

What to do in... October

The leaves are coming off at a great rate, the cold wind has returned and frost is here. The garden does not take much effort at this time so with some of the spare time take a look at the wildlife outside and see if it needs a little help, You may not need to top up bird baths now but there will be some hungry hedgehogs looking for their last meals before hibernating and many birds may appreciate some seeds! Also make a note of what worked well in the garden and which plants you saw on your travels that were interesting and see if you can get seeds cuttings or buy them locally at the garden centre. Lastly the temperatures will likely get down to freezing by the end of this month so if you have an outside tap, see if you can turn it off from inside the house or wrap it well so it does not burst over the winter, wrap up warm when outside and take care.

Flowers - Lift dahlia tubers or protect those left in the ground with a thick mulch of straw or bark, Sow sweet peas now for bigger, earlier blooms next year, Collect seeds and berries from shrubs and flowering plants that you want to propagate, Empty and clean out delicate glazed or ceramic pots and move them into a shed for winter, Remove suckers growing around the base of trees, Prepare areas to plant new roses, Buy primroses and primulas for seasonal colour, Lift and divide congested clumps of perennials, Move shrubs that have outgrown their position or are in the wrong place, Pile bark mulch over the crowns of hardy fuchsias to provide winter protection, Plant out spring bedding, including pansies, wallflowers and forget-me-nots, Pot up tender perennials from summer displays to bring under cover for winter protection, Prune rambling and climbing roses, Rake autumn leaves from lawns and pick out from around border plants, Cut down annuals, add the material to the compost heap and fork over the beds, Lay new lawns from turf, Start to plant tulips in pots and borders, Pile bark mulch over the crowns of hardy fuchsias to provide extra protection, Collect seed from alliums seedheads and sow straight away into seed compost, Plant evergreen shrubs and conifer hedges, Carefully dig up gladioli corms and overwinter in cool, dry storage conditions, Lift and pot up tender perennials to protect over winter, Collect fallen leaves from under rose bushes so they don't carry diseases over to next year, Lift and divide congested clumps of perennials, Plant crocuses and dwarf bulbs in areas of rough grass, Make sure tall, late-flowering chrysanthemums are well staked, Divide large clumps of crocosmia and replant into freshly prepared soil, Spread a thick mulch of compost or bark over the soil around dahlias and agapanthus, Plant tulip bulbs in groups to make drifts of spring colour, After first frosts, lift and store dahlia tubers or leave in the ground but mulch heavily, Plant evergreen shrubs and conifers, including new hedges, Lift tender cannas to avoid frost damage, and overwinter tubers in cool dark conditions, Plant out spring bedding, Sow hardy annuals in cleared areas for early flowers next summer, Sow sweet peas in pots, and overwinter under cover, Prune back standard roses to help prevent wind rock damaging the plants, Take hardwood cuttings from cornus, ribes, salix and roses, Plant up tubs and baskets with evergreens for autumn and winter interest

Allotment - Lift and store carrots, Pot up chives and other herbs to bring under cover for winter use, Sow green manure crops over bare areas of soil, Sow broad beans for early pickings next May or June, Prune out fruited blackberry canes and tie in new shoots to replace them, Cover productive areas of herbs and salads with cloches for protection, Sow hardy peas under cloches, Wrap grease bands around the trunks of fruit trees to protect them from winter moths, Keep harvesting root veg such as beetroot and carrots, Order fruit trees and bushes for planting from late autumn, Finish picking beans, but leave a few pods to ripen fully to save their seed, Clear away plants and fading foliage from old crops, Prune back canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries and blackberries after harvesting, Harvest ripening tomatoes and courgettes before conditions turn cold, Plant out Japanese onion sets and garlic, Plant hardy peas and broad beans, Keep harvesting root veg such as beetroot and carrots, Order fruit trees and bushes for planting from late autumn, Finish picking beans, but leave a few pods to ripen fully to save their seed, Clear away plants and fading foliage from old crops, Prune back canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries and blackberries after harvesting, Harvest ripening tomatoes and courgettes before conditions turn cold, Plant out Japanese onion sets and garlic, Plant hardy peas and broad beans, Pick ripe apples and pears, Finish harvesting marrows, squashes, onions and potatoes, Sow broad beans and hardy peas, Plant out garlic cloves, Earth up leeks to cover and blanch their stems, Cut away fruited blackberry canes at soil level and tie in new ones, Plant new fruit trees and bushes, Tidy strawberry beds, cutting back old

foliage and congested runners and removing weeds, Pot up a few roots of mint and bring under cover for winter pickings, Dig over bare ground and fork in bulky, well-rotted manure

Glasshouse and Conservatory - Clear fallen leaves from greenhouse gutters, Bring tender plants under cover before frosts strike, Wash off any remaining summer shading paint and clean glass inside and out, Insulate the greenhouse with bubble polythene, Open vents on warm days but close them tightly each evening, Bring dormant cyclamen in pots back into growth by watering, Clear out old crops and growing bags, adding material to the compost heap, Stop watering pots of begonia, gloxinia, achimene, gloriosa, eucomis and other summer bulbs, Pick and lay out green tomatoes from outdoor crops to ripen under cover, Sow pots of hardy winter lettuces, Plant winter salads in growing bags, Check heaters are working efficiently, Clean staging and wash capillary matting to use next summer, Line greenhouses with bubble polythene for insulation, Bring pots of tender bulbs, like agapanthus and eucomis, under cover, Check all plants for signs of pests and treat immediately, Sow sweet peas in pots, Avoid moving Christmas cactus during autumn while they're forming flower buds, to prevent damage, Move potted peaches and nectarines under cover, Sow sweet peas and pinch out the growing tips of seedlings for bushier plants, Continue harvesting chillies, peppers and other crops, Reduce watering potted tuberous begonias to allow the top growth to die down, Bring pots of tender bulbs like agapanthus and eucomis into the greenhouse for the winter, Let achimene, gloxinia and gloriosa die down in their pots, Keep potted azaleas constantly moist using rainwater, Plant bowls with hyacinths and spring bulbs, Check greenhouse heaters are in working order and that you have fuel in stock, Pot up roots of lily-of-the-valley to provide fragrant winter flowers, Sow hardy annuals, like calendulas, in pots for early flowers, Wash greenhouse glazing to let in maximum light, Bring potted cordylines under cover for winter, Fix bubble polythene to the inside of the greenhouse, Maintain plant hygiene, picking off faded blooms and dead leaves from all plants, Water plants more sparingly now conditions are turning cooler, Check heaters are working properly, Use an electric propagator to encourage rooting on late cuttings, Plant hyacinths and daffodils for indoor displays, Keep good air circulation around potted chrysanthemums to avoid mildew, Lift chicory roots, cut the tops off and pot them up, then place in the dark to blanch

General - Treat mare's tail with a systemic herbicide such as glyphosate, Install water butts to collect rainwater over winter, Apply an autumn lawn food, Gather up hoses, sprinklers and watering equipment to store away for winter, Wrap insulation material around outdoor taps, Order hedging plants, roses, trees and shrubs, and prepare the soil for planting, Spike compacted lawns and brush grit into the holes to improve drainage, Remove pumps and filters from ponds and bubble fountains, Dig over vacant soil and spread a thick layer of compost over the surface, Paint timber decking with preservative, Prune suckers away from the base of ornamental trees, Collect hoses, sprinklers and other watering equipment to store in the shed over winter, Protect glazed pots from frost damage by wrapping up or bringing into a shed, Order bare-rooted roses for planting in autumn, Wrap insulation around outdoor taps and pipes, Clean out bird boxes, Level out dips in lawns with loam-based compost and oversow with fresh grass seed, Clear away debris that could be sheltering slugs and snails, Check bonfires before lighting, in case they are sheltering sleeping hedgehogs, Send off for seed catalogues, Trim lawns during dry weather with blades set high, Bring garden hoses and sprinklers under cover for winter to avoid damage in freezing weather, Collect canes and plant supports, and store them in the shed, Sow a green manure crop over bare areas of ground, to dig into the ground as fertiliser in spring, Throw a net over branches of holly berries to protect them from hungry birds, Collect and compost autumn leaves, Cut back suckers growing around the base of trees, Visit garden centres to choose bulbs and bedding for spring displays, Mow lawns less frequently now grass growth is slowing down, Complete new lawn laying projects during autumn, Prepare areas in borders for autumn planting, digging over the soil and adding compost, Remove and clean pumps from ponds, Take hardwood cuttings from shrubs and fruit bushes, Spike lawns and brush sharp sand or grit into the holes to improve drainage, Get hold of stable or farmyard manure to dig into your soil over winter