

CHAPTER 9 – SEPTEMBER

September: Planting Spring-Flowering Bulbs



As the summer warmth begins to wane and the days gradually grow shorter, September brings the perfect window of opportunity to start planting spring-flowering bulbs. It always amazes me that you plant an ugly bulb and it is transformed into a beautiful flower. These bulbs hold the promise of vibrant blooms that will greet you with cheerful colours after the long winter months. Isn't nature a wonderful thing.

Here's a step-by-step guide to planting spring-flowering bulbs in September:

Choose the Right Bulbs:

- Select a variety of spring-flowering bulbs that thrive in the UK's climate.
- Daffodils, tulips, crocuses, hyacinths and grape hyacinths, alliums, and snowdrops are popular choices.
- N.B. It is better to plant Tulip bulbs after the first frost.

Select the Planting Site:

- Choose an area that drains well and receives adequate sunlight. Most spring bulbs prefer full to partial sun.

Prepare the Soil:

- Enrich the soil with well-rotted compost or organic matter to improve drainage and provide nutrients for the bulbs.

Spacing and Depth:

- Follow the packaging instructions for specific spacing and planting depth for each type of bulb.
- As a general rule, bulbs should be planted at a depth that's about three times their height.

Planting:

1. **Dig Individual Holes:** Use a bulb planter or a trowel to dig individual holes for each bulb. Alternatively, dig a larger area to plant several bulbs together for a naturalized look.
2. **Place the Bulbs:** Place the bulbs in the holes with the pointed end facing upwards. Make sure there's enough space between each bulb.
3. **Cover and Water:** Gently cover the bulbs with soil and press down to eliminate air pockets. Water the area thoroughly to help the bulbs settle in.

Tips for Success:

- **Grouping and Layering:** Consider planting bulbs in clusters or layers of different heights and colours to create a visually striking display.
- **Adding Bone Meal:** Incorporate a sprinkle of bone meal at the bottom of the planting hole to encourage root growth and enhance flowering.
- **Mulching:** Apply a layer of mulch over the planted area to help retain moisture and provide some insulation during winter.
- **Naturalizing:** For a natural look, toss a handful of bulbs onto the planting area and plant them where they fall.

Looking Ahead:

- After planting, keep an eye on the soil's moisture level. Bulbs need adequate moisture to establish their root systems before winter.
- As the temperatures drop, the bulbs will go through a period of dormancy. Their energy will be focused on root development during this time.
- As spring approaches, you'll be rewarded with the emergence of green shoots, which will eventually burst into vibrant blossoms.

Conclusion: Planting spring-flowering bulbs in September is like planting a promise of beauty that will bloom in the months to come. With careful preparation and proper planting techniques, your garden will awaken with

a spectacular display of colour, bringing joy to both you and the pollinators that visit your garden.

September: Harvesting Late Summer Crops



As the warm days of summer transition into the cooler embrace of autumn, September is a time of abundance in the garden. Late summer crops that have been nurtured over the season are now ready to be harvested and enjoyed.

Here's a guide to successfully harvest your late summer crops, along with some tips to make the most of your garden's bounty:

Crop Readiness:

- Different crops mature at different rates. Observe the plants closely and wait until they reach their peak ripeness before harvesting.
- Look for signs such as colour changes, firmness, and the ease with which fruits or vegetables detach from the plant.

Tools and Containers:

- Have a selection of harvesting tools ready, such as sharp scissors, pruning shears, and a basket or container to collect the harvested produce.

Harvesting Techniques:

- **Gentle Handling:** Handle the plants and their produce gently to avoid damaging them. Use care when cutting stems or detaching fruits.
- **Avoid Overcrowding:** Give space to your harvested crops in your container to prevent bruising and ensure good air circulation.

Harvesting Common Late Summer Crops:

- **Tomatoes:** Harvest when they have reached their desired colour and are firm to the touch. Twist or cut the stem, leaving the calyx attached.
- **Peppers:** Pick peppers when they've reached their full size and have vibrant colours. Cut the stem about an inch above the pepper.
- **Courgettes and Squash:** Harvest when they are young and tender. Use a sharp knife or scissors to cut the stem.

- **Beans:** Harvest before the beans become too mature and tough. Snap or cut them off the plant. Any beans that have hardened, let them dry out and the seeds can be retained for next year's crop.
- **Cucumbers:** Harvest cucumbers when they are firm, smooth, and their color is even. Use scissors or a knife to cut them from the vine.
- **Corn:** Check the silk for brown and dry tips, then gently pull down and check the kernels. If they're plump and milky, the corn is ready.
- **Herbs:** Harvest herbs by snipping the leaves or stems, leaving enough to encourage further growth.

Gardening Tips for Harvesting Success:

- **Morning Harvest:** Harvest in the early morning when temperatures are cooler. This helps preserve the quality of the produce.
- **Frequent Check-ins:** Regularly inspect your plants to catch crops at their prime harvesting time.
- **Regular Harvesting:** Don't let ripe produce linger on the plant for too long, as this can affect plant health and encourage pests.
- **Wash Before Storage:** Wash your harvested produce gently to remove dirt and pests before storing or using them.
- **Preservation:** If you have an excess of produce, consider preserving through canning, freezing, or drying.

Enjoy the Fruits of Your Labor:

- Savor the flavours of your freshly harvested crops by incorporating them into your meals.
- Share your garden's bounty with friends, family, and neighbours to spread the joy.

Conclusion: September's harvest is a culmination of your gardening efforts throughout the season. By following these harvesting guidelines and tips, you're not only enjoying the rewards of your hard work but also ensuring that your garden remains productive and healthy.

September: Preparing Garden Beds for Winter in the UK



As summer gracefully gives way to autumn, September is a pivotal month for gardeners. It's time to start thinking about the transition to cooler weather and the steps needed to ensure your garden beds are well-prepared for the upcoming winter months. Here's a comprehensive guide on how to get your garden beds ready for winter:

Clearing and Cleaning:

- Begin by removing spent annuals and any plants that are past their prime. This clears the way for new growth next season.
- Pull out weeds and ensure the beds are free from debris that can harbour pests and diseases.

Pruning and Trimming:

- Trim back any dead or diseased branches from trees and shrubs to prevent winter damage.
- Trim perennials that have finished flowering to encourage healthy growth in the next growing season.

Soil Care:

- Loosen the soil using a garden fork to improve aeration and drainage.
- Add a layer of well-rotted compost or organic matter to enrich the soil with nutrients for next year's plants.

Mulching:

- Apply a layer of organic mulch over the soil to insulate plants from temperature fluctuations and help retain moisture.
- Mulching also prevents weed growth and erosion during the winter months.

Bulb Planting:

- Plant spring-flowering bulbs like daffodils, crocuses, and tulips during September. These bulbs need time to establish their root systems before winter.

Protecting Vulnerable Plants:

- For tender perennials that might not survive the winter, consider lifting them and storing them indoors.
- Cover delicate plants with horticultural fleece or cloths on frosty nights to protect them from cold temperatures.

Pest and Disease Control:

- Inspect plants for signs of pests and diseases. Remove any affected parts to prevent the spread.
- Clean garden tools to prevent the carryover of pests or diseases to the next season.

Considerations for Wildlife:

- Leave some seed heads and plant debris in your garden to provide food and shelter for birds and beneficial insects during the colder months.

Lawn Care:

- Give your lawn some attention by aerating, scarifying, and overseeding to promote healthy growth.
- Raise the cutting height of your lawnmower to prevent stress on the grass during winter.

Watering:

- Continue watering your plants until the first hard frost. Adequate soil moisture helps plants endure the winter.

Garden Planning:

- Take time to reflect on this year's gardening successes and challenges. Use your observations to plan for next year's garden.

Winter Tools and Supplies:

Organize and store garden tools and equipment in a dry sheltered area.

- Stock up on winter gardening supplies such as fleece, cloths, and mulch.

Conclusion: Preparing your garden beds for winter in September is a crucial investment in the health and beauty of your garden. By following these steps, you're setting the stage for a successful transition to the colder months and ensuring that your garden will thrive once again come spring.