

Wally's Weekly News 25th JULY 2009
Written by Wally Richards.

CHECK LIST FOR SPRING

The weather may not be the best but each day the sunlight hours increase by a few more minutes and our plants and gardens respond to this increasing amount of light.

We are only about 6 weeks away to the beginning of spring and there is a lot to do in these 6 weeks so that you are ready, and the gardens are prepared.

Let us list some of the things to do and you can pick out which ones apply to your gardens.

If you need to move any shrubs or trees get onto it as soon as possible as time is quickly running out for safe moving.

Roses should now have their final pruning and as you prune each one spray the plant and cuts with **Liquid Copper**. Pick a sunny day to do pruning when the air is not damp to reduce the risk of diseases entering the wounds.

You are likely to find that new growth is starting to appear on the canes which gives you a good indication where to prune the canes which is just above a outward going bud.

It is too later to use Lime Sulphur on the roses or other deciduous plants.

Likewise if you have any deciduous fruit trees or plants now is the time to do any pruning if required.

Likely it is getting too late for grapes as they will bleed as the sap is starting to rise about now.

Weeds will also be coming away at this time so clean them up before they mature and produce any weed seeds.

If you are going to use a chemical weed killer you need to dissolve some sulphate of ammonia into water and add that to the spray mix along with **Raingard** to stimulate the weeds to grow and thus die.

Weeds growing in cobbles and similar can be treated with salt to kill them safely. Just pour the salt over the weeds and cracks.

Moss and liverworts etc will have grown in lawns and other areas so clean them up with a spray of **Moss and Liverwort Control**.

Spring bulbs will be starting to bud up and be getting ready to flower, sprinkle a little potash around them to enhance the flowering.

Plants that have yellow leaves should be treated with a sprinkling of **Fruit and Flower Power** or Epsom salts. Repeat again a month later.

Purchase seed potatoes for planting next month, there is a good selection available from your local garden centres at this time. The potatoes should be laid in a tray for sprouting.

If there are no noticeable sprouts on the ones you buy place the bag in doors in a warm room or in a hot water cupboard to break dormancy. As soon as the shoots appear place the tray outside in a frost free situation so the shoots green up ready for planting.

If you have not purchased your new season strawberry plants yet do so now and plant them out as soon as possible. Start spraying your strawberry plants every two weeks with **Mycorrcin**, it will increase your crops by 200 to 400%. Plant out any runners that have rooted up.

Vegetable gardens should be limed after the weeds have been cleared and preferably use a soft lime that is quick acting such as **Rapid Lime**.

It is also time to start germinating vegetable seeds of hardy plants. The seeds can be started off indoors in a seedling tray or punnet and watered in with **Magic Botanic Liquid** (MBL) which speeds up germination.

As soon as they show the first green leaves they must go outdoors into good overhead light so they do not stretch. An old drawer with a sheet of glass over the top is ideal for this.

Ensure that they have protection from later frosts. If you have glasshouses then germinate and grow the seedlings on by placing the trays on a bench inside.

Likewise trays of seed potatoes can be also placed on the bench to green up safely.

If you wish to build a **raised garden** for vegetables then do this now.

If you have a lot of leaves laying on the ground, gather them up and place them on a bit of lawn and run a rotary mower with catcher on over the pile to smash them into small bits.

Place the catcher lots into a black plastic rubbish bag till the bag is full. Tie off the bag and punch a lot of little holes over the bag with a nail or small screwdriver. Place the bag in a sunny spot and leave till summer. You will have made some neat leaf mould to use in gardens or containers. Placing some animal manure such as chook manure into the bag in layers will further increase the goodness of the leaf mould.

Look in your yellow pages for Poultry Farmers and Dealers locally, ring them and ask about obtaining bags of chook manure. Many of them sell good sized bags at a low price and this is great food for your gardens.

Besides spreading it over bare soil areas at this time and covering with compost you can make liquid manure for side dressing plants later on.

Take a plastic rubbish can and fill the bottom third with the manure, some grass clippings and sea weed can also be added if available. Fill to three quarters full with non chlorinated water and stir with a suitable paddle. Put the lid on and leave with an occasional stir. When ready to use dilute the mix to one part liquid manure to nine parts non chlorinated water. This can be safely watered around or over plants at this strength. Check around for the availability of other animal manures in your areas from stables or farmers. Often you can find free supplies and it's great for your gardens.

If you wish to plant any more fruit trees then now is the best time to do so. Check out your local garden centres to see what is available.

Likewise if you wish to plant any more roses now is the time to get them in.

Plantings of garlic cloves and shallots can be done now along with sowings of broad beans and peas.

Lime the planting area of the seeds and water in with **MBL**.

Make a point of harvesting and using any winter vegetables that are mature over the next few weeks, if you do not then they will go to seed as the day light hours increase. This will also give you more garden area for spring planting.

Seedlings of hardy vegetable plants and annual flowering plants are now available from garden centres and these can be planted out now.

If you have clear plastic bottles of cordial or fruit juices don't throw them into the rubbish, instead cut off the bottoms, remove the cap and push them into the ground with the vegetable plant inside.

This shelters the plant from the wind and cold and acts like a little glasshouse to promote growth.

Later when the plant starts to fill the inside of the bottle it can be removed to allow further un-cramped space. It can speed up harvest time by several weeks and give the seedlings protection from birds and cats. It's a busy time when the weather allows. Problems ring me at 0800 466464 (Palmerston North 3570606)