

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN THIS MONTH: **SEPTEMBER**

As harvest time approaches, the garden takes on a softer glow as foliage changes colour to autumnal shades of red and gold. The effects of shortening days are noticeable and the warmth of the sun is decreasing. However, we are often blessed with plenty of warm sunny days to get into the garden and enjoy reaping the rewards of the past few months.

TASK LIST

- Tidying up is one of the main tasks for the month. Clear away spent vegetables and flowers and remove general debris from around the garden and ponds. Deadhead roses as the blooms fade to encourage further flowering into the autumn. Trim back lavender bushes after flowering and clip back new growth from hedges for the last time.

- Add some plants for autumn interest in the garden – many of the plants subdued by the summer heat and dryness take on a new lease of life. Dahlias and chrysanthemums are vibrant and will continue to flower until the frosts come. Berries and rose hips will be starting to colour and autumn-flowering bulbs such as nerine and schisostylis will be at their best.

- Plant out some autumn bedding such as pansies, bellis, primulas and cyclamen into pots and containers for a colourful display through to spring. Replant your summer hanging baskets and include hardy herbs such as thyme, sage and rosemary. Ivy and lysimachia are great trailing plants for winter baskets. Add some slow-release fertiliser to your new baskets and they will keep going all through the winter months.

- Start looking at planting spring-flowering bulbs such as hyacinths, daffodils and crocus in the garden. There's a wide range for a striking spring display with the winter aconites and snowdrops through to the later flowering tulips.

- Finish taking cuttings from tender plants such as fuchsias, verbena, coleus and pelargoniums. These can be overwintered on windowsills or in a frost free greenhouse.

- Remove any shading you may have in the greenhouse and reduce the amount of damping down. This can be discontinued by the end of the month. Keep a watch on ventilation as this is dependent on the daily temperatures.

- Continue to harvest vegetables when they are tender and fresh. Never leave crops too long before picking them, especially beans and courgettes.

- Aerate and scarify your lawns to remove debris and re-seed any worn patches. Autumn fertiliser can be applied and weeds and moss controlled where appropriate.

OUR PLANTS OF THE MONTH

Abelia grandiflora
Anemone japonica
Abutilon
Berberis
Campanula
Canna
Cotoneaster
Dahlia
Erigeron
Ipomoea (Morning glory)
Lavatera (Mallow)
Malus (Crab Apple)
Pernettya
Plumbago
Pyracantha
Passiflora (Passion flower)
Prunus
Rudbeckia
Sorbus (Mountain Ash)
Yucca filamentosa

DIANA'S CHOICE

My choice of plant this month is the Sedum spectabile or Ice Plant. This is a perennial plant that belongs to a large group of fleshy-leaved plants that thrive in hot and dry conditions. Its flowers are large clumps of tiny flowers which come in shades of pinks and reds. They flower from August to October and attract butterflies to the garden – well worth growing for their splash of colour and resistance to droughts and pests.

