

Gardening

THANK GOODNESS that spring is just around the corner and let us hope that when it arrives the rains will become less frequent and so allow the ground to dry out enough to be workable.

We have had a hard winter. Not only have there been floods everywhere but we have had very severe frosts which have caused extensive damage to many of our shrubs. Some of them are dead and will have to be replaced. I have some cealothus which have been trained to cover walls. They are in sheltered places facing south and west but sadly they are black and brown with frost damage and will have to be clipped back to live growth. So the heavenly blue will not appear this year. Once again I ask you to take the secateurs and cut away all the frost damaged growth wherever it occurred and hope for a complete recovery.

Seed sowing time, but please not in the soil until it is drier.

Try plugs – they are plastic trays with 60 compartments. They are not expensive and are ideal for small seeds. Use multi-purpose compost and keep them moist. First sow the seeds in a pot and when the seedlings are big enough to handle transplant them singly into the plugs. As the small plants are ready, plant them into the ground. There is no root disturbance and rarely a failure. Ideal for small flower seeds and also brassicas and lettuce.

If you have not pruned your roses, do so right away. Be sure that all weak growth is removed and suckers pulled off – if you cut them they will come again.

Nature has a way of catching up, so if you are late with some sowing and planting don't despair for by summer you will have forgotten the difficulties of the spring.

Enjoy your gardening.

A.V. Mitchell.

Council Funds Hit Squad

AN ENVIRONMENTAL HIT SQUAD is to be brought in to tackle the growing problem of fly-tipping and fly-posting in West Oxfordshire. West Oxfordshire District Council agreed to invest £50,000 in employing an environmental cleaning team at its meeting to set its 2001/2002 budget on March 1. The hit squad will initially be employed for a year but this could be extended. It is in response to concerns about fly-tipping raised at Parish Forum meetings in the autumn.



It has also pledged £50,000 to reward initiatives set up to benefit the community, and £50,000 to set up the post of Rural Business Support Officer to help small businesses in rural areas. All this has been achieved at no extra cost to the taxpayer, Council tax will remain at £40 for a Band D property. This is one of the lowest district council charges in the country.