



THE GARDEN GIRL

## Taking stock

CAROLINE BROOME

June, July, August, the summer months we all look forward to. You've nurtured and tended your garden in preparation for the main event. It's time to sit back and enjoy.

It's also the time to take stock of borders. Observe what is thriving and what is struggling. Keeping a monthly photo log can be very helpful. There will be plants that are overpowering their less vigorous neighbours. With deciduous shrubs in full leaf, it's possible that they may be shading out the understory. Spring flowering shrubs may be looking untidy now, bulb leaves dying back naturally, and early flowering climbers may be swamping their supports. Perennial weeds need dealing with before they spread.

Late winter flowering shrubs like chimonanthus, sarcococca and camellias, should have been

pruned back directly after flowering, but it's not too late if you get a spurt on! Shrubs like philadelphus that flower in May and June should also be pruned immediately after flowering. As a rule of thumb, prune early flowering shrubs before the longest day. Deadhead them or, if they are overtaking their allotted space, reduce their height and width by roughly a third and take out any congested, dead or crossing branches to the base.

If left to its own devices, fatsia japonica, can grow to over 2m tall with multiple stems. My advice – prune out all the oldest, tallest and barest stems, leaving the newest stems to create a more compact shrub. This can be done when necessary. Fatsia japonica is bullet proof!

Clematis pruning tends to stir fear in the hearts of even the most experienced gardener. Winter flowering clematis such as armandii (flowers in March) and montana (May) can be pruned quite hard after flowering, or you can let them run rampant if they are being trained over a pergola or a tree. It'll look a bit brutal but regrowth will be rapid. Nelly Moser and President, should only be lightly pruned to fit their supports, perhaps cutting one or two stems back to the base to encourage new growth. They may flower again lightly later in the summer.

As a general rule, prune pip fruit in winter and stone fruit in summer. Summer is a good time to prune trees that you want to keep small and for dwarf trees, trained apples and pears, as it doesn't trigger lots of new growth. It's also a chance to remove diseased or dead wood. Avoid cutting off branches that have started to develop fruits (known as setting fruits), as well as branches with fruits on.

When planting in the summer months you just need a few safeguarding techniques. Our local London clay can be very hard in a drought period, but very claggy if it's wet. So, when digging your hole in dry clay, make sure you break up any clumps to loosen the soil within the hole as this will enable the plant to establish new roots. If the plant likes well drained soil then incorporate copious amount of grit into the planting hole to aid drainage. Before planting ensure your plant is well watered. Now fill the planting hole with water and once its drained away you can pop your plant in. Water in well. If it's a flowering perennial then use a potassium rich feed, such as Tomorite, which encourages flowering. If it's a shrub, an all-purpose organic seaweed fertiliser will do fine. Water thoroughly once a week rather than little and often.

It pays dividends to maintain a regular feeding regime. Floral container displays and hanging baskets, planted in compost containing slow-release fertiliser during May, by now will probably benefit from a drench of Tomorite every fortnight throughout summer. Regular deadheading promotes new flowers. If you mulched in autumn or early spring with well-rotted manure, your borders should not need feeding as the plants draw natural resources

through the nutrient rich soil. Certain plants, such as roses and clematis, are heavy feeders, so a liberal sprinkling of specialist plant food in early summer give them a much-needed boost.

Surround your seating/dining areas with container displays of fragrant plants and herbs. Use

large pots or tubs for visual impact and plant sustainability: Creeping Rosemary and English lavender are particularly suitable for containers. Edible herbs such as thyme, fennel, chives, oregano and sage are ornamental and hardy. Keep bird feeders topped up and you will have your own built in pest control.

## HortSoc update

MARJORIE HARRIS

The Horticultural Society is putting the finishing touches to preparations for the 289th Flower Show, to be held at the Free Church Hall, Northway, NW11 6PB from 3-5pm on Saturday 11 June. The programme will include all the favourites but has simplified the classes that can be entered by old hands and newcomers alike. There should be a riot of colour on show and some lovely summer scents wafting from the roses, sweet peas, delphiniums and other flowers. Fruit, veg and preserves can be seen and children under 12 are invited to win prizes for three decorated cupcakes and/or a collage using flowers and leaves. People of any age can submit photographs of 'Wildlife in your garden'. Friends and family can enjoy home-made teas and there's a scarecrow competition open to all ages of a favourite Disney character. Scarecrows should be brought to the Free Church Hall by 11am on Saturday 11 June. Hort Soc programme details can be found at [www.hortsoc.co.uk](http://www.hortsoc.co.uk) or join the society and get a handbook from [HGSHS.membership@virginmedia.com](mailto:HGSHS.membership@virginmedia.com) / 020 8444 2329.



## Suburb in Bloom

MARJORIE HARRIS

On Sunday 17 July, the Suburb will be in bloom as eight of its choicest gardens and one attractive allotment will open from 11.30am-5.30pm, hoping to welcome as many visitors as possible to support two of the Suburb's favourite charities. Refreshments will be available at Fellowship House in Willifield Way, and all profits from food sales will go to Forces' mental health charity, Combat Stress. Entry tickets with maps will be on sale on the day at Fellowship House and from individual gardens. Garden entry ticket sales and an extensive raffle with fantastic prizes will benefit The North London Hospice. Finchley Nurseries and some gardens will be selling plants.

(Below) Bespoke herb window box (Bottom) Roses at their peak (Photos: Caroline Broome)



## 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

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