

The Garden in Winter

Series by: Nadia Bunner
Tel: 016973 52024
gardens-by-nadia.co.uk

December and January can seem like bleak gardening months, but on bright winter days it can be very therapeutic (and good exercise) to dig over beds and borders if you are so inclined. However after a long season of gardening I prefer the old fashioned wisdom that if the soil sticks to your boots you shouldn't try to work it, and if it is frosty, don't try to plant or walk on the grass. This gives us a very good excuse to browse catalogues and gardening books, hone our good intentions and rest our aching muscles for a few weeks.

At this time of the year houseplants become more readily available and thousands of these are bought either as presents or to brighten up the house. These plants are grown in artificial conditions which cannot be reproduced in our dry centrally heated homes and the plants we buy often sulk in protest at their changed conditions. Perhaps the one thing



house plants object to most is getting cold. For this reason they should not be kept behind drawn curtains or carried to the car in freezing temperatures. Most plants have a little care card with them which is useful to read. This gives you information on siting the plant, how much water to give it and how frequently. Most plants like a good light but not direct sunlight, being given a drink once a week from below (too much water is as harmful as not enough), and benefit from frequent misting and occasional feeding with a proprietary house plant food.

On a technical note 22nd November 2007 was the last day that

weed killers containing ammonium sulphamate could be sold to amateur gardeners - although they can be stored and used until 22nd May 2008. The

reason these products are being withdrawn is that none of the manufacturers submitted data for the EC review programme - in many cases because it wasn't commercially viable to provide the data, rather than because of a specific safety concern. Products affected may change their formulation, but keep their name.

The codes given below (labelled in small print on the packaging) will identify them. Withdrawn products include: Doff weed killers M12217, M11991, M12242 and M03510; Growing Success Bramble Killer M12530; 'Deep Root' range M08368, M09365, M11389 and M10640;

and Ivy Killers M11440 and M11439. Meanwhile, chemical companies such as Bayer and Scotts are bringing out new weed killers for 2008.

- Winter tasks (if you are so inclined)
1. Check your winter protection structures are still securely in place
 2. Check that greenhouse heaters are working properly
 3. Protect outside taps from freezing with insulation or a tap jacket
 4. Prune open-grown apples and pears (but not those trained against walls)
 5. Prune acers, birches and vines, if necessary, before Christmas to avoid bleeding
 6. Harvest leeks, parsnips, winter cabbage, sprouts and remaining root crops
 7. Deciduous trees shrubs and hedges can still be planted and transplanted
 8. Hardwood cuttings can be taken of many shrubs
 9. Try to keep mice away from stored produce
 10. Reduce watering of houseplants
- Enjoy your gardening.

Abbeytown Flower Club

Chairman Ruth Pinguey welcomed everyone to the November Meeting and read the record of the October Meeting.

The New Year Dinner will be at the Kelsay Hotel on 17th January and a menu was passed round for people to choose their meal.

Ruth introduced Elaine Forester, her sister Julie and her Mum June whose theme was Christmas Flowers. June told stories of when she had the flower shop in Wigton and some of funny happenings recently while the girls arranged the flowers. Elaine began with two simple mirrored cubes filled with nine red roses and decorated with gold wire and sprayed with snow. They were very easily made but looked stunning. Julie made a table centre in the shape of a wreath from evergreen, artificial fruits and cinnamon sticks, Elaine followed with a

large artificial amaryllis surrounded by red roses, carnations and artificial evergreen to put on a coffee table. Julie made a beautiful tied bunch of mixed flowers and Elaine finished off by decorating a gold bowl with red roses, red carnations evergreens, holly and ivy.

Lesley Evans thanked the ladies for a very enjoyable evening. Joyce Wilson sold raffle tickets for the flowers and the winners were Phyllis Dockeray, Pam Taylor, Marion Jefferson, Noeline Foster and Lesley Evans.

Phyllis Dockeray, Margaret Todd and Pam Taylor served refreshments and the winners of the competition for Christmas wrapping paper were Audrey Harrison, Noeline Foster and Elsie Foster.



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