

GARDENING.

THE PURPOSE of pruning is simply the removal of surplus growth. It is necessary in the cultivation of most trees, shrubs and climbers and nearly all varieties of fruit. Surplus growth differs from plant to plant. Sometimes it involves the cutting out of wood, be it dead or alive, and which I will refer to later, but also, the pinching out of young growth, 'dead heading', thinning of flowers and fruit and in some cases the removal of the root system.

We have reached the time of year when many of our flowering shrubs need tidying and made ready to flower again next year and before I go any further let me emphasise that if you are in any doubt about pruning please ask and if necessary ask again.

With a reasonably wet season the growth of some shrubs has been rampant especially forsythia where the old flowering shoots should be reduced to three or four buds and the same treatment given to flowering currants. You must control all flowering shrubs in a similar way but please do not prune camellias, azaleas or rhododendrons unless they are damaged by frost and then only cut back the damaged area to live growth.

Leave these acid loving plants, if you are fortunate enough to be able to grow them, to make their own sweet way.

This has been one of the best years ever for flowering trees and shrubs and rarely in my long life have I seen a denser coverage of foliage on most trees. It gives me great compensation for the ravages of snails and slugs which have had a feast.

The seeds of biennials such as wallflowers and sweet williams have germinated well but the same cannot be said of my vegetable seeds some of which have been most disappointing and it has been necessary to sow again.

One of the great pleasures that I have enjoyed this year is the displays of alstroemerias, sometimes called the Peruvian lily or lily of the Incas. They do indeed come from South America. They are colourful, attractive and, may I say, very showy. They are long lasting when cut – two weeks can be expected – and they are a garden flower of the future for many glorious hybrids have been developed and the work goes on. Count your blessings.

A.V.Mitchell.

