

NOVEMBER

Wind and rain are on the increase and temperatures are falling, so make sure anything tender has either been brought inside or has protection from the frost. Nothing much entices us outdoors to garden in November, but there are still things to do!

PLANT tulips for a brilliant display next spring. Border tulips are grown for their display and will normally only give a good show for one year, and will grow in most soils so long as they're not waterlogged. They are usually dug up after the first year but there are some species that will naturalise and flower in subsequent years, such *Tulipa sprengeri* and *Tulipa sylvestris*. Other species of border tulips will flower year after year, so check the catalogue or packet details carefully. When buying bulbs, choose ones that are firm and have no mould on their skin: the papery brown skin falls off easily.

PRUNE roses and buddleia shrubs to prevent wind rock, by taking off around half of their growth. Also prune apples and pears - remove any dead or weak growth and any crossing branches, then shorten this year's growth on main branches by a third, to a bud facing in the direction you want it to grow. Cut back side-shoots to five or six buds. This can also be done early next year, so long as the trees are still dormant.

MULCH Once vegetable beds are clear, apply a mulch or organic matter such as garden compost or spent mushroom compost to a depth of about 5cms to increase the fertility of the soil. Leave the worms to drag it in over the winter.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE

- Keep tidying leaves and put into bags or containers to make leaf mould. Get a plastic bag and fill with fallen leaves, making sure they are damp but not too wet. Tie it at the top and use a garden fork to make small holes in the bag to let water run out as well as allowing air to get in. Find somewhere where you can leave the bag for 12 months or so to let the leaves break down into leafmould. Instead of bags, you can also make a cage with stakes and wire netting, filling it gradually with leaves as the month progresses. (See more information in the December Guidelines.)
- Insulate pots with bubble wrap to prevent the plant roots freezing.
- Put grease bands around fruit trees to prevent damage caused by winter moths.
- Cover brassicas if pigeons become a problem.
- Bring the greenhouse heater out of storage, clean it and put it in place for colder nights to avoid frost damage. Put up bubble wrap in one area to make a mini-greenhouse to give really tender plants added protection.
- Check stored crops such as apples and onions – only keep those that are firm and not showing signs of decay.

JUNIORS' JOBS FOR NOVEMBER

This is a good month to plant **rhubarb**! A pot or container must be 50cm deep and wide because rhubarb has big roots and needs a lot of room to grow. The pot must also have drainage holes – rhubarb needs water that drains off without leaving the plant waterlogged.

- The soil needs to contain food that gets the plant growing and the roots established. There is a special compost for this purpose but you will need to get it from a plant nursery – it is called John Innes No 3.
- Put some of the soil into the pot and place the rhubarb plant on top. Add more soil until the growing tip is just below the surface – covering it completely will rot the crown of the plant. Firm the soil and water the rhubarb. Cut off any old leaves.
- Rhubarb is very hardy in cold weather – in fact, it likes to have a couple of months when the temperature is close to freezing to grow well. If it gets very, very cold, then the pot might need covering with fleece but it's unlikely in our country.
- In spring, feed it with multi-purpose plant food and put about 5-8cm of well-rotted manure on it if you can find any – but not fresh manure because it is too strong and will harm the plant.