during the summer.

In mild areas, it is still just possible to sow hardy annuals outside, to overwinter for a display next year.

Raise patio containers on to bricks or purpose-made pot feet to avoid them sitting in water during the winter.

Move alpine troughs to a covered porch or lean-to to protect them from the rain (if you do not have a suitably ventilated and unheated greenhouse). Alternatively, shelter the troughs with transparent acrylic or plastic sheets suspended above them.

Top 10 jobs

- Clear up fallen autumn leaves regularly
- Cut back perennials that have died down
- Divide herbaceous perennials and rhubarb crowns
- Move tender plants, including aquatic ones, into the greenhouse
- Plant out spring cabbages
- Harvest apples, pears, grapes and nuts
- Prune climbing roses
- Order seeds for next year
- Last chance to mow lawns and trim hedges in mild areas
- Renovate old lawns or create new grass areas by laying turf