

Winter work pays dividends

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From bulb planting to edging lawns, pruning, mulching and dividing seasonal perennials, there are plenty of winter gardening jobs to keep Jack Frost from nipping at your toes.

Pruning

Winter is a good time to prune most deciduous trees and shrubs as you have a clear view of the canopy and branches now that the leaves have fallen. Remove any dead, damaged, or diseased material. Prune low-lying branches particularly those that are troublesome when mowing lawns or those that look untidy. Remember to check pruning times for individual trees and shrubs.

Edging and mulching

Edging existing beds & borders will provide a neat and finished look to your garden. Winter is the perfect time to carry out this task provided your soil is not too wet. A sharp half-moon edging spade will create a clean, crisp finish to your borders. Once finished why not mulch your beds with rich organic material such as garden compost or composted bark mulch.

Applying compost at this time of year will lock in the moisture in your soil for the season ahead, suppress weed growth, and enrich the soil as it breaks down, feeding your plants and more importantly the



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soil and its army of beneficial micro-organisms.

Dividing perennials

Dividing perennial plants every two to three years to maintain health and vigour is a cost-effective way of increasing the number of plants in your garden.

Summer flowering perennials such as hemerocallis, phlox, and astilbes can be divided in November. Ornamental grasses, hostas, and geraniums are best divided in early spring just as the plants are coming into growth.

Remove old growth and gently lift plants shaking off any excess soil to expose the roots. Divide the plant into several clumps with healthy shoots and a good root system. Depending on the plant, it's best to use a sharp spade or lawn edgers to divide the plants. Replant in your chosen location and incorporate plenty of garden compost or well-rotted manure (at least a year old) into the soil before planting. Firm the plant in with your heel so the roots make good contact with the soil and water well. Watch out for slugs and snails in early spring.

A blast of colour: November is the perfect time to plant spring bulbs



Spring bulbs provide a blast of vibrant colour in the garden. The 'Black parrot' tulip (pictured above) is a stunning variety with blackish-purple, cup-shaped flowers with irregularly wavy petals on tall stems. November is the perfect time to plant bulbs, with a vast array available in garden centres. Plant tulips to a depth of two to three times their height in a free draining soil. If planting in heavy soil, bulbs may benefit from being placed on a layer of horticulture grit to aid drainage. Ensure the bulbs are firm and not soft before you plant them. Tulips can be planted in pots to be placed around the garden and in borders to add seasonal colour and then be removed once they finish flowering. Use a rich compost if planting the bulbs in pots and feed the bulbs in spring with a high-potassium liquid feed such as tomato feed.

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Tulip 'Johan Cruijff'.