

GARDENING

Stealing a march on spring!



THE GARDEN GIRL

CAROLINE BROOME

There's no getting away from it, winter is here! You may rest assured that if you don't step outside of your door into the garden, everything will be just fine. But why miss a trick? The first quarter of the new year can allow you to steal a march on Spring if you follow my advice.

By now, let's assume that you've completed all your winter prep. Leaves have been cleared off the lawn and scooped out of ponds, you've pruned back spent vegetation (leaving some ornamental seed heads as food for the birds,) and mulched your borders – taking care not to

smother the crowns of dormant perennials and avoided application on waterlogged or frozen soil.

So, what is there left to do, I hear you ask? Although spring flowering bulb planting season has passed by now, December is not too late to plant tulips. Whilst tulips do not do well in clay soil if left in the ground year on year, and should therefore be planted new each season, most other containerised bulbs can be recycled. Once flowered, allow the foliage to die down naturally, then lift bulbs and store them in a cool, dry, dark place, ready to replant directly into your borders next September. By doing this you are on your way to creating year-round colour in your garden, starting as early as end of January, with snowdrops and winter aconites, followed by iris reticulata and crocus in February, daffs in March and April, and tulips in May.

This being the dreariest time of year, I urge you to create festive patio or balcony displays to lift your spirits. There are plenty of colourful bedding plants to be found in garden centres right now, if you are prepared to fight your way through the Christmas decorations. I favour red, white and silver – hellebore Christmas Carol, marbled cyclamen, Silver Bush convolvulus cneorum, euonymus japonicus White Spire – evergreen perennials, which can be relocated in permanent positions within your borders next spring. No waste and better value.

January to early April is typically the time to buy and begin planting bare root roses and shrubs. Bare

root plants cost less, establish a better root system, in my opinion, and produce less packaging waste. What's not to like? Whilst some nurseries do hold stock, you will find more variety through buying mail order.

Given a mild mid-February, you should be able to start planting out containerised shrubs and early flowering perennials. Following on from that, the time to plant your snowdrops 'in the green' is early March. 'In the green' simply means bulbs that have been dug out of the ground once their flowers have faded but with the foliage still on. Don't make my mistake and plant dry snowdrop bulbs, they are unlikely to prosper and you'll never see them again.

At last, we are getting to the good bit: Plant buying. I'm going by personal experience here, suggesting plants that are either in my own garden or gardens that I work in, tried & tested, hardy and requiring the minimum of fuss. Most are aimed at neutral to alkaline clay soils, typical of the Suburb. I prefer single flowered species, favoured by pollinators, and if plants are happy, they will spread through self-seeding and be more resistant to pests and disease. If you are aiming for year-round interest, then visit your local nurseries or garden centres every month, as they will be selling whatever is at its best right at that time. If you buy at least one plant every month you are guaranteed to have something interesting in your garden every day of the year!

Late winter is the ideal time to plant spring flowering plants that thrive in dry shade under deciduous trees. The one Must Have plant for dry shade is the fern; evergreen or deciduous, there are ferns to suit every aspect of shade, throughout all months of the year. Characteristically, ground cover woodland plants such as brunnera, pulmonaria, epimedium, solomon's seal, hellebores, bleeding heart, often with lemon, lime or silver leaves, give their best performance before the trees come into leaf and shade out the sun. Once the



Photo: Caroline Broome

canopy closes over to create dense shade, they fade into the background, producing a tapestry effect with their foliage. Whilst the obvious solution to bare winter borders is to plant evergreens, particularly the silk tassel bush (garrya elliptica James Roof), to create real winter impact, you can add colour in the form of dogwood (cornus), red and orange stems ablaze; ghostly white arching stems of white stemmed bramble (rubus cockburnianus); shrubs with unusual formations, such as contorted hazel (corylus contorta), and fragrance provided by winter-sweet (chimonanthus), hamamelis (witch hazel), sarcococca (sweet box), arrowwood (viburnum x bodnantense) or my favourite, paperbush (edgeworthia).

If areas of your garden are in very dry shade, created by conifers, evergreens and the borrowed landscape of neighbouring Suburb woodland, it's no surprise that very few substantial plants will grow, let alone grass! Think of a dense woodland floor, layer upon layer of leaf mold, composted bark, brambles, ivy and not much else. Mimic nature, forget plants, create a stumpery, lay a bark mulch, add a bench, a piece of sculpture or even a children's willow weave den. There is no point working against Nature, you won't win!

For some of the most spectacular examples of the winter garden why not visit our very own North London gem, Myddelton House in Enfield.

Horticultural Society Special Spring Show

MARJORIE HARRIS

In addition to the usual Summer and Autumn shows, the Horticultural Society will be holding an extra special non-competitive Spring Show next year at Fellowship House on Saturday 9th April. We want to fill the hall with a burst of lovely spring colour and scents for all to enjoy, so now is the time to start planting your bulbs and other spring flowers. Anyone of any age can enter free – in pots or as cut flowers (bulbs, corms and rhizomes and shrubs and other spring plants) to make a gorgeous display. A full list of the categories will be distributed to Horticultural Society members shortly.

Other plans for next year include our popular 'grow a potato in a pot' competition and a scarecrow competition. For full details and how to join, go to www.hortsoc.co.uk.

London Gardens Society 2021 awards

CAROLINE BROOME

On Thursday 7th October 2021, The London Gardens Society held its annual Trophy Presentation Evening at the Old Library, Guildhall. The All London Championships are open to individual garden enthusiasts, many of whom live locally, and Affiliated Societies, of which the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society is one.

After a two-year absence, enthusiasm seemed to have increased, with several new entrants taking part throughout the Suburb. Stalwart members, Diane Berger, Yvonne Oliver, Marjorie Harris, Rosie Daniels and David Weinberg all received prestigious certificates, with new participants Northway Community Rose Gardens winning Silver in the Garden Display In a Public Place category, and The Orchard Housing Society also achieving Silver in the Alms-houses class. HGS Hort Soc member Gerlinde Kathuria won trophies for her front and back gardens, culminating in her winning the RHS Banksian Medal, awarded to a private member accumulating the most points in classes entered of the All London Championships.

Many congratulations to all those who took part, either as individuals or through the HGS Hort Soc affiliation. Oh, and by the way, David and I won First Place, Gold medal for Garden, any size, with paid or Professional Help. In case you're wondering, that's me, employing my own professional services, in our own garden!



We'll bring your dream garden to life

Our professional team with seven years experience specialises in all types of garden landscaping including • Fencing • Decking • Driveways & Patios • Turfing • Irrigation. Also monthly garden maintenance undertaken. For further details or a free quotation, contact Naomi: 07718 592955 / 8374 8103 • naomilandscaping@gmail.com or visit our website at: www.naomilandscaping.co.uk

Naomi Landscaping

Four Seasons GARDEN MAINTENANCE

- ♣ Weekly or fortnightly maintenance contract
- ♣ Garden clearance
- ♣ Lawn care (mowing, turfing, fertilisation etc.)
- ♣ Planting
- ♣ Weed killing & treatment
- ♣ Hedge trimming, tree works
- ♣ Patio cleaning
- ♣ All general garden services

We offer a professional, reliable service with 16 years of experience at an affordable price. Call Roland or leave a message for a free quote.

♣ 07584 574520 ♣ fourseasonsgarden@hotmail.com