



REDDITCH BONSAI

Edition of mid October 2020.

GARDENING TIPS FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

The following has been borrowed from a well known seed merchant's email circulars! You might find a reminder or even something useful. No apologies either!

- The soil is still reasonably warm so take the opportunity to get spring bulbs planted before things get too cold and wet. To create a natural, 'woodland' scene, plant drifts of bluebells, fritillaries and daffodils into a lawn.
- Create a little bit of extra winter colour with tubs of cyclamen and heathers.
- Plant evergreen shrubs now to give them a chance to establish before the cold weather cools down the soil temperature
- Protect delicate plants such as tree ferns with garden fleece if you know there's going to be a cold snap
- Rake leaves to prevent them from rotting into the lawn
- Sow green manure seeds in empty veg plots – this can be composted straight back into the soil in spring for a big nitrogen boost before the first crops go in
- Clear the veg plot of all old crops, and condition the soil with a well-rotted manure
- Give the greenhouse an autumn clean to remove any pests and line it with bubble wrap to protect any tender plants against the cold.
- Check greenhouse heaters
- Create 'Hedgehog Hotels' and wildlife refuges

The Flower Borders

Things are coming to a close in October, but you should still have late-flowering plants like asters giving you the occasional burst of colour. Once they're over, cut them down and tidy up the beds for the winter. Cover the soil with a deep mulch or bark chippings to offer protection against tender tips and shoots in the spring.

The Veg Plot

Things are slowing down in the veg plot too, but there's still plenty to do. Winter cabbages, cauliflowers and leeks are still going strong, squashes and pumpkins are hitting their stride (just in time for Halloween at the end of the month!), and the last of the autumn main crop potatoes should be ready to lift now.

Once you've cleared a section of the veg plot make sure you give it a good reconditioning by adding plenty of well-rotted manure. You can also sow a crop of green manure, which is simply rotavated back into the soil in the spring to give it a nitrogen boost before you start planting out again. Herbs can be divided and replanted, while autumn raspberries can now be pruned right back down to the ground.

The Greenhouse

The greenhouse doesn't need to be empty during the winter, and you can sow some fast-growing crops such as kale and spinach and pick the leaves early for autumn salads. The most important thing to do is to give the greenhouse a thorough clean from top to bottom to make sure no pests or diseases are lurking in the corners. Use a special disinfectant such as Citrox Garden and Greenhouse Disinfectant which will tackle even tough mould and mildew.

The temperature is going to start to drop, so if you want to protect delicate plants like fuchsias and potted orange plants then check for any cracked or damaged panes and use bubble wrap to provide an additional layer of protection against frosts.

Make sure gutters are clear of fallen leaves so that you can maximise the amount of rainwater you have going into your water butts.

If you have plants such as hostas then now is the perfect time to lift and split them. You can be pretty brutal with these tough plants too –simply lift the whole plant and literally cut it into quarters with a sharp spade. Replant one quarter back into the original location and reposition the remaining three quarters to their new spots.

October is the time when wildlife really needs a helping hand. The birds will certainly appreciate some high-energy food to get them ready for winter, so keep feeders topped up with treats.

Set up a 'Hedgehog Hotel' log pile in the corner of the garden with plenty of dry leaves and branches to create a safe space for your local hedgehogs to over-winter. Check bonfires carefully before lighting to make sure hedgehogs haven't burrowed down inside.

If you've planted autumn flowering plants in your borders then leave them for as long as possible to give pollinating insects and bees a chance of some autumn food.

Ponds can benefit from a good clean out before the cold weather. Scoop out any leaves that may have fallen into the water to stop them rotting down over the winter.

Other Jobs around the Garden

- The autumn gales are starting, so check fences and sheds for any damaged panels after any stormy weather
- Give the lawn an autumn feed and reduce the number of cuts, especially once the cold weather starts
- Aerate compacted lawns and dress with sharp sand to improve drainage
- Store hoses indoors so that they don't crack and split during the winter
- Reduce the number of slugs over the wetter months by using a nematode slug killer
- If you have a poly tunnel, utilise the space by planting winter greens.

THERE'S A CERTAIN AROMA IN EDGBASTON!

Just an interesting observation, I was bought some African Stink Wood seeds from Cape Town's Botanical Gardens fourteen months ago.

There were six seeds in the packet. One was planted in a deep six inch pot and is now thirty six inches tall with branches coming out all over. The trunk is quite thick. The other five were planted in a seed tray. Three weeks ago I replanted them in a shallow bonsai pot as a small Forest group. All of these trees seem to be flourishing, and in a few years should make interesting bonsai.

What amazes me is. Trees which grow in parched African conditions seem to be thriving in the UK. Has anyone any ideas where to winter them?

Wes.

What about Cape Town? Ed.

A TIP FROM MALCOLM.

Malcolm has recommended Round Up Tree stump Killer for getting rid of, believe it or not, tree stumps. He points out that it gets rid of small ones as well as big ones, so, if you have any ash trees growing between paving slabs this would seem to be the right stuff to use. A product called S.B.K. is apparently an alternative. It might be a question of price? Thanks Malcolm!

BONSAI TIP OF THE MONTH.

1. Join Zoom meetings on Mondays if you have not already done so!
2. Time to check your winter protection equipment. Malcolm will tell us more on 19th October at 7.30 p.m.
3. Wire conifers.
4. Stop high potash feeding later in the month.

In an earlier issue I suggested the use of sphagnum moss to help stressed trees to recover. Well, what I should also have said is that you should put some sort of permeable cover over the moss. It's an attraction for the birds in the garden, although I can't think why as there can't be any nest building going on at the moment. I found most of one pot's worth all over the place the other day!

FREE TO A GOOD HOME.

We have the following available for anyone who would like them:-

1. 4 x Plastic wallets with zip top 19" x 13",
2. Quite a few A4 size wallets with top opening and gizmo on side to insert into ring binder, and
3. Also some without the gizmo and open on top and side.

All clear plastic. We won't keep them long, so don't delay!

ZOOM MEETINGS.

We are pleased to tell you that we have now sorted out a programme of events for the next couple of months which we hope will entertain you, keep you in touch with other members and possibly encourage those members who have not so far ventured into the Zoom world to do so.

We should also like to take the opportunity to thank all those members and friends who have agreed to give a presentation. We are looking forward to these evenings. The sessions will in theory be for 40 minutes but if more time is required then taking a short break will allow us to make use of a second period of 40 minutes free of charge!

All these meetings will take place on Monday evenings at 7.30 p.m.

We are of course hoping to continue these events beyond the end of November so, if you have any suggestions, requests or would even wish to offer a presentation yourself then please get in touch. Two such later sessions will hopefully be by Corin Tomlinson and Mark Skan respectively. The latter would have "signed up" sooner but I am afraid that work is getting in the way just at the moment. We are nevertheless glad that Mark has work and is actually able to carry it out in these troubled times.

For anyone wishing to join the Zoom meetings for the first time and in the event of any anticipated difficulty in doing so, please contact Alex Watt directly for help and guidance.

So, here is the programme, (please note slight change from my email):-

October.

19th Malcolm Hughes What show judges are looking for in your trees/Winter preparation.

26th Judith Davison. Judith will reprise her photo presentation of some weeks ago.

November.

2nd. Judith Davison. Judith will tell us where we all went wrong in taking our photographs!

9th. John Clarke. "Air plants".

16th David Cheshire. Mame

23rd. Russell Andrews Quiz.

30th. Peter Clarke. His Cacti/Birmingham Cacti Society/Winterbourne.

December.

7th. Russell Andrews. Pines.

N.B. 1. Since my original email David Cheshire's talk has now been confirmed as "Mame" 2. There was a photograph of one of the Cacti Houses at Winterbourne in an earlier photo compendium in the summer.

COMMITTEE MEETING.

As we have not held a committee meeting for some time now we thought we better have one! So, if you have any issues that you wish to raise/questions please let me know.

One of the matters to be discussed will probably be the question of the A G M normally held in December.

MBS WEBSITE.

Gary has very recently posted a series of photographs of trees submitted for the Virtual Show. There will be more in due course, so do have a look. Well done Gary.

Richard Gilkes, Ed., 14th October 2020.

