

October

October should be a busy month getting the garden ready for winter. I know that there is still plenty of colour in the garden but a damaging frost could come at anytime, its not a nice thought, but a reality never the less. As I look out into my own garden whilst writing this article I can see several of my roses flowering, *Salvia Uliginosa* with its tall 6 ft tall stems covered with their lilac-blue flowers have been flowering since early August are still going strong if a little leggy. Dahlias, late Sown Sunflowers, African and French Marigolds, *Amaranthus Coudatus* [love lies bleeding], Phlox with a second flowering, Asters [Michaelmas daisies] plus quite a few more plants are giving it their all I have even got a Delphinium flowering. The same can be said for the gardens over at the hall some plants might vary but the colour is still there. The decision is yours.



When the frost comes it will hit the tender plants such as Dahlias, Salvias and bedding plants first, its important especially with Dahlias to cut the stems right back to ground level, you don't have to dig them up if they are planted more than 5 inches down that's 5" of soil on top of the crown, then give the site a good mulch with what ever you have got at hand be it old compost, straw, woodchip or fresh leaf litter, about 5-6" will do the job. By leaving them in over winter the plants get a quicker start in the late spring giving you a longer flowering period. Later on in the month you can cut back most of your plants and they would benefit from a good mulch.



If you want to plant bulbs now is still the time for getting them in it means they make a good root system, which feeds the bulb, which in turn makes for better flowers. As the leaves start to drop collect them up and compost them separately when rotted down this is valuable stuff for mulching putting in the bottom of your pots to save on bought compost next summer. The autumn is also in my opinion the best time to split herbaceous perennials, discarding the central bit of the plant mix a handful of bone meal into the soil then replant.

Apple picking is well underway, now sorting out the blemish free fruit to put in to storage, if done right and you have the right varieties for storing it is well worth the effort to be able to eat an apple at its best the flavour is more complex than anything you get from a supermarket. Down here at the hall we have the whole Bedford collection plus several other varieties, this gives us apples right through to the spring and beyond if we are lucky. The vegetable garden is looking a little forlorn, last of the sweet corn bean about finished just leaving the French beans on to collect the seed for casseroles and stews once dried. The tomatoes that survived the blight attack are still producing fruit, the late raspberries are just going over now so as soon as they have finished we will cutback the stems to ground level and apply a good thick layer of mulch.



I noticed last week that a new attack of cabbage white caterpillars on my brassicas not had this late in the year, you learn some thing new all the time in this game. if you have a green house or good cold frames keep sowing greens like winter lettuce, Mizuna, spring cabbage, early cauliflower and rocket. Enjoy you garden even in the colder months there is always some plant flowering every month of the year even every week if look of them. that is the aim down here in my garden and at the hall.

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