

AUTUMN GARDENS

Autumn is a great time for planting out gardens and besides the planting of vegetables and flowering plants, you also have a great range of shrubs and trees you can add to your garden.

It is still early times for new seasons deciduous fruit and ornamental trees or roses but orders can be placed at your garden centres for collecting of, later on, in winter.

Lets have a look at the various areas starting with the vegetable garden.

Silverbeet is one of my favorite winter plants and you have two types that are available, being the original dark green such as 'Fordhook' and the newer coloured silverbeet that are called 'Bright Lights' The later is a sweeter silverbeet and if you don't like the flavor of the dark green you may well like the sweeter taste of the coloured forms.

When you buy silverbeet in shops you find that you are buying the whole plant minus the roots as this is the way the commercial growers harvest the crop.

In the home garden there is no need, in fact it's silly to harvest the whole plant, instead just remove the outer leaves and the plant will continue to produce till it goes to seed.

Rust should not be a problem through the winter and nether should pests bother the crop so no extra work involved spraying. It is best to buy the seedlings and plant them at this time, as seed raising will take longer to reach harvest time.

Broad beans are grown from seed and if you like these iron rich vegetables then plant up a row. Snowpeas are another good winter seed grown crop and are ideal for stir fry.

All the brassicas do well during winter and no problems with caterpillars.

For those with bigger vegetable gardens you can also sow seeds or plants of Chinese cabbage, cress, leeks, winter lettuce, mustard, onions, radish, shallots, spinach and turnips.

If you place Nufert under the plants or with the seeds before you cover them, you will speed up the growth of the plants noticeably.

Feed with sheep manure pellets later by side dressing the plants. If you want to add selenium to your food crops then sprinkle some Micron after planting.

In the flower garden you once again have a great range of plants to choose from for winter colour. I will list the plants for cold climate areas and these will grow even better in the warmer areas. Plants are once again a better option, as seeds take several weeks to get to the stage purchased plants are already at. Primula and polyanthus are excellent choices making great bedding and container plants for winter colour.

Place dried blood under the seedlings at planting time and side dress with the same every month or so. Cineraria do very well in winter as long as they are in frost protected places. The dwarf forms make wonderful container plants in a 6 to 8 inch pot. Another plant for containers or protected garden places such as under trees are cyclamen. Both cyclamen and cineraria can be grown indoors as flowering pot plants but ensure they are right in front of a full light window and in a cool situation for best results. Other flowers to plant would include, bellis, calendula, candyturf, Canterbury bells, carnations, cornflower, delphinium, dianthus, everlasting daisy, forget-me-nots, godertia, lobelia, nemsia, pansy, viola, snapdragons, sweet peas, stock and wall flowers.

It will depend on what plants are currently available in your garden centre but you will surely have a lot of choice.

Shrubs, trees and fruit trees are all personal choices and it is not worth listing types that can be planted. Autumn is a great time to plant as there is no stress from heat and the soil

has adequate moisture so extra watering is kept to a minimum. The plants have right through winter and spring to establish which means that they should be doing well before they have to face a summer. This will reduce the possibility of losses.

It is important to choose plants that will suit the conditions which means the type of soil, the wet or dry conditions they will have to face during a gardening year and will provide the size and shape that you desire without a lot of future trimming.

Plus the chosen plants should fit into the way you want your gardens to ultimately look like. If planting up new gardens or sections don't be tempted to plant the shrubs and trees too close. Just because they are smaller when you plant them, remember that they grow and their ultimate size needs to be catered for. Information on the label will give the approximate end height and spread which gives you a good idea how far to space the plants. Mind you I have yet to know of a plant that reads its label and the end result maybe different dependant on factors such as the growing conditions.

Planting shrubs and trees too close together may look better for the first couple of years in filling in gardens, but will need constant trimming or removal of maybe half the plants in the future.

When you plant your trees and shrubs at the right spacing apart, for when they mature and the areas in between look sparse, then obtain some perennials or ground covers to fill in the spaces. These can either be removed in the future if need be or they will acclimatise to the situation and survive. Also perennials can be easily be lifted and transplanted to more suitable situations in the future.

What to put under trees and shrubs when you plant them? It depends on soil type whether clay or sandy. Both means you should dig a hole about twice the depth and width needed and use peat moss or compost mixed with the removed soil (about half and half) to line the base of the hole and back fill. This gives a good area for initial root formation.

I like to place a couple of hands full of Gypsum in the planting hole on heavy soils to aid root penetration and for food just use sheep manure pellets in the base of the hole.

It is better not to stake unless it is a very exposed, windy situation and then only stake for a few months while the plant establishes its roots then remove. Left staked too long actually weakens the plant and can lead to losses in the future. Once the roots have a reasonable grip into the earth the movement of the plant in the wind builds up its strength in the trunk allowing it to withstand high winds in the future.

Happy Planting and any problems ring me at 0800 466464. Wally Richards