

Gardening Hints & Tips for Autumn!

The soil heals better than any medicine.

When you have a bad day at work or a stressful time at home, what better way to restore your mind & soul than by stepping out into the garden & getting your hands into the soil.

In the vegetable plot, you should have lifted all the butternut squash, pumpkins and runner beans & vegetables such as cauliflower & rhubarb are ready for gathering - a sign that summer is coming to an end & it's time to stand aside to allow autumn to take centre stage. Onion sets can now be put in the ground, broad beans & garlic can be set off in pots or in the soil. Dig over the soil and add lots of compost or well-rotted manure.

Now is a great time to add lots of fuel to the compost heap in the form of all your garden waste and vegetable stems. Leaves are good for adding to the compost mix when they have rotted down.

Making your own compost is rewarding and a good money saver! All you need is four posts and enough chicken wire to go round the posts. The rotting down process takes about six to nine months but is worth the effort – its gardeners "Black Gold"!

In the garden, flowers are still giving lots of enjoyment. The autumn flowers, such as chrysanthemums, are beginning to show their worth. The growing season may be winding down but there is still plenty to do. It's a good time to sow seeds for flowers like calendula and hollyhocks.

Did you know?

Calendulas are bright yellow and orange flowers, historically used for medicinal and culinary purposes. Commonly called the pot marigold, the calendula flower has long been a staple in British cottage gardens. Petals of the calendula flower are used in cooking and were used as yellow colouring in cheeses and butters in centuries past. When used in stews, broths and salads, petals of the calendula flower add a spicy taste similar to saffron to many dishes.

All parts of calendula plants are useful in many ways. It is said to stimulate the immune system and is currently used as an ingredient in many cosmetics. Flowers and leaves of the calendula may be dried and stored for later use. In the vegetable garden, calendula draws aphids away from valuable plants. While uses of calendula plants are diverse, growing calendula in the flower or herb garden is an optimum use of this attractive plant. Calendula plants are frost tolerant and cold hardy and add long-lasting colour and beauty in a flower bed or container.

