

Gardening

THE HALF-WAY HOUSE for the year's propagating is almost upon us and the seed sowing of most spring flowers is rapidly approaching. All the biennials to sow and all the seeds we gathered last back-end want sowing. Sow biennial seeds and prick the seedlings out in a nice bed ready to put them in their flowering place in November.

Time to sow runner beans and all of those delectable seeds that produce those mouth-watering vegetable dishes – peas, beans, young carrots, something to prove that if one can defy the squirrels, hares and rabbits and of course pigeons, one can sometimes, some year, enjoy the fruits of one's hard work.

Work the ground well and incorporate some fertiliser and dress with slug pellets.

After sowing keep the pigeons off with black thread, which keeps everything at bay excepting butterflies. You cannot spray for caterpillars so I suggest a tennis racquet as a good antidote for butterflies. One thing, they only abound on sunny days so we could enjoy them!

Propagating shrubs etc. is simple. When shrubs have bloomed, take a few growths about four inches long, buy some rooting material, put in any wooden box and cover with a sheet of paper, glass or polythene to render it airtight, shade against sunshine and they will root nicely.

All the young growth in the garden needs to be attended to, lavenders and all of that type of shrub need instant attention – a busy time lies ahead.

The lawns have been invaded by badgers digging out leather jackets and want all the holes trodden in. It is the only way of dealing with the pest. The wet turf has very long grass to contend with, but the only way to deal with it is to cut the grass and roll it well, it will dry out in a week, and the leather jackets will disappear.

All of our work will recommence with fine weather. The weeds will disappear in a few days and summer bedding will straighten it all out, but it will take the rest of May to put it right. Wisteria has suffered from frost and will have very little bloom – perhaps the sweet william will help the ailing flower beds.

A lot of hard work lies ahead, so bear it in mind – we will try, but will we succeed? Gardening is hard work, but it reaps good crops and our garden beans are worth eating if the hares don't get them first!

Take it from me, it is all worth while, so bend your back and dig, dig, dig!

V. Mitchell

