



Hello and welcome to *our August newsletter*

The Natters August Newsletter has arrived!!

In this month's newsletter, we will be looking at trimming your lavender bushes and hedges, discussing how to take flower cuttings and harvesting your kitchen garden. We look at a good book to entertain your 8-12 year olds during the loooong summer holidays!!!

Around the garden remember to be wary of pests and diseases, minimise slug damage and continue the weeding!! Try to keep ponds in check, apply lawn feed, keep watering and feeding bedding plants in hanging baskets & containers and continue mowing the lawn regularly.

For avid gardeners and those who simply spectate, the August garden is a true spectacle of colour, textures and fragrances. This month, flowers such as sunflowers, dahlias and roses are at their peak. Don't feel awful about cutting stems and bringing them inside for your own floral display and enjoyment because you will be amazed by the pride you feel knowing you have grown those beauties!

If you are itching to get ahead for autumn, go for it! August can be a great time to sow some hardy annuals for next year or add mulch to any space ready for autumn bulbs. Your pots can be cleared and put to one side if you are planning on planting any autumn bulbs for patio displays.

Trim Lavender...

At this time, you want to remove the old flower spikes, which you may well have already done if you like to cut lavender for drying.

If not, just go over the plants with a pair of shears, cutting off the old flower spikes and about 2.5cm (1in) of the leafy growth at the tips of the shoots. This will encourage side shoots to grow, keeping the plants bushy and compact.

Keep in mind that lavender rarely grows again from the old wood. If plants have become old and straggly it's best to take cuttings or replace with new plants. Consider your soil and if there is a high clay content incorporate coarse grit before planting new lavenders. This improves drainage which they enjoy.





Hedge trimming....

Most hedges can be given their final trim towards the end of the month as they will not grow much after this, although conifers may need another going over.

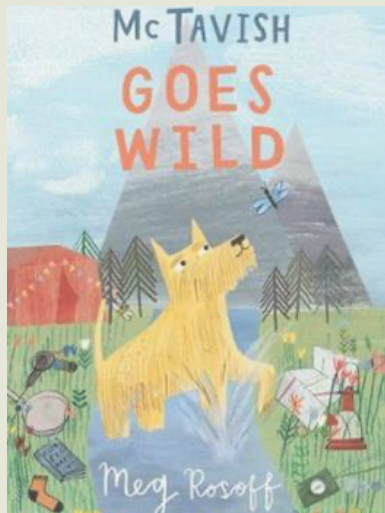
If you want a level top to a hedge, fix a post at either end and tie twine between them at the required height to act as a guide.

Trim the sides first, working up from the bottom using a powered trimmer or shears.

Working upwards means that as you cut the trimmings fall away and you can see where you are going!!

One top tip is to make the hedge wider at the base and narrower at the top which helps it to stand up to weather better leaving the top until last using the twine as your guide.

If you are considering trimming conifers it is recommended you use shears because powered trimmers can bruise the growth.



School holiday read for 8-12 year olds.....

The Peachey family have a rescue dog called McTavish – but little do they know that McTavish is pretty sure he's there to rescue THEM. In fact, McTavish is trying to train them all to stop squabbling and dithering.

So when the family decide to go camping, McTavish is very pleased. Not only does this mean that he can tag along on holiday too, but he'll get the chance to put his plans into action and bring the family closer together.

McTavish Goes Wild is the second of the McTavish adventures, but you don't need to have read the first to get swept up in it. The Peachey family is very well drawn – each member has their little quirks and peculiarities: Pa Peachey sees danger everywhere; the oldest daughter, Ava, is always buried in a philosophy book...

All these details add up to a gentle and knowing humour and an affectionate portrait of a modern family with different interests. The gorgeous illustrations by Grace Easton also give the text a lovely dash of whimsy.

Beyond all this is a rallying call for nature and (mindfully) exploring the joys of the countryside, no matter your age. Be warned, though: your kids may beg you to take them camping after this one!

How to take flower cuttings.....

August is known for being the traditional month to take cuttings of geraniums, fuchsias and other tender perennials. They can also be taken from spring through until autumn too but if you take cuttings after September don't pot them up until spring. Cuttings are very easy to take, she says!! Here goes.....



- Choose a shoot that is soft and green at the tip and cut it just below a leaf joint. Trim the soft part at the top just below a leaf this helps reduce moisture loss.
- Make a shallow cut 1.5cm long on one side of the stem and dip in to a hormone rooting powder or gel.
- Put the cuttings into some potting compost down as far as their lower leaves. Firm the compost around them, label and water with tap water.
- Put a plastic bag over the entire pot and secure with an elastic band. Be careful not to touch the leaves. Placing slightly taller sticks either side of the pot will ensure the bag stays away from the leaves preventing rotting.



Top tip!

If the plant you are taking a cutting from has a larger leaf such as a hydrangea or some roses, cut the top leaves in half before putting into the soil. This will prevent the leaves from taking up all the water, and it can be used to help new roots to grow.

Kitchen garden harvesting...

Fresh vegetables taken from your own garden are particularly flavoursome, it is important to harvest them whilst they are still young for the best flavour. As they age the texture and flavour changes. Also plants like courgettes and marrows, if harvested regularly, encourages the plant to produce more flowers and fruit. This way you will have a crop well into the autumn. Summer cabbages would normally be ready now so its advantageous to cut and enjoy now before the pests do before you!!!!

Harvest and freeze beans to prevent wastage. you can freeze runner, french and podded broad beans.

Harvest onions once the foliage collapses. Choose a dry day so you can ease them out carefully with a fork and leave to dry in the air.

When you see some windfall apples and pears on the ground, this is the sign they are ready for harvesting! If they don't come loose easily leave them for a few more days but you should be able to cup them in your hand and gently twist. Eat and enjoy the early harvest as they don't keep well sadly.



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