

December

I know that most peoples mind is not on their garden this month, and looking out of the window as I write this I can sympathize with them. The jobs for December are mostly of tidying up leaves fallen twigs and branches etc, in the flower beds if you haven't cut back the tops of your herbaceous plants there is still time as quite a few people leave them for the wild life to eat the seeds and shelter among. If you have bulbs under planted in your beds they will soon be showing through meaning that you will have to take extra care when tidying up so as not to step on them, plus by clearing the old stems away you can see the bulbs better.

There is still time to take hard wood cuttings of some of your favourite shrubs, i.e.: - Viburnum, Ribes [blackcurrants, Gooseberries, flowering currant], Forsythia, Roses, Cornus [dogwoods], variegated Holly, Philadelphus, Weigela, Grape vines, Laburnum, Hydrangea, Ornamental Cherry and Jasmine to name a few to be getting on with. The method is as follows, select sections of stem of this year's growth, cut a length minimum of around 6" [15cm] long do this diagonally at the bottom and straight across at the top, if the stem has prominent buds like Hydrangea for example rub off all but the top few, now with a sharp knife cut an 1" – 3cm length of the bark at the bottom of your cutting just deep enough to take off just the bark. With this done to all your cutting select an appropriate site in the garden as these cuttings will be there until late next autumn, an ideal site is out of excessive sun, in the shade of a north facing wall would be ideal this gives them an ambient temperature.

Dig this area over removing weeds and rubbish, rake level and leave slightly fluffed up. If you have light soil the stem cutting can be pushed straight into the soil diagonal cut end in first, in a row label if plant name known. Then gently with a foot either side of the cuttings shuffle along the row to firm up the soil around them taking care not to tread on them. If you are on heavy land like clay dig over the same then get your spade and make a slit trench by inserting the spade into the ground and gently moving it backwards and forwards then put some sharp sand into the bottom of the trench insert the cuttings, back fill the trench and do the same shuffle along the row.

All spring bulbs should be in by now if you leave it late it just means that they come up later in the spring but by the following spring will have naturalized time wise. Down at Howbury we are still planting the last of our bulbs. The old orchard is getting a makeover new fruit trees being planted and in the long grass areas over a thousand-home grown Agapanthus have been planted along with a thousand Camassias, wild flowers including Yellow Rattle, Salad Burnet, Meadowsweet, Bladder Champion, Red Champion, Yarrow, Ragged Robin and Oxeye Daisy to name a few. Hoping this will give us some interest throughout the seasons and attract the insects.

The rose border is in the process of being restocked with new roses over two hundred in all. The walled garden new fruit trees and bushes are on order this means that the pear arch will be fully planted for next year also a collection of over a dozen types of gooseberry to be planted and in time fan trained, the practical beautification of the walled garden is under way making it not only productive but pleasant to look at in a Victoria garden style to the best of my abilities.

Don't forget to still be looking at the seed catalogues get you orders in asap as they run out quickly. Ps, do not forget the birds this winter keep feeding them and they will repay you by eating the pests in spring. Have a Merry Christmas and Good New Year.

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