

GARDENING

AS THERE HAS BEEN so much rain in recent weeks we must delay any digging or soil preparation until the weather improves, but we can use the time to carry out pruning that is necessary.

In all pruning we need a good clean cut so please be sure that the tool you use, be it a knife or secateurs is sharp and will give a good result. It is important or otherwise there will be loss of sap and delayed healing. A jagged cut not only looks bad but can also assist fungus disease.

The pruning of fruit trees is an involved operation depending on the age of the trees and the object of the particular cut. A newly planted tree needs to be pruned for strong growth and then as time goes on, for the production of fruit – spur pruning. If you have doubts then consult some knowledgeable person or buy a good book on the subject.

Except for roses which I will deal with later, most shrubs can be dealt with now. Most will flower next year on the young growth produced this year. Keep the shrub to the size suitable for the area allotted to it and be sure to cut out any old wood no longer required and also any weak growth. Try to produce a nice rounded appearance. Both *senecio greyii* and *philadelphus* (sometimes mistakenly called *syringa*) are very rampant and need rather drastic treatment to keep them to size.

A special word about *ceonothus*, in these parts a plant for south or south-west facing walls. Spur prune as for fruit trees. Honeysuckle should be cut back to short spurs, bearing in mind how they will flower after the autumn hedge cutting around the fields – this applies to holly and

hawthorn too. A warning, prune hardy fuchsias in March and not before.

So to roses. I have listed the various types with my suggestions. Hybrid tea, floribundas and patio roses. Prune in late February or March to about six inches from the ground – some will say three buds from the ground – removing old stumps and any twiggy growth. Pull off any suckers from the root. After pruning, patio roses need shaping as growth proceeds. This year there has been excessive growth and it is therefore advisable to cut back HTs and floribundas to about 18 inches from the ground to reduce rocking in high winds, followed, of course, by the thorough pruning in the spring.

Climbing roses. First of all remember that climbers should be trained horizontally to promote flower and foliage growth upwards. Any old or twiggy growth should be removed and an endeavour made to give the rose a good shape. Remember to tie back firmly.

Ramblers. As for climbers with emphasis on the preservation of young growth.

Shrub roses. Very little pruning required other than the removal of dead heads and shaping.

If you still have wallflowers, sweet williams and pansies to plant, use a plank to stand on; it helps.

And now as I write this in early November I realise that I shall not be with you again until late January, so let me wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and good health and peace of mind in the coming year and most important, the best garden you have ever had.

A.V. Mitchell.