

GARDENING

SEPTEMBER, and quite a cold northerly wind blowing, may the runner beans escape frost for at least another two or three weeks. Living as I do, next to open countryside, my neighbour is wildlife which finds that the things that I grow in my garden are far more palatable than those available in the fields and woods.

Now to gardens and gardening. Bush fruit, gooseberries, currants, etc., prune back to about three basal buds. Plums of course are better pruned in June.

Wisteria has produced long shoots which should be taken back to four buds, but leave the cutting of forsythias until January when some of the excessive growth can be brought into the house to bloom and brighten up the winter murk.

There is much to do in the next two months. Carry on with the bulb planting leaving tulips until the end of November or even early December. There is also planting of biennials to be done – pansies, wallflowers, polyanthus, primroses, bellis and so on. Time now before the ground gets too cold and soggy to thin out perennials remembering that the best growth for the future is that on the outside of the clump.

For pots and bowls that are to bloom indoors be sure that the containers have drainage holes. Use the special bulb fibre or something similar, well watered, and keep the tips of the bulbs just above the surface. I plunge the pots about a spade depth into the garden and put the soil back over them but some people simply cover them with bark or compost.

After eight weeks bring them into the house and away they go. My favourites for this treatment are hyacinths.

With a suitable fertiliser you can get some late growth into the lawn which, if you have the energy, should be spiked and scarified

And, of course, everything needs tidying up.

Now for a few “don’t forgets”. Put in a few lavender, rosemary, rose, currant and gooseberry cuttings outside under the shelter of a south wall, and put in penstemon and pinks in a cold frame or in a box with a pane of glass over it; use a sandy soil.

Now for roses. Ramblers – cut out all old flowering wood down to the new growth, which will provide the flowers for next year. Climbers (which are not ramblers) – replace old flowering wood with new wood where possible, and spur prune the remainder. Reduce in size until March then prune again.

Now a few words about clematis. With the large flowered summer varieties, tie in the strongest growth and reduce them to the required height and length and remove any weak growths. The late-flowering small varieties and jackmanii should be cut down to one foot in March. The montanas, which are very early and vigorous, should be reduced to the required size immediately after flowering. Most other climbers in your garden should be cut back to the required size.

Hope we have a lovely autumn.

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