

GARDENING

THE MONTH of March is upon us, the month of buying seeds, insecticides, fertilizers etc.; March the month of digging, sowing, planting and worst of all, lawn mowing. What of other work, say for a start, pruning? Prune down to about a foot above ground all clematis that flower in July and August, that means the jackmanii and viticella types; the large flowered types require cutting out all weak growths in the autumn and tying in the strongest growths. Roses, leaving out ramblers, require spur pruning in March. Winter flowering climbers such as *Lonicera Standishii* and its hybrids, they require spur pruning of old flower stems, as do Wintersweet, *Chimonanthus fragrans*. The month of April for clipping or cutting back ivy; when in doubt, a rule with very few exceptions is prune after flowering, buddleia is an exception to this rule for one, prune it in March.

March, sow most half-hardy annuals, and tender annuals, petunias etc., end of March and April. Sow tomatoes mid March for cold greenhouses, cucumber in April with melons and cantalopes at the same time; tomatoes for outdoors end of April. Most seeds are better sown in April; the ones I have mentioned require a good frost free frame or cold greenhouse if sown earlier than the recommended time. Geraniums and fuchsias grow freely under greenhouse conditions in March, so keep pinching out the growing tips regularly to promote bushy plants. Plant the gladiolus out with such things as dahlia tubers in early May. If a greenhouse is available, March is a good month to put in a few cuttings of such things as phlox, daisies, or should I say *Chrysanthemum Wirral Pride*, Michaelmas daisies, most of the grey foliage plants all root quite readily and may come in handy to fill up gaps left in the border by the winter frost. Sow seeds in pots in April of almost any of the annuals; place the pots out of doors, right up to a south facing wall; sow thinly, water them in, and then cover with a piece of glass or polythene, and they will be ready to plant out in May.

Now for a warning. Shop around for seeds, as prices are really steep; I ordered twenty-eight pounds of seed potatoes, Arran Pilot - I was charged £10; — £40 a hundredweight, was rather steep, I thought! A few other prices; tomatoes four pence a seed, geraniums ten pence, cyclamen fifteen pence, primroses four pence, pansies three pence. Those are prices for one seed only; I for one am afraid to look any further.

Whilst walking around the fields I have noticed that the pigeons have raped the fields of rape; those dear little grey squirrels have barked the beech trees, the badgers have painstakingly dug up and devoured the tulip bulbs, the hares have eaten the wallflowers, and I wondered - I wondered why the good folk who put protection on the badgers, talk lovingly of squirrels, and try to stop hunting hares, foxes and deer (have you noticed the long slim boxes foresters have to put around their young trees to ward off the graceful deer?). I wonder why some people don't understand our problems.

A.V. Mitchell.