

Timely Tips in October

In the flower garden

Now that colder weather is approaching, **protect half-hardy plants** with **fleece** or bring into a frost-free greenhouse.



Lift Dahlia and Begonia tubers

Lift **Dahlia tubers**, **Begonia tubers** and **Gladiolus corms** to store dry over the winter months. Remove the dead foliage before storing them.

Plant **daffodil bulbs**, **tulip bulbs** and **Allium bulbs** for a glorious spring display. Dot them through borders or naturalise them in grass. **Click here** for more information on planting spring bulbs.

Plant bareroot ornamental **trees** and **shrubs**.



Plant out perennials and biennials sown this year

Plant out any **perennials or biennials** you've grown from seed this year.

Plant **spring bedding** such as **wallflowers**, **Bellis**, **Primulas** and **winter pansies** for a fantastic spring display.

If your **summer containers** are looking past their best, re-plant them with fresh **winter bedding plants**. For winter plant ideas take a look at our '**How to plant up hanging baskets, flower pouches and containers**' article.

Autumn is the ideal time to plant **Clematis plants**.

There is still time to **direct sow hardy annuals**. See '**what to sow and grow in October**'.

This month is an ideal time to **move trees and shrubs**, and plant hedges.

Hardwood cuttings can be taken now from deciduous shrubs.



Prune Climbing Roses

Prune climbing roses and rambling roses once they've finished flowering and tie in the stems before autumn winds cause damage.

Clear up fallen rose leaves to prevent diseases such as black spot from over-wintering - don't compost the leaves.

Clear overhanging plants away from pathways to maintain access routes throughout the garden.

Cut back perennial plants that have died down or alternatively leave the dead foliage in place for over-wintering wildlife.

Lift and divide any overcrowded herbaceous perennials whilst the soil is still warm.

After tidying borders, **mulch** with bark chips, well rotted manure, leaf mould or spent mushroom compost to insulate plant roots for the winter and keep weed growth in check.

In the vegetable garden

Finish harvesting beans and peas. When beans and peas finish cropping simply cut the plant away at ground level, leaving the roots in the soil. These crops fix nitrogen which is slowly released into the soil as the roots break down.

If you plan to **grow beans next year**, start preparing the site by digging trenches and filling with manure or kitchen waste.



Harvest Squash and Pumpkins

Harvest squashes and pumpkins before the first frosts. They will quickly turn mushy if left outside!

When you **harvest your cabbages**, leave the root in the ground and make a cut across the stem to encourage a flush of smaller leaves.

Any plants with **green tomatoes or peppers** remaining can be hung upside down indoors to ripen.

Protect autumn cauliflower heads from frost by wrapping the outer leaves around them and securing with string. Alternatively use a **cloche** or **fleece**.

Continue to **plant autumn garlic bulbs** now for a bumper crop next summer.

Plant autumn onion sets for cropping next summer.



Try growing mushrooms

Now is an ideal time to invest in **mushroom kits**. For more information about growing mushrooms see our '**How to Grow Mushrooms**'.

Cut back yellowing **asparagus foliage** to within 5cm of the ground.

Reuse old grow bags by cutting away the top and sowing late **salad crops**. Cropping can be extended into winter if grown under glass, **cloches** or **polytunnels**.

In the fruit garden



Cut back the fruited canes of Summer raspberries

If you haven't done so already, cut back the fruited canes of your **summer fruiting raspberries**, leaving the new green canes for next year's crop. Tie in next year's raspberry canes to support wires or fencing.

Move citrus trees indoors to a bright, frost free position (4-12°C) away from cold draughts and radiators. Reduce watering in winter but do not let the plant dry out completely.

Now is the perfect time to **order strawberry runners** and plant up a strawberry patch for cropping next year.

Clear the straw from around the base of **strawberry plants** to increase ventilation. Shear back old foliage to encourage fresh new growth.

Divide congested clumps of **rhubarb** by digging up and splitting into several pieces with a spade. Re-plant the healthiest looking pieces.

When **planting blueberry plants** make sure you have an acid soil or alternatively grow them in pots of ericaceous compost.

Autumn is an ideal time to **plant many varieties of fruit trees**. See our extensive range of **fruit trees online** and get ready to enjoy delicious fresh fruit straight from your garden or allotment.



Apples should come away easily when ripe

To test when **apples are ripe** gently lift them in the palm of your hand or give them a gentle pull - they should come away easily.

Remove any diseased fruits from branches or the ground as they may spread infections to next year's crops.

Wrap **glue bands** around the trunks of apple trees to trap winter moth females whose caterpillars shred spring flowers.

Remove the netting from fruit cages to allow birds to catch and eat any pests that are lurking there.

Apply a winter wash to the trunks and branches of fruit trees to kill off overwintering pests.

In the greenhouse

If your **greenhouse** is fairly empty, now is a good time to **clean and disinfect it**. This allows more light in and prevents pests and diseases over-wintering.



Remove greenhouse shading

If you haven't done so already, **remove any greenhouse shading** to allow as much light in as possible.

Move tender plants into the greenhouse to protect them from early frosts. Make sure that there is enough space between them to keep them well ventilated and reduce the risk of disease.

Check any plants which you are bringing inside for **pests** such as aphids.

Continue to **remove any fallen or dead plant material** to keep the growing area free of fungal diseases.

Set up your **greenhouse heater** in case of early frosts.

Looking after your lawn

Clear up fallen leaves regularly to allow light to the grass.

A **last mowing** can be made this month before leaving your lawn for the winter.

Recut any lawn edges if needed. Try installing lawn edging to make future maintenance easier.

Finish off **essential lawn maintenance** to avoid waterlogging and compaction over winter. Try aerating your lawn with a **garden fork, raking thatch** from the surface and repairing dead patches.

Fresh **turf can still be laid now**. Autumn rains should ensure the turf settles successfully.

Other jobs about the garden

Reuse spent compost from annual container displays as a mulch on the garden.

Create compost bins for collecting fallen leaves and dead plant material.



Collect leaves to make leaf mould

Collect leaves up for making leaf mould as a soil conditioner. Oak, Alder and Hornbeam will rot down in a year but beech, sycamore, horse chestnut and sweet chestnut will take a couple of years to compost.

Sweep up debris and fallen leaves that harbour overwintering fungal spores and hiding places for slugs and snails.

Start **preparing a bonfire** with twigs and prunings - cover them with plastic so they remain dry for better burning later. (Make sure you check for hedgehogs before lighting your bonfire)

Net ponds to prevent leaves falling into them. If you need to clear pond weed lay it next to the pond for a day to allow wildlife to escape back to the water.

Clean out water butts and let the autumn rains refill them. Install a new waterbutt ready for next year.

If the soil is dry, give your garden **one last good watering** before the ground freezes.

Use the last of the dry weather to **paint sheds and fences** with preservative before the winter arrives.

Build a cold frame to protect young plants from extreme winter weather.

Check stored onions and garlic and remove any rotting bulbs immediately. The neck of the bulb is usually the first area to rot. Try using **onion bags** to improve air flow.

Check stored potatoes and remove any that are rotting. Use **Hessian sacks** to store your potatoes as this will allow the crop to breathe.

Make time to give **evergreen hedges** a final trim before the bad weather sets in, so they look neat and tidy for the winter.

Once plants are dormant, it is a good time to **lift and relocate** any plant that you want to move.

Raise pots off the ground for the winter by using bricks or 'pot feet', to prevent waterlogging.

Invest in **bird baths and bird feeders** this autumn. Birds are gardeners friends and will keep pest numbers down.

From your armchair



Take photos of your garden as a reference point

Take stock of this years garden and make a few notes or sketches for next spring - a digital camera has become an invaluable garden companion - taking snapshots of where herbaceous plants are located before they die back so you don't damage their roots during a winter dig, capturing images of borders you'd like to replicate at home or simply just a memory jog so you remember which areas of the garden look like they need improving. Why not keep a photo diary of your garden with pictures taken each week? Reflect on what grew well, what failed miserably, and what changes you will make next year. You will be surprised at how useful these notes can be when you start ordering seeds and plants for next year!

Place your orders online for **fruit trees**, **fruit bushes** and **perennial plants** - from now until the spring is the ideal time to plant them.