

The Garden in Early Summer

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By the first week of June the last of our trees and shrubs have got their new leaves. Summer can begin.

This year however everything in the garden seems to have happened about three weeks early, so hopefully we are in for a long pleasant summer. (As I write it's pouring with rain, windy and cold!) There is much talk about climate change and its effect on the garden. Drought tolerant gardens are being heavily promoted. While I do not dispute that the climate is changing and that we need to recognize some changes may be necessary, I don't think we need dig up our gardens and replace the lawn with gravel overnight. Let the garden evolve gradually. If and when plants show signs of stress, replace them accordingly.

Many gardens are at their very best now, but June is a good time to look at any gaps, work out what plants are needed and set off to the garden centre to get them. Before you leave home, decide what plants you want and go for them with a will of iron. It's so easy to come away with a boot full of goodies which are totally impractical and for which you have no good home. If a plant

label says tender, half hardy or needs a sheltered spot, you can only guarantee keeping it alive by pampering it in this part of the world until the frosts arrive.

June is the month for roses. Roses epitomise summer.

There are roses available in virtually any size and colour (except blue) and there is at least one rose to suit every conceivable aspect, although generally speaking they prefer a sunny spot and heavy soil. Roses even come without thorns, although I have the knack of growing extra thorny ones. There are few people who dislike roses yet they are quite a high maintenance plant. They are not the plant for the organic gardener as even the modern disease resistant varieties will eventually succumb to blackspot in our clean air.

Q. When is a wild flower a weed?

A. When we have too much of it in our garden and we can't get rid of it. The abundance and variety of weeds in our local gardens never ceases to amaze me. Annual weeds can be hoed away but perennial weeds need completely removing including every



last bit of root. This is easier said than done with ground elder (our Roman legacy), mares tails and bindweed. Chemicals will knock them back but they will return unless completely removed. (If you want any more information on dealing with weeds or indeed if you need any other gardening answers send me an email: nadia.bunner@virgin.net or telephone 07982 608943).

Early Summer Notes

Lawns
Feed weak or patchy lawns this month. If you mow it quite enough



already, leave well alone.

Spring bulbs
Move your spring bulbs to make room for bedding plants. Place the bulbs in a temporary plot and let them die back naturally. After flowering, spring bulbs carry on growing for up to eight weeks.

Staking
Any tall growing plants such as Delphinium, Lupin, Poppies and climbers need a frame work of canes and string around them to help prevent them being damaged by winds.

Bedding plants
Plant out summer bedding plants such as Busy Lizzie, Tobacco plants, Marigolds, Pansies, Lobelia and Stocks. An hour before planting give the plants a good soaking of water and soak the planting hole before you put them in. If it's a sunny day then try and plant them in the late afternoon or early evening. Don't forget to water well again after planting.

Pruning
After flowering prune Forsythia, Pieris, Weigela, Berberis and Philadelphus (mock orange). Trim back straggly alpines such as Aubrietia.
Sweet Peas

Add a mulch to the base of your Sweet Peas. Remove the tendrils and pinch out side shoots. Remove flowers as soon as they fade. Feed each week to encourage flowers and healthy growth.

Roses
Keep a close eye on your roses for insects and disease. If there is any signs of your roses being attacked then take action now by treating them with a systemic insecticide or fungicide. Dead head faded blooms.

Herbaceous plants
Cut back herbaceous perennials such as Poppies, Hardy Geraniums and Delphiniums to encourage a second flush of flowers in July or August.

Sowing and planting
Sow biennial seeds



and winter flowering pansies.

The kitchen garden
Sow turnips. Plant out leeks, cabbages, marrows, courgettes, pumpkins, sweet corn and celery. Make sure nets over strawberries and raspberries are proof against the birds. Peg down a few runners if you want some extra plants, otherwise remove them.

Enjoy your gardening.

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