

GARDENING

WE ARE NOW APPROACHING the fruit months of August and September and also the time of year to propagate for the spring, for replacing casualties and repairing the turf in the lawn.

August is the time for taking cuttings and a good rooting material for most cuttings is a 50/50 mix of sharp sand or grit and peat. Carnations and the dianthus family generally – what most of us call 'pinks' – root very easily. If a cold frame is not available then a box with a piece of glass on top will do equally well. The important thing is to provide a close atmosphere.

Many shrubs root well from semi-ripe cuttings taken in August. The cuttings should come from this year's growth, taking pieces about 6 to 8 inches long where the tip is fairly soft and the lower stem firm. Take off the leaves, say about four, from the lower part of the shoot and then sever the base just below a leaf joint.

Into the cold frame containing the recommended compost or the box with the glass on top, or if you have neither try three cuttings, not touching, in a 3" pot with an inverted plastic bag held by an elastic band on top. It is the close atmosphere that is important.

Roses can be rooted by the simple expedient of digging out a strip against a wall or other sheltered spot, putting in sand or gravel and then planting pieces of rose with the

dead heads removed, the lower leaves stripped and the base cleanly cut below a leaf joint; firm in with soil and leave to the spring when you will have the makings of new rose bushes. You can also treat gooseberries and currants in the same way, taking this year's growth.

For those of you who grow biennials from seed, such as wallflowers, sweet williams, bellis and myosotis, it is time to thin out so that you will have strong healthy plants to grow on to late autumn when the flower beds will be ready to receive them.

Whether you have sown them from seed or will buy in the plants, winter flowering pansies are a wonderful investment and will flower right through the winter and will be in their full glory throughout the spring. They are an outstanding development for they recover very quickly from the hardest frost.

Soon you must think about planting bulbs. Tulips can wait until October or November but August and early September is the best time to put in bulbs of the narcissus family.

If you grow apples, try storing them for they will taste much better than the shop bought ones.

Good gardening!

A.V. Mitchell.