
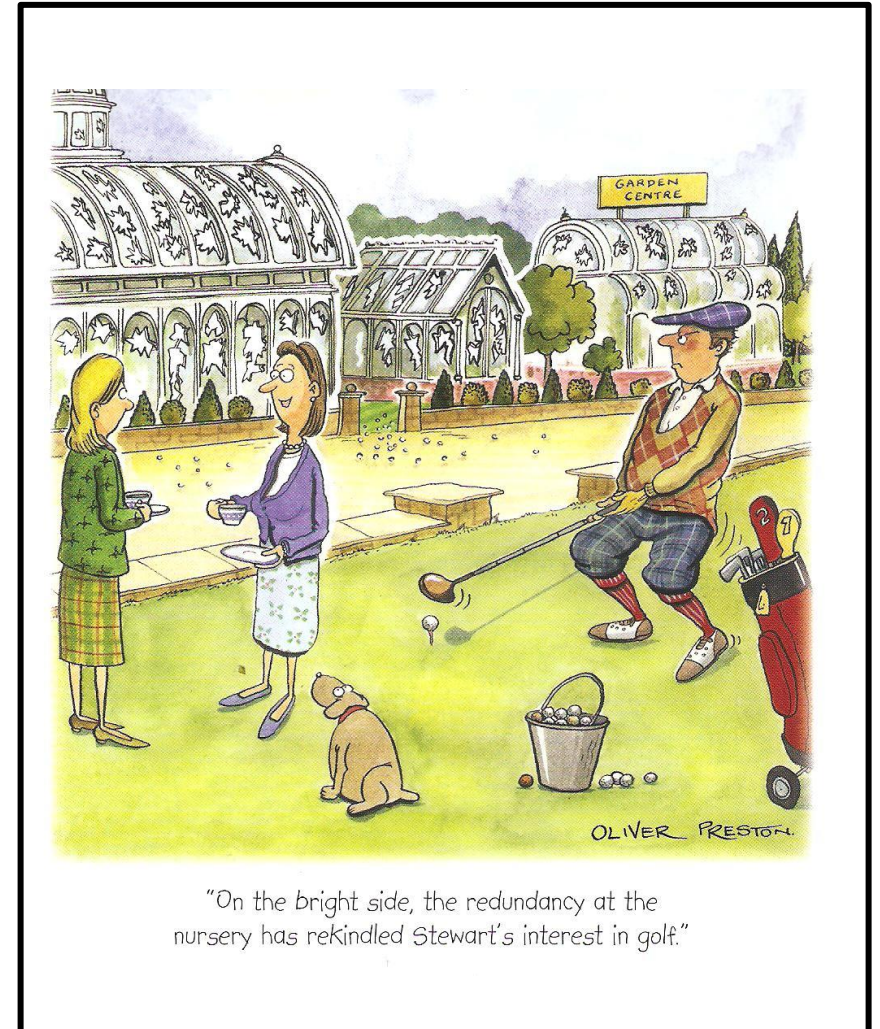


Ash Parish Garden Club

www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk

 ash parish garden club



Monthly Newsletter Oct 2021

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EDITORS NOTES

Brian -Stories to ernestperry33@gmail.com hard copy to Chris

R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY

We are affiliated to the RHS who's benefits include competitive insurance cover, free gardening advice, a free group visit to an RHS garden, (54 members to visit Wisley club trip in Summer) access to medals (Banksian medal) and show stationery and a free monthly copy of The Garden magazine (see Brenda Winton if you wish to view).
Our membership number is 10564709.

A LITTLE SQUASHED

Squashes are one of the oldest crops known to mankind They can grow at break-neck speed and one of the joys of growing them is the sensational choice of shape, variety and texture

Growing winter squashes is great fun.

There are days when you can almost watch the vine like shoots spread across the vegetable bed with side shoots growing off a main stem that can reach more that 30ft in length.

And there's the most wonderful varieites to grow from the exotic looking Turban (C.maxima) to the bulbous butternut (C.moschata) to the traditional hubbard (C.maxima) to the wonderful looking and shaped 'Heart of Gold' (C pepo}.

With their oversized leaves and chunky fruits, winter squashes are the giants of the veg patch. After planting they grow at break-neck speed and given a sunny spot the fruits can be left to swell with minimal fuss. They come in all colours and weird and wonderful shapes, making this an excellent crop.

Winter squashes are frost sensitive, heat loving plants native to the Americas which are easy to grow and very versatile when it comes to moving into the kitchen to cook both sweet and savoury dishes.

They belong to the Cucurbita genus of the cucumber family which also includes melons and marrows.

A winter squash has a stalk and a hard skin or rind surrounding a layer of dense, starchy flesh.

The boom in cucurbita in kitchen gardens over the past decade has resulted in lots of head scratching. In some countries, the same word is used for the whole interbred family.

The summer squashes, such as courgettes, have always been popular but recently a wide variety of winter squashes have joined the party and have become enormously popular.

Winter squashes have firm chestnut-flavoured flesh that's delicious roasted in the winter months, or made into a soup.

However a lot of gardeners don't grow them or eat them due to ignorance. Yet they are easy to grow in sunny positions where they can ramble a little.

They are delicious and very nutritious being rich in beta carotene, iron, vitamin C and potassium. They also contain small traces of calcium, folic acid, and minute amounts of 6 vitamins. They are considered one of the super foods and they are at their best in the depths of winter.

The key to success with these delicious veg is plenty of sunshine and thoroughly enriched, moist soil. Fruits can be left to ripen on the plant, so there's no guesswork as to when to cut them. Once they mature they can be cured and their skins will toughen up to keep the sweet, tasty flesh inside ready to eat right through the winter.

Winter squashes and pumpkins are rampant feeders so your chances of success will be greatly increased if your soil is well prepared before planting.

Pick a sunny, sheltered position for your plants and dig over the soil at least a month beforehand. Incorporate plenty of well-rotted organic matter at this point; it's fairly hard to over-feed squashes and pumpkins, so the more added to their growing area the better.

Plants may even be set onto the top of compost heaps where the endless supply of nutrients and the raised position will leave you with exceptional results.

The young plants should be planted out during the first month of spring, or as soon as the danger of frost has passed in your area - this can be as soon as early May in the south west.

There's a fine balance between over-watering in the early stages and then not watering enough once plants are growing at full speed. Over-irrigating when plants are young may lead to rotting but as soon as their growth speeds up they will need to be kept consistently moist, particularly in hot weather when evaporation rates are high. Damp soil will encourage large fruits so water freely until late August, when irrigation should be reduced.

Applying a layer of mulch to the soil will have two effects: locking in moisture and supplying an additional source of nutrients. Any organic material can be used to cover the soil, from rough compost to grass clippings over layers of cardboard or part-rotted leaves. Trailing varieties of pumpkin and squash will form new roots wherever the stem touches the ground and will push through into the mulch to draw additional strength. Pinch out trailing stems as soon as they reach 60cm to encourage a more compact plant. In most cases weeds shouldn't be a problem but any large, unwanted perennials should be dug out with a trowel as they appear.

What to grow

Here are some of the best, with lots of new varieties being introduced each year into catalogues.

- Sweet Dumpling' - white with a green stripe
- 'Baby Bear' - flattened orange fruit and very tasty seeds
- Turk's Turban' - orange with distinctive cream and green stripes
- 'Sunspot'- sweet and smooth texture with a classic deep orange flesh
- 'Sweet Lightning' sweet very early to ripen and excellent to store
- 'Celebration' sweet flavor and semi bush style with a very high yield
- 'Crown Prince' large fruits excellent storage and delicious flavour

Harvesting and storage

If you plan to keep your pumpkins and squashes for storage you will need to leave the fruits on the plant until at least October. This will help their skins to harden ready for storage. If slugs are prevalent on your patch then keep the developing and maturing fruits above the soil by slipping a square of tiling, or a similar material, beneath each fruit for it to rest on. Raising fruits off the ground will also help to prevent them from spoiling or rotting by avoiding contact with the damp soil.

GARDENING CALENDAR OCTOBER

October is the time to start tidying up and preparing for winter in earnest, while still enjoying the harvest.

Harvest

If you have apple or pear trees, now is the time to pick the fruit.

Protect

Move any tender plants, including houseplants, into a conservatory or greenhouse – don't forget to check that any heaters you have are working properly.

Container gardeners should remove any drip trays and raise terracotta patio pots with bricks or special pot feet (from garden centres) so they don't sit in water over winter and crack when it freezes. This is also the time to stop all feeding, as your plants are slowing down for the winter.

Plant

Now is the time to plant up your spring bulbs, excluding tulips, which should be planted up in November.

Tidy

Fallen leaves are an important natural resource, so don't simply discard them: clear up fallen leaves into black bin bags or create a separate pile next to the compost heap to make leaf mould ready for next October's soil conditioning. Continue planting spring bulbs, but leave tulips until next month

POETS CORNER

Michaelmas

'Tis more than mid-October, yet along the narrow garden
The daisies loved of Michaelmas keep sturdily in flower;
For though the evenings sharply fall, they find a way to harden
The crop of comely blossoming that makes for me a bower.

The honey-hunters, diligent, are searching them for sweetness;
A pair of handsome bluetits flash their colours on a stem
(Exponents of the art of standing upside-down with neatness)
While two entranced Red Admirals gaze stonily at them.

The rose has faded bedward, there to dream of scarlet duty
When June is kissing England at the flowertide of the year;
The gladiolus in his bulb considers plans for beauty
To flame along the border when his miracle is clear.

Yet autumn wears an apron, and the apron's sweet with lendings
Of colours matched with comeliness of blossom and of leaf;
And daisies dear to Michaelmas, with dances and with bendings,
Forbid my heart to weary for the Summer's beauteous sheaf.

The garden's fate not narrowly resembles my condition,
With Spring and Summer gone afield delighting other places;
Where towered the hollyhock of Hope, the larkspur of Ambition,
Unvaunting blossoms, pale but sweet, have learned to show their faces.

Though Time has thinned my lavender and plucked my reddest roses,
(He's welcome to the buttonhole he gathered in my ground!)
His picking of a loveliness fresh loveliness uncloses-
Some overshadowed pansy that my heart had never found.

What though he made a nosegay of the fairest and the tallest?
My loving fingers still can tend some simples in the dusk.
'Tis easy to be patient. I will think the best is smallest,
And water here good-humouredly my little pot of musk.

Old Time has made a nosegay. He is welcome to his plucking
Of tiger-lilies, lad's love, and the tall cathedral spires
Of lupins, and snapdragons where the bee is fond of sucking.
And all the flowery likenesses of Youth and Youth's desires.

Old Time has got my nosegay; but the gloaming finds me cheery
Because the gloaming is itself a flower of lovely hue!
The more I look at what remains, the less of world seems dreary,
For quiet breathes at Michaelmas, and well-worn friends are true.

Ah! quiet breathes at Michaelmas, and Love, his bosom sobei
Has got the perfect song by heart and hums it all the day,
To thrill me without feverings and teach how mid-October
Gives angels for the blossoms that old Time has borne away.
NORMAN GALE (1862-1942)

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Blueberry & lemon drizzle cake

Blueberries and lemon make a winning combination, especially in this easy-to-make cake

Serves 8-10 Prepare 20 minutes + cooling Cook 30-40 minutes

You will need

175g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing

175g caster sugar

Finely grated zest of

2 lemons, and juice of 1

3 Medium Free Range Eggs

175g plain flour

1 tsp baking powder

150g blueberries

3 tbsp granulated sugar

To do

Preheat the oven to 180°C, gas mark 4. Grease a 20cm round cake tin and line with baking parchment. Beat the butter and caster sugar with an electric whisk for 4-5 minutes until light and fluffy, then beat in the zest of 1 lemon. Beat the eggs together in a jug with a fork, then slowly mix into the batter, adding a spoonful of flour if the mixture starts to curdle.

Fold in the flour and baking powder until just smooth, then spoon a thin layer (about 1cm deep) of the mixture into the tin. Set aside a handful of the blueberries, then fold the rest into the remaining cake mixture and spoon into the tin. Scatter the reserved berries on top.

Bake for 30-40 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean. Cover it loosely with foil if it starts to brown too much on top. As soon as the cake is removed from the oven, pierce the top all over with a skewer. Mix the lemon juice and remaining zest with the granulated sugar and spoon all over the top. Cool completely in the tin before serving.

Cook's tip This cake can also be made in a 900g loaf tin. Bake for 1 hour, covering loosely with foil after 45 minutes if it starts to brown too much on top

BEDDING DOWN FOR THE WINTER

John Ridding

FIUCHSIAS that have flowered this year are now looking well past their best, so it's time to start making preparations for overwintering your plants. Your course of action depends on which fuchsias you are growing and the facilities that are available to you.

Hardy varieties

Permanently planted hardy fuchsias are the simplest just leave them alone! Leave the tops on and add a layer of mulch as extra protection. However, hardy varieties trained as standards must be lifted and treated as tender. If left outside, the roots will survive but the stem and head will not.

Tender fuchsias

Tender fuchsias can be left outside until the first frosts.

If you've followed my advice, you'll have been giving them regular high-potash feeds, which will have helped to ripen the wood.

As the foliage yellows and begins to die off, discontinue feeding and gradually withhold water, allowing the plants to become very dry, which will assist the defoliation process.

However, as soon as they've lost their leaves, lightly water the compost again or your plants will die.

Very lightly trim any soft unripe branches but don't prune the hard wood yet that's best left until spring. You'll find that, within a couple of weeks or so, new leaf shoots will appear from the wood.

If the plants are kept just frost free, these shoots will remain as they are until the days become longer and warmer, at which time the sap will start to rise again and they'll re-commence active growth.

Winter quarters

The main considerations when overwintering fuchsias is to keep plants frost free and don't allow them to dry out. A variety of options are available to gardeners and these are some of the more popular methods:

Heated greenhouse or conservatory Maintaining a minimum temperature 5C (41F) will keep plants ticking over during the winter and give a bigger plant that blooms earlier in the season. Keep the compost just moist but do not overwater.

If you choose not to heat your greenhouse in winter, a compromise could be to heat a small section divided off with bubble wrap or plastic sheeting especially for your fuchsias.

Cold greenhouse Tender fuchsias will not survive in a cold greenhouse alone. If you have soil borders inside, dig out a 'grave' and bury them.

Place your fuchsias carefully into the ground, then backfill the grave so that the highest parts of the plants are covered by several inches of soil.

They will remain dormant and frost free, and won't dry out while buried. Leave them alone until the end of April, when they can be dug up, pruned and re-potted ready for the new season. Even standard fuchsias can be treated this way, laid on their side.

You can also use this technique in the open garden, but remember to peg out the edges of the burial site it's easy to forget where your fuchsias were buried several months later!

Cold frame Alternatively, you can arrange your plants inside a deep cold frame, leaving a 15cm (6in) gap between the frame sides and the nearest plant.

When all plants are inside, fill the frame with peat or straw, giving at least 15cm (6in) insulation between every plant and the outside world.

Replace the frame lids and cover the whole frame with a few big blankets or similar for extra protection. Again, leave well alone until the better weather returns.

Spare room If you're lucky enough to have a spare room, bigger plants can be stored indoors. Turn off the radiators and stand your plants on a thick sheet on the floor. Keeping them frost free won't be an issue but without the heating on, they will dry out if left alone until water them little and often

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Chrysanthemums, with their richly coloured flowers in a host of shapes and sizes are great in the garden, on the allotment, in containers and in the greenhouse. Plant out in the next few weeks for flowers during late summer and into autumn, with blooms in bronzes, mahoganies, golds, creams, yellows, pinks, deep reds and purples.

Growing Tips

Check the information on the chrysanthemums you choose, as exactly how you treat them depends on the type or varieties you have. As a rule, they'll need planting with a spacing of 30-45cm (12-18in) and many will need support from a cane or proprietary support. Choose a well-fertilised and well-drained spot to grow them in the garden.

When using pots or containers, make sure they have plenty of drainage holes. The best compost is a loam-based John Innes No.3, and I'd add a little horticultural grit to keep the drainage good.

Chrysanthemums need regular watering to flower well, but take care not to over water. To get the best out of them, a weekly feed during the growing season is worthwhile. You can buy specially formulated chrysanthemum fertilisers but if you don't have one to hand then a high-potash liquid feed will do well.

Pinch out the tips of chrysanthemum plants so that side-shoots will form rapidly, which will keep the plant bushy and flowering well. Just remove the tip of the young plant, leaving about five leaves. If you want your chrysanthemums to produce fewer but larger flowers, you will need to 'disbud' each flower stem by removing all the buds and side shoots (when they are about 2cm long), so that you are left with just the top or terminal bud. If you prefer more but smaller flowers (a 'spray') then you'll need to do the opposite i.e., remove the terminal bud and leave all the side shoots.

Chrysanthemums should be stored in frost-free conditions from late autumn until May, once there is no danger of frosts. Carefully remove most of the garden soil from their roots when you lift them for storing and trim both the top growth and the roots back to about 25cm.

Temporarily 'plant' them in seed trays of well-drained compost kept in a frost-free spot. Keep the plants on the dry side with occasional light watering of the

roots, watering them a little more in early spring to encourage the plants to grow away strongly, ready for planting out.

Varieties that have caught my eye include:

- 'Primrose Enbee', an early spray type with simple, primrose-yellow blooms
- 'Chestnut Talbot Maid', an early spray double with near-spherical brown flowers
- The outdoor pot and bush 'Pompon Collection' in colours including 'Red' and 'Red Bronze'
- 'Green Mist', a wacky variety with lime-green spidery flowers
- 'Misty Primrose' with near-spherical bright yellow flowers
- The 'Spartan' chrysanthemums - 'Raspberry' with pinkish petals and a golden-yellow centre

