

FEBRUARY - Jobs to Do

Flower Garden:

- When **Snowdrops** have finished flowering, lift and divide them "in the green" and replant straightaway in smaller clumps, adding a small handful of bonemeal and home-made compost into the planting hole;
- Prune **Buddleia** (butterfly bush) cutting back to about 30cm (1') above ground level, pruning to just above a pair of buds – don't be frightened about "hard" pruning;
- Prune any late **summer-flowering Clematis** if you didn't do this in January, cutting to just above a bud at about knee height and be prepared to fan out new shoots as soon as they start moving;
- Prune **Cornus** (dogwood) as close as possible to the ground to promote new growth that will produce the strongest colour next winter; the same can be done with Salix (willow), **Cotinus** (Smoke Bush), **Paulownia** (Foxglove Tree), **Perovskia** and **Caryopteris**;
- Prune **Bush Roses** and **Shrub Roses**, sloping the cut away from any buds and remove dead, diseased and damaged wood;
- Shorten last summer's growth on **Wisteria** back to 2 buds to promote flowering wood;
- Sprinkle slow-release fertiliser, such as bonemeal, over the soil at the base of **bushes** and on both sides of **Hedges** and cover this with a mulch of compost, lightly teasing both into the soil surface with a fork;
- Top-dress any woody **plants in pots** by removing the top few inches of soil, taking care not to damage the roots and replace with loam-based compost;
- Plant container-grown **shrubs** in the ground to get them established.
- Pull or cut away any old leaves from **Alchemilla mollis** (Lady's Mantle). If old plants haven't been growing strongly, lift the clump, divide it up and replant the younger, outer portions;
- Trim old flowers from **Winter Heathers**;
- Cut out at their base any remaining old stems of shrubby **Perennials**;
- Cut back to soil level old foliage of **Ornamental Grasses** to make way for new shoots; established clumps should be divided every few years;
- Check **ties** on trees in case they have been loosened, or need to be made looser to stop them digging into the trunk;
- Plant **Lily** bulbs;
- Sow **Sweet Peas** (including those you have received for the Summer Show Challenge Class) in deep pots or receptacles such as toilet rolls; for those sown in autumn, wait until 5 leaves have formed, then pinch out the tip just above the top leaf to encourage sideshoots to grow from the base;
- Take cuttings of over-wintered **Pelargoniums** (half-hardy Geraniums) to make new plants;
- Buy plug plants of **Pelargoniums, Petunias, Fuchsias** and other tender summer bedding plants, potting them up immediately and grow on in a minimum temperature of 16°C;

- Pot up **Dahlia** tubers and keep under cover.

Vegetable Garden:

- Sow indoor seeds of herbs such as **Parsley, Basil, Chives, Coriander** and **Thyme**;
- Sow early varieties of **Peas** in a length of guttering in a greenhouse (or direct in the ground if you're prepared to risk the mice) and **Broad Beans**;
- Apply a top-dressing of high-nitrogen feed such as Chicken Pellets (available from the Trading Centre) to overwintered **Onions**;
- Sow under cover: summer **Cabbages** such as Greyhound and Primo, as well as **Turnips** and **Spinach;**
- Plant perennial vegetables such as **Rhubarb, Horseradish, Asparagus** and **Jerusalem Artichokes**;
- Try forcing established **Rhubarb** to get some sweeter, earlier stems by placing straw around the crown and placing an up-turned dustbin over the plant;
- Plant **Garlic** cloves, if you didn't do this in the autumn;
- Plant **Shallots** and **White Onion** sets (leaving the reds until March/April);
- Apply a general fertiliser (available from the Trading Centre) to **Garlic/Onion Sets** planted in the autumn;
- Sow seeds of **Tomato, Chilli, Pepper, Aubergine** and **Cucumber** indoors for growing in a greenhouse;
- Minimise walking on your vegetable patch to avoid compacting it.

Lawn:

- Repair your lawn if it's uneven by cutting out a square with a half-moon tool, lifting the turf and peeling back the 2 flaps you've cut; either add additional soil to fill a hollow or remove excess earth in the case of a raised bump; make sure the soil is level, then replace the turf.

Fruit:

- Sprinkle potash-rich fertiliser over the soil at the base of **Fruit Trees** to promote good flowering and fruiting; hoe into the soil and cover with a good mulch of compost;
- Cut back autumn-flowering **Raspberries**;
- Prune out approx ¼ of the old growth of **Blackcurrants** to ground level to allow light in;
- If you haven't already pruned your **Vine**, do this now, as if done later, it will bleed.

General:

- Give the greenhouse a thorough clean;
- Look out for any hibernating snails hiding in crevices, such as unused pots etc in the garden – perhaps put them on the bird-table to boost the birds' diet.