

# September

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September seems to be much of the same weather wise making it harder to get jobs done. Like the lawns, I don't know if many of you do lawn care or it is just a semi grassed area for the kids to play on but down here at Howbury Hall I am trying to get started with the lawns scarifying this gets rid of thatch and moss, then sow fresh seed in the worst areas, put autumn fertiliser on and that should be it more or less for the winter apart from the odd mowing.

The herbaceous borders it pays to keep dead heading the flowers this will encourage more although it is getting cooler at night it will not effect the majority of them, in fact it is the cooler autumn weather that induces some of them to flower. This also goes for the roses and don't forget to still folia feed on a dry day. The ones to watch with the cool nights are Dahlias and tender bedding plants these will start to look bedraggled, the perennial type like Geraniums will be making a lot of leaf growth around now, this growth can be used for cuttings. Using a sharp knife or secateurs to remove the new growth, trimming it taking off dead or damaged leaves prepare the cutting, cut just above the leaves at each section giving you a length of about 2"-3" 5-7cm long. Put the cutting to one side for a few hours to dry out the cut ends, then insert them into either vermiculite or a mix of sharp sand and compost, water lightly do not cover, put on a window sill out of direct sun checking weekly then pot up when rooted, that's next years plants sorted.

If you like sweet peas now is the time to order them, as they should be sown next month. Kings, Unwins, Suttons, Fothergill's and Marshalls all have a good range more of that next month. September is also the best time to give your hedges their last cut, this gives them time to set new growth buds ready for the Spring as with the sweet peas. This is still the time to get your spring bulbs ordered and plant as soon as possible, allowing twice the depth of soil on top of the bulb as the bulb is deep, tulips do better long term if they are planted an extra two inches deeper. The autumn raspberries and late fruiting strawberries are still fruiting here but the plums have finished. We have started to pick the apples the first to be eaten straight from the tree. The ones to be stored are picked later this month and into the next.

The fruit looks good with some codling moth damage on the apples but we will combat that next year with pheromone traps in early Spring. If you have a cold frame or greenhouse sow some winter salad leaves like winter lettuce, Rocket, Mizuna Greens Brassicas like Male and Spring greens, Radish and Mustard greens. All of these can be used in salads stir fries or added at the last minute to stews and even to curries. We have had the first signs of blight on the potatoes and tomatoes, we have sprayed with Dithane but it has taken a few plants out, at least we got this far into the year last year we got it in early June. I've managed to get some ground cleared so I could sow my overwintering onions a fortnight later than I would have liked, but we will see, hopefully for a mild autumn. On Thursday the 7th I gave a talk to the ladies of Renhold WI the feedback was very good and I would like to thank them for a warm reception I enjoyed it as much as them.

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