

THE WINTER GARDEN.

WET AND WINDY WEATHER is not for gardening at this time of year. Leave the spade in the shed, go indoors, put your slippers on and a couple of logs on the fire and enjoy the dreams that a seed catalogue engenders. Sheer luxury and by far the easiest part of gardening.

You will notice in your seed catalogues that instead of seeds you may buy plugs – sometimes called miniplants – and every year more and more varieties are becoming available.

Plugs cut out a lot of the fiddling work of seed growing and pricking out and are an advantage in that you can buy exactly what you need. Given normal conditions there are very few failures. So think about it – impatiens (busy lizzies) for the shady places and petunias and lots of other flowers in the sun, all about a foot apart.

Not many of us have enough land to justify a cultivator. This device is a boon for those who have collected a large number of years, have a “back” or just do not like digging. They may be hired but better still for close neighbours is to share. Cost it out, for it may be worthwhile.

But if we grow vegetables we have to sow seeds for peas, beans etc. The birds and the mice will eat some of the seed and what does grow will have to contend with such little darlings as carrot fly, onion fly, flea beetle and the rest.

But no surrenders, for your own grown fresh vegetables have a far better taste than anything you buy. So dig on.

Now is the time to split clumps of perennials. Use the outside and younger pieces for replanting. If the centre of the plant has become solid, discard it.

Unless you have a frost-proof greenhouse or conservatory be circumspect about buying such plants as osteospermums and the like for they will not overwinter in the open. Better to acquire anthemis in yellow or white, which is hardy and does not require staking.

Finish pruning your climbing roses and remember to cut out all the old wood of ramblers and tie in new growth. There is still time to plant bulbs and when the weather is favourable and the soil not soggy the borders will look nicer when forked over. And now it is time to wish you a very happy Christmas and good health to enable you to enjoy your gardening in the coming year.

Now, as for many years past, I give my recommendation for a cheap, decorative centre piece for the Christmas table. It is a saucer or a plate with a dob of clay or something similar in the middle. Insert a red candle and surround with sprigs of berried holly, in fact any berried shrub will do. Children can make it.

A.V.Mitchell.