



Gardening During The Pandemic



Some reflections by Peter Dickinson, U3A Gardening Group

Gardening has certainly helped me through these difficult times. Research has found that almost 3 million new gardeners have sprung up this year. It has shown that a new, younger, breed of gardeners has emerged with nearly half (49%) under 45.

We have used our garden to unwind and enjoy with family and friends. Many others have started to grow their own food.

The research reported that our health and well being has been helped, often with a relief of stress but more importantly in helping people keep fit, both physically and mentally. There has been a return to enjoying and appreciating nature and wildlife. There has also been time and opportunity to connect with neighbours and friends using the garden as a safe space.

Latterly, visiting public gardens such as Burnby Hall, Sewerby Walled Garden, Sledmere House and Scampton Walled Garden have proved very enjoyable experiences. New ideas have been observed, friends have met up safely and money has been spent on even more plants!

Looking back at photographs taken in the garden has given much pleasure. They show how many new projects and garden designs have taken place. They give us ideas for the forthcoming year, which areas of the garden are the highlights, which have been disappointing and where changes are needed next year.

The U3A Gardening group was set up in 2012 and we have around 30 members who have enjoyed a mixture of interesting talks and a variety of garden visits. Let us hope that we will get back one day, either by Zoom or an outside visit or eventually an indoor meeting.

Keep safe and keep gardening!

What should we be thinking about in Autumn in our gardens?

John Munson asked me to put down some ideas for members who have never gardened or feel they need some ideas to help with their garden so here goes....

Autumn is a key part of the gardening year and we must take advantage of the days when the weather is good.

1. Planting Bulbs, in pots or in the ground. Now is the time to create a wonderful display in spring time. You will need
 - Some bulbs. Tulips, Daffodils, Crocus, Snowdrops, Bluebells
 - Multi purpose compost.
 - Some cheap plant pots or a clean border.
 - Trowel or spade.How to plant them?

- Go on the web and Google 'How to plant bulbs?' We are so lucky now with the internet because we can watch a short video on bulb planting in pots or in the ground. There is an incredible choice: www.rhs.gardening - YouTube – www.gardendesign.com www.bbc.co.uk There are so many videos showing the bulbs being planted.
- I have just experimented with a 'lasagne' method with layers of different bulbs: daffodils on the bottom layer, tulips, crocus with some pansy plants on the top. Will it work? I hope so. We never know in gardening but have fun in trying!
- The RHS have just launched 'Grow at Home' to encourage people to plant now. There are seven themed weeks with lots of 'advice' videos.

2. Plant an Autumn basket or Planter with shrubs and bulbs.

- You will need: small conifers or foliage plants ; pansies or violas ; perhaps some left over bulbs ; any other plants from your local nursery ; compost and planter.
- Be creative! Put together a mixed planter...CHEAT! Google 'Mixed Autumn Planting'. The results can be stunning. Put the pot in view of a window you look out of regularly and you will be very proud of your creation. Take a photograph to show your friends.

3. Tidying up the garden in Autumn

- Pruning or cutting back – now is the time to tidy the garden for winter. Shrubs, hedges, dead flowers all need cutting back.
- Google 'How to prune or cut back a...' You will be presented with numerous videos of when, how, what and why to cut back
- You will need secateurs, shears and a friend if it is too hard.

4. Visit a Garden Centre.

Since lockdown Garden Centres have been very safe with one-way systems ; excellent Café arrangements and staff willing to give advice on compost, pots, planters, bulbs and foliage plants.

- Buy your bulbs, compost and a planter.
- Look in the indoor plant section and find the cheap foliage plants, usually for about £3 in a lovely pot. Buy one for yourself and one for a friend.
- Put it in your kitchen window and talk to it each day. Watch it grow. After a month you will hopefully have to put it in a larger pot. You will be very proud of your efforts when it has grown to full size...and you don't have to spend much money.

5. Bring tender plants under cover.

Now that we are into October, temperatures start to drop and there is a chance of night frosts. Many tender plants have to be protected.

- Some people use a conservatory, some a cold frame and some a Green House and move plants inside. Others use a car port, fleece or the shade of a wall.

- Fuschias and Pelagoniums (Geraniums) are many gardeners favourites but are succulent and need lots of care. There are many others.
- Again – go online and Google ‘How to protect tender plants in Autumn’ Don’t panic if they get frozen and die; you can always go out and buy some more plants in spring or even better try to grow some plants of your own in the spring.

6. Looking forward to next year.

- Have you tried growing herbs in pots?
- Try to grow some bedding plants: Marigolds, Rudbackias, Cosmos, Sweet Peas are examples.
- Try to take a lot of pictures of your garden to create a diary of the year.
- Join the U3A Gardening Group when we can get started again. If you need help please e mail or telephone and we will try to put one of our members in touch with you.