

## What to do in August...

*The rain and cold weather in July has been unsettling for many gardeners, hopefully August will see us with warmer and dryer conditions. The lupins that have adorned so many gardens are all but through and careful selection of seeds should now be made. Remember to get out and water when its dry and keep feeding your pots and baskets to maintain them. The 16<sup>th</sup> will be the Foggie flower show and is well worth a visit, if you fancy entering in one of the many sections check out the website [www.foggieshow.co.uk](http://www.foggieshow.co.uk) - above all enjoy the summer!*

**Flowers** - Don't neglect hanging baskets, tubs and pots, watering & feeding will help them last through until autumn, Deadhead plants to prolong the display. Cutting back the foliage and stems of herbaceous plants that have already died back (e.g. *Dicentra*) is starting to be a priority. Remember not to cut off the flower heads of ornamental grasses. These will provide winter interest. Hardy geraniums can be cut back a little to remove tired leaves and encourage a new flush of growth. Pinks can now be propagated by layering. Propagate irises by dividing the rhizomes if not done last month. Propagate perennials by dividing once they have finished flowering. Take cuttings of tender perennials such as *Pelargonium* and *Osteospermum*, as soon as possible. A greenhouse, cool conservatory or a light windowsill are ideal to bring them on until they are established. Rock garden plants, such as *Helianthemum*, *Aubrieta* and *Dianthus* can be propagated from cuttings at this time of year. Collect and store seeds of hardy annuals and perennials for sowing later in the autumn. Towards the end of August sow hardy annual seeds directly into borders. Feed containers, and even tired border perennials, with a liquid tomato food each week to encourage them to bloom into the early autumn.

**Allotment** - Finish harvesting second early potatoes, especially if it turns wet. Harvest sweetcorn as it ripens. Push a fingernail into the kernel when the tassels at the end of the cob start to shrivel and brown. If the liquid is milky it indicates they are ready. Lift onions, shallots and garlic when ready. Plants should be harvested when the necks start to turn brown and papery, and bend over naturally. Regularly pick fast-maturing vegetables such as French beans, runner beans, courgettes, cucumbers and tomatoes, to prevent stringiness or toughness, and to encourage further cropping. Marrows should be raised off the ground slightly, to prevent them rotting with contact on the soil. Irregular watering can lead to problems with blossom end rot in tomatoes, splitting of root vegetables and flower abortion in peas and beans. Help prevent this by watering well during dry spells. Weeds can also compete with vegetables for water, and act as hosts for pests and diseases, so should be removed regularly by hoeing. Continue to pick summer fruit. Freeze surplus & make jams & jellies. Start picking apples and blackberries for use in pies and desserts. Support heavily laden branches on plums to prevent breakage. Pot up rooted strawberry runners, Prepare new strawberry beds for next year if not yet done. Cut out fruited canes of summer raspberries and tie in new canes to fruit next year. Select strong, healthy canes and cut out weak, forked or misplaced ones (such as those growing out into the paths). Tie in new growth on blackberries and hybrid berries. Prune out dead and fruited wood after cropping of fan-trained plums and cherries, and tie in replacement shoots.

**Greenhouse and Conservatory** - Ventilate conservatories to their maximum to prevent soaring temperatures. Use shading if necessary. Damp down greenhouses on hot days to maintain humidity levels. Water houseplants freely when they are in growth. Feed plants when necessary, usually once every one to two weeks with a liquid feed. *Cyclamen* that have been resting over the summer can be started back into growth for winter blooms. Watering and careful replacement of the top layer of compost should be sufficient to 'wake' them. Hyacinths, 'Paperwhite' daffodils, freesias, and *Lachenalia* corms can be planted in bowls now to achieve flowers for Christmas. Once they have put on 2.5cm (1in) growth, they can be taken into a cool room, only to be brought into a warm room in time to flower for the festive period.

**General** - Keep lawn edges trimmed by cutting with a half-moon edging tool, Remove blanket weed from ponds & wash out pond filters, Feed hanging baskets and patio pots every week, Keep mowing

the lawn regularly, Deadhead border plants, unless you want to collect their seeds, Prune *Wisteria* and shrubs such as *Pyracantha* after flowering. Hebes and lavenders can be given a light prune after flowering. Give hedges a final trim over now. They will only grow a little before cold weather stops growth. Continue to deadhead shrubs, such as roses, to extend flowering into early autumn. Spindly specimens that have lost leaves can be cut back a little further to encourage new growth. Pick everlasting flowers or herbs for drying, Look out for developing weed infestations and control immediately, Top up bird baths regularly and ensure feeders are well stocked.

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