

THE GARDEN IN SPRING

AS FAR AS WORK in the garden is concerned, the past winter has been an abomination. Now, in the middle of March, when I write this, there is little or nothing done. No winter digging, too wet; no pruning and cleaning of rubbish, too wet; could not burn anything, too wet! Now well into March, no early potatoes have been planted and broad beans, early carrots and peas have not been sown, too wet!

May it be fine for Easter for then maybe we will be able to catch up. We have learned one thing and that is that a mild, wet winter puts us further behind than a cold hard one.

As there is little in the way of winter cabbage, spring greens, savoy and purple sprouters, victims of the continuous rain, we must try alternatives. Sow some broad beans seeds in a box to start them and lay shallots out on the garden where they will start growing. Also sow cabbage and lettuce in boxes to get them going and then pray for some fine weather.

Looking to the future, please remember to prune shrubs such as forsythia, ribes, lilac and weigelia as soon as they have finished flowering. Cut back all flowering wood to an inch or two.

I know of no laid down rule for the pruning of the popular old *Daphne Mezereum* so leave it alone.

Be ready to clip evergreen hedges of box, holly and laurel etc., in early June.

Plant out tender flowering plants towards the end of May and I include such as dahlias, chrysanthemums, zinnias and petunias.

A few tips for spring time. Spray carrots with insecticide to control carrot fly as soon as the rough leaves show and broad beans and brassicas need similar treatment against aphids and caterpillars. Apples need spraying twice with insecticide at pink bud stage and with fungicide at petal drop. Be generous with slug pellets because the mild wet winter will have produced lots of unwelcome slugs and snails.

Lawns are suffering badly from moss, so in your initial feed use a fertiliser that contains sulphate of iron. Your lawn will be brown for a time but the moss will be killed or reduced.

Finally, let's hope there are no late frosts.

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