

## GARDENING.

**W**ELCOME TO SPRINGTIME. Time for working gets longer. Lots of it to get back-ache, so may the good Lord be kind to us and make our toil lighter and send the good weather to help us with our digging, hoeing and planting and, of course, inevitably, weeding.

First things first. Finish the rose pruning – by the time that you read this there should be little to do. Remember to prune the spring flowering shrubs as soon as the bloom has finished; cut out all wood that has bloomed this year together with any weak or dead growth. Then you will have lots of new shoots to give an even better show in 1999.

I notice many casualties in the usual stand-bys in shrubs and hardy plants such as lavender, rosemary and pinks, especially Mrs. Sinkins. The short edging plants have also suffered. Where there is damage, prune back hard and watch the rapid recovery. Hellebores generally have done very well and have flowered early. On the other hand the helianthemum, rock rose, is looking scruffy and this case needs severe cutting back. You won't kill it!

Early April is the time to sow annuals. Use the gaps that may have appeared in the border and any other space that is available. Sow straight into the ground and thin out as recommended on the packet.

Most lawns are mossy at this time of the year. There are many treatments that are recommended and there are doubts about all of them.

Many of you will disapprove of using chemicals whether mixed with fertiliser or not. Slitting and scarifying help but if you do not have a suitable machine this can be very hard work.

My method, used over many, many years is to take the grass down to half an inch on the second cut and keep it to this height. This will keep the moss down and better still if you have a roller and can use it regularly. Like all other growth, grass needs feeding. Get a good sward in the autumn with the aid of Growmore and you are less likely to be troubled by moss. And then another feed about now.

Until the next time and no late frosts please.

A.V. Mitchell.

