

16 PAGES OF TOP JOBS TO DO IN YOUR GARDEN THIS SEASON

AUTUMN GARDEN CARE

TIPS FOR...

Lawncare

Flower
borders

In the kitchen
garden

Greenhouse
maintenance

Composting

Pond work



FREE ONLY WITH
**Kitchen
Garden**

WELCOME

Autumn is a rich season of rusty hues, soft light and late warmth with occasional sharpness in the air as winter approaches. Our gardens are naturally preparing for dormancy but there is plenty for us gardeners to do to help it along its way. It is a time to tidy and make good for the cold winter months ahead and in this supplement we look at the different areas of the garden and what jobs are important for each at this time of year.

So enjoy your autumn garden and appreciate the cycle of life and enjoy the last flurry of activity before the winter rest.

Happy gardening

Emma



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THE FLOWER GARDEN

Whether you grow a few flowers on your allotment or have beds and borders in your garden, autumn is a time for a tidy and refresh

Rudbeckia is a late summer into autumn flowering perennial

Divide perennials

Clumps of herbaceous perennial flowers occasionally benefit from being lifted and split up then replanted. Some plants produce a massive root ball over time with the centre often deteriorating or they just get too big for their allotted space. Now is a good time to lift those herbaceous perennials that die back in the winter and regrow in spring. Good examples include perennial phlox, hardy geraniums, hostas, day lilies (hemerocallis) and rudbeckias. You can tell which can be split as they gradually spread and have a fibrous root system when you do try and lift. You can use two forks in the centre of the plant and split that way or lift the whole clump and use a knife or spade to split the clump. Tidy and replant those with good roots attached in freshly turned soil with some compost and bonemeal added.



TIDY BUT NOT TOO MUCH

Annuals such as sunflowers (above) or some herbaceous perennials will produce seed heads which are often best left on the plant. The birds and other creatures will appreciate the food source in autumn and early winter. The seed heads are often decorative too especially when the frosts coat them. The hollow stems of dying plants can also shelter overwintering insects so it is not always a good idea to cut these off immediately but wait until spring. If you prefer a nice tidy plot then trim some but leave a few others intact.

LIFT DAHLIAS

Dahlias are wonderful bold flowers to grow on an allotment for cut flowers or just in a flower border for mid to late summer colour. They just keep blooming for ages so are well worth the effort. The tubers are best lifted and overwintered in protected conditions, unless you live in a mild area with free-draining soil. It is normal to wait until the first frosts have blackened the tops of the foliage and then lift the tubers. These can be placed in boxes of pretty much dry compost or sand and placed under a greenhouse bench or in a shed. Label them to make sure you know the colours if you like to colour scheme your plot. Check tubers regularly and if necessary sprinkle a little water to prevent the tubers shrivelling but not too much or they will rot.

In early spring start to moisten the compost just a little and when you see good growth you can pot up and bring on before planting out after the danger of frost has passed.



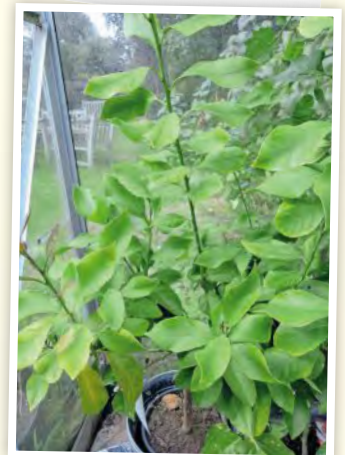
QUICK REMINDERS

■ Gladioli corms can be lifted if you live in a very cold part of the country or have very heavy clay soil. Lift and dry corms before storing in a dry, cool place.

■ Make up winter hanging baskets of pansies and keep well watered. It is surprising how dry they can be even after a downpour as it just cascades off the leaves and doesn't touch the compost.



■ Tender plants such as young first-year figs, citrus (pictured right), banana plants or olive trees and cannas, non-hardy fuchsias and pelargoniums are best moved into a cold conservatory or greenhouse for the winter. Larger, more mature specimens of figs and olives are often slightly hardier and can be left outside. Large bananas could be left in situ in milder areas if packed in straw and wrapped in hessian. If grown in pots they could be moved nearer a house wall for protection.



ANNUAL SOWING

Annual flowers such as cornflowers, sunflowers, love-in-a-mist (nigella) and larkspur are wonderful to place in spots on a veg patch or gaps in the flower border. You can in theory direct sow these in the ground in autumn with September being the peak time for doing this. Otherwise wait until April to direct sow them or March in small cell trays. Once you have a patch of these established, depending on sowing date, you can have flowers throughout the summer. They will set seed and if you don't want self-sown seedlings popping up all over the place, remember to remove flowers or at least the seed heads as they form.



Cornflowers will self-seed around the garden

TIME TO PLANT

Plant wallflowers, primulas, forget-me-nots and winter pansies now. Wallflowers are particularly good on allotments along the edges for a bit of spring colour and cut flowers. However it is worth remembering that they are in the same family as brassicas and can be affected by club root. If this is a problem on your allotment plant in large containers of fresh compost.

Begonia care

Tuberous begonias are best lifted and stored somewhere cool and dry for the winter. Like dahlias, lift when the weather turns cold and dry off the plants in a shed, conservatory or greenhouse. The stems will detach from the tuber and you store the dry tubers in paper bags or in boxes in a dry, cool, frost-free place for the winter. Pot up in early spring to encourage into growth. The compost should be just moist initially and only start watering the plant when it is showing good signs of growth.



■ Plant daffodils in the garden or in pots. Dwarf ones are particularly good planted among winter pansies.



■ Tulip bulbs can be planted October to November.

■ Collect seedheads from flowers and dry on sheets of kitchen paper before storing in envelopes kept in a plastic container in the fridge. Sow in early spring.

■ Avoid feeding flowers now but compost bins can be emptied and the contents laid around the perennial flower border. It will help protect the crowns from severe weather.

■ Trim off a few leaves from Christmas and Lenten roses so you can see the flowers better.

■ Leave penstemons alone until spring. Leaving the tatty foliage actually helps protect the base from frosts.



■ Ornamental grasses can be cut back now.

■ Remove stakes used to support herbaceous perennials.

■ Create new flower beds now and plant up. The soil in autumn is still relatively warm and helps the roots establish before winter.

■ Order your flower seeds now for spring sowing.



SIMPLE WAYS TO A GOOD LAWN

A good lawn makes a great backdrop for the flower borders and a super play surface for the kids. Now is the prime time to prep it for the season ahead; here are our top tips

Sharpen those edges

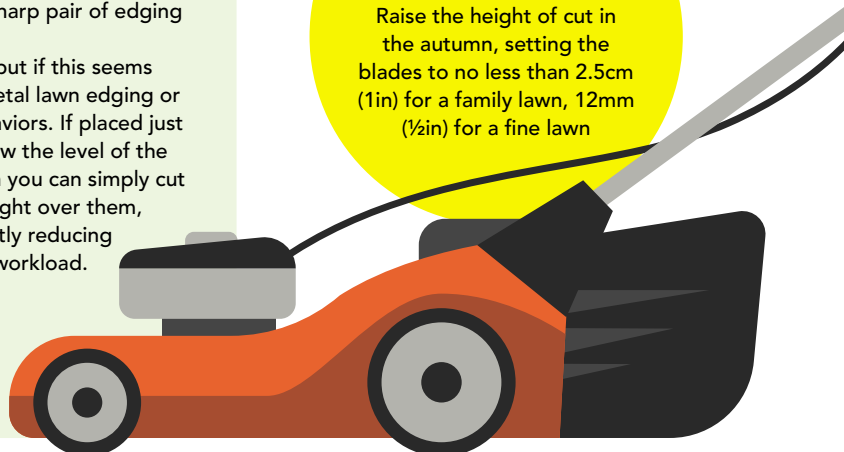
By this time of year it is common for the lawn edges to look a little overgrown and ragged, especially if children tend to tread on them as they play. Redefine them using a half moon edging knife or simply trim with a sharp pair of edging shears. Long-handled tools can help save on backache.

If you can it is best to edge the lawn every time you cut, but if this seems too arduous a task this is a good time to install plastic or metal lawn edging or edging paviors. If placed just below the level of the lawn you can simply cut straight over them, greatly reducing the workload.



TOP TIP

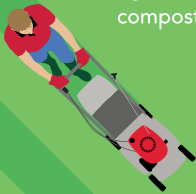
Raise the height of cut in the autumn, setting the blades to no less than 2.5cm (1in) for a family lawn, 12mm (½in) for a fine lawn



7 STEPS TO A GREENER LAWN

- 1 Before starting work mow the lawn to your preferred height
- 2 Apply a mosskiller if necessary. Sphagnum moss often builds up in old lawns especially if poorly drained or shaded.

- 3 Rake any thatch (dead grass, and also weeds and dead moss) from the turf with a lawn rake or on large areas use a mechanical rake. You can hire the latter if you wish. The thatch can go into the compost heap.



- 4 To improve drainage the lawn now needs to be aerated. Small areas can be done with a garden fork, pushing the tines in every 10cm (4in) or so and as far into the soil as you can. Larger areas can again be aerated mechanically and you can buy or hire a machine for this.



- 5 This step is optional but for the best results top dress the lawn with a sandy soil mix available from your garden centre or lawncare specialists. If there are now patches where moss has been removed, consider adding a suitable grass seed to the dressing.

- 6 If you decide not to top dress you could feed the lawn instead with a special autumn lawn feed. This will be high in potash and will help to toughen the grass against the winter cold.

- 7 If rain is not expected for three days water the lawn thoroughly to wash in and activate the treatment.



TOP TIP

Avoid walking on the lawn when frozen or very wet as this is likely to damage the grass



PLANTING BULBS IN THE LAWN

If you love a more natural look to your lawn and have the space you might consider planting spring-flowering bulbs in an area that can be left rough in the spring. Plant narcissus (daffodils) and crocus in September/October in small circular groups of five, seven or nine bulbs. Tulips are planted in the same way in November.

Simply cut an 'H' shape in the turf with a spade or edging tool and ease back the two resulting flaps to reveal the soil beneath. Dig a hole two to three times the depth of the bulbs before cultivating the bottom of the hole and adding 2.5cm (1in) of sharp grit or sand. Space the bulbs evenly in the hole, 'nose' upright, so they have a little space between each. Cover with soil, overfilling the hole slightly, and replace the turf. Tread it down firmly until it is level and water well.

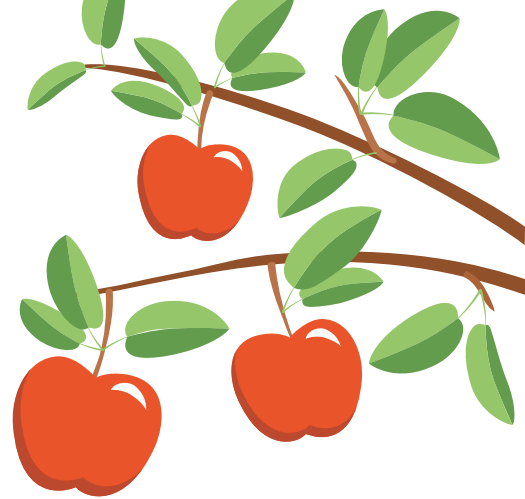
TOP TIP

Once mowing season is over, be sure to have petrol mowers serviced or to clean electric and battery-powered machines thoroughly of dried grass. Remove the power source before going anywhere near the blade



TREES FOR SMALL PLOTS

Apart from being naturally beautiful, trees form wonderful focal points in the garden and are great for nature. Now is the time to plan and plant for best results



Choosing your tree

Trees, whether ornamental or fruiting – or both – can be planted at almost any time of the year if grown in pots. However, those lifted in the autumn and winter, when dormant from nursery beds and supplied bare-rooted, tend to establish faster and more successfully.

Planting a tree, especially in a small garden, is a big commitment in terms of time and space, so you need to choose carefully and buy the best specimens you can find. If you only have room for one tree in your garden try to choose one that looks great all year round, perhaps because of its shape, beautiful bark, spring flowers, summer fruits and/or autumn colours. Would you like a deciduous tree (one that loses its leaves in the winter) or an evergreen?

PLANTING YOUR TREE

1. Choose a reasonably sunny spot in fertile, well-drained soil. Dig a hole a little deeper and wider than the rootball of your tree. Fork over the base of the hole to improve drainage
2. Place the plant in the hole – bare-rooted trees should be planted so that the soil mark on the trunk is level with the soil. For pot-grown plants keep the level of the compost at soil level
3. Fill the hole around the roots. Shake bare-rooted plants gently to encourage the soil to filter through the roots. Use your spade to push soil around the rootball of potted plants
4. Stake your tree to give it support until well established. Use a tree tie to hold it firmly in position. Water your new tree thoroughly and maintain watering during dry spells at first



5 GREAT ORNAMENTAL TREES FOR SMALL GARDENS

■ **ACER GRISEUM (PAPERBARK MAPLE):**

Beautiful peeling copper-coloured bark. Nice autumn colour



Acer griseum.
Inset: Peeling bark

■ **SORBUS 'JOSEPH ROCK':**

Yellow berries and great autumn colour from this mountain ash

■ **LIQUIDAMBAR**

STYRACIFLUA: Lovely lobed leaves turning deep red in autumn

■ **MALUS 'BUTTERBALL':**

Yellow crab apples and good autumn leaf colour. Can act as a pollination partner for some dessert or cooking apple trees



Malus
'Butterball'

■ **PYRUS SALICIFOLIA VAR ORIENTALIS 'PENDULA' (WEeping PEAR):**

Silver leaves, scented white flowers and tiny fruits



Liquidambar.
ABOVE LEFT: Pretty foliage of liquidambar

5 GREAT FRUIT TREES FOR SMALL GARDENS

■ **TRAINED APPLES AND PEARS:**

grown on dwarfing rootstocks with suitable pollination partner. A few pears are partly self-fertile e.g. 'Conference' or alternatively choose a family apple tree or grow several cordon apples or pears in close proximity.

■ **PEACH 'CRIMSON BONFIRE':**

A naturally dwarf hybrid with deep red foliage, pink spring blossom and full-sized fruits. Self-fertile.

■ **APRICOT 'APRIGOLD':**

Ideal for large patio pots. For medium gardens, ordinary apricot trees can be kept reasonably compact. Try 'Tomcot' or 'Flavourcot'. Self-fertile.

■ **PATIO MULBERRY 'CHARLOTTE RUSSE':**

A new dwarf variety with tasty blackberry-like berries in August/September. Self-fertile.

■ **BLUEBERRY:**

Ideal for pots in lime-free compost. If your soil is naturally acid, can be planted in the ground or raised bed. Self-fertile.



'Conference' pear



Apricots



Peach



Blueberry



Mulberry



PONDS FOR FISH & WILDLIFE

A pond adds a whole different dimension to the garden and autumn is the time to maintain it to cause as little disturbance to the many creatures that live in it as possible

Clean it!

Whether you have a pond dedicated to fish or to wildlife it will need regular maintenance to prevent it from filling with silt as old plant debris and autumn leaves fall into the water and rot. Pond plants too will need to be kept under control and unwanted growth removed. Here are some top tips to help you keep your pond in great health.

TOP TIP

Place a net over ponds near trees to stop autumn leaves falling in. Regularly move any long threads of algae by winding them around a cane and lifting out. Scoop out duckweed and other unwanted growth, putting it by the side of the water overnight to allow creatures to escape before composting. If algae is a recurring problem there are other ways of controlling it including chemical treatments, barley straw pads or UV filters





TOP TIP

Ensure frogs, hedgehogs and other creatures that come to the water can escape by installing some stones or a ramp from the water. Birds will also appreciate a partly submerged ledge where they can bathe and drink without being out of their depth

TOP TIP

Unless you have a fountain or waterfall consider installing a solar pond aerator to top up oxygen levels in the water on sunny days. Alternatively spray water from a hose over the surface to give the same effect



TOP TIP

Before accepting plants from neighbours and friends – or giving any away – be sure they do not come with unwelcome visitors such as invasive duckweed or azolla ('floating fern' – now banned for sale in the UK)

7 STEPS TO A HEALTHY POND

Most ponds need a major overhaul every five years or so. To do this:

1 Have a container ready with some water taken from the pond. You may also need some more containers of pond water for plants if you won't get the job done in one day

2 Larger ponds can be drained with a pump, smaller ones very carefully with a bucket taking care to transfer any fish or other wildlife temporarily to your reservoir

3 Lift out the plants and place them near the edge of the pond in case any creatures have become trapped. They can find their way back to the water

4 Once you reach the sediment in the bottom of the pond, scoop it out and put it on the compost heap. Keep some of the sediment for putting back before refilling the pond

5 Check the liner for any holes and if it is beyond its guarantee consider replacing it. Otherwise give it a scrub taking care to remove any signs of algae or duckweed

6 You will almost certainly have too many plants and they can now be divided and reduced if necessary before returning to the pond

7 Place the saved sediment in the bottom of the pond and refill slowly using rainwater if you can. Reposition your plants as the pond fills and pop the fish and any collected wildlife back into the water



IN THE KITCHEN GARDEN

PRUNE APPLE TREES

Winter pruning can start as soon as the leaves have dropped, so late November onwards is a good time. Remove any badly angled branches and any that are diseased. Tall whippy upright water shoots can be cut to their bases.

The last of the summer crops are gathered in and we anticipate the winter ones to come

Summer crop harvest

The last of the summer-grown crops will be harvested now. Winter squashes such as butternut and pumpkin can be cut after the foliage has almost died down and before the first frosts. The fruits can be cured in a warm place indoors for about a week to 10 days to harden the skin then stored in a frost-free cool place.

Lift any carrots and beetroot and store in boxes of sand or dry compost. Dig up any remaining potatoes and store the good ones but eat any with markings fairly quickly as these may not store well.

WINTER CROP CARE

Many of the brassicas such as Brussels sprouts, kale and cabbages should be growing well now. Stake Brussels sprout and broccoli plants or create string supports around them. These grow quite tall and often get blown down by strong winds.



Plant garlic

Buy garlic from seed companies to ensure healthy stock and the right varieties that grow well in our climate. Choose a sunny spot and plant individual cloves, just covering with soil about 15cm (6in) apart.

QUICK REMINDERS

- Apply grease bands to fruit tree trunks. This prevents the female winter moth climbing the trunks and laying her eggs in the branches. These hatch out and burrow into developing fruitlets next year.

- It's a good time to plant fruit trees and bushes such as blackcurrants and redcurrants. Dormant, bare-rooted plants can be bought from specialist nurseries.

- Divide old rhubarb clumps and replant smaller viable pieces.

- Start lifting parsnips when required.



- If you have any leftover pea seeds, sow these in small pots and place on a windowsill in the house or greenhouse bench. As soon as the plants are a couple of inches high you can snip the tops off for nutritious tasty leaves.

- Peas to mature early summer next year can be sown now. Sow the hardier ones such as 'Feltham First' or 'Meteor'. They can be sown in cell trays and overwintered in a cold frame or planted out and covered with cloches.

- Take off any fig fruit that is larger than pea size. Leave the really small ones as these are next year's fruit.

- Keep harvesting apples and store in a cool, frost-free place.

- Pull leeks as required.

- Cover bare vegetable beds with shredded leaves and a few grass clippings. Leave on the surface for the worms to incorporate.



ESSENTIAL AUTUMN REPAIRS

TOP TIP

Make timely repairs to fences. The wind will find any weak points such as broken panels and rotting posts. Replace them now before giving them, and any other outdoor wood, a fresh coat of plant-friendly preservative

TOP TIP

Before the winter hits in earnest collect up any canes, dip the ends in a good garden disinfectant and tie them in bundles before storing away

With winter around the corner this is a good time to start repairing greenhouses, polytunnels and fences and having a general tidy up

PREPARE FOR HARSH WEATHER

The main danger to structures during the autumn and winter comes from strong winds. Here are some top tips that could save you much work and money later:

- Polythene tunnels can be vulnerable if the cladding is old and past its best. Consider replacing it completely if it has outlived its promised lifespan, but if in reasonable repair just search out and cover any rips with water-resistant repair tape available from polytunnel suppliers and good DIY stores
- Like polytunnels, greenhouses will withstand all but the strongest winds, yet a cracked or missing pane can greatly reduce the integrity of the whole building – the wind gets in and lifts pane after pane. Repair damage right away

- Both polytunnels and greenhouses only provide their best if the coverings are clean. A 1% loss in transfer of light through the covering can result in a 1% reduction in growth. Clean the surface with a suitable cleaner, preferably an organic plant-friendly one
- Don't neglect the interior of the structure, using the same cleaner to scrub the framework where possible. If you had particular problems with pests this season consider lighting a sulphur candle inside, after first clearing out any crops
- Small structures such as mini plastic greenhouses will need to either be stored away or if in use secured well against any gales
- Cover bare ground as much as possible whether with a green manure, cardboard, a layer of compost or ground cover fabric to help prevent nutrients from being washed away in winter rains



TOP TIP

Clear weeds and plant/crop debris to the compost heap to prevent pests and diseases using it as a place to overwinter



TOP TIP

The ultimate compost station will have three compost bins or bays. This allows you to partially decompose a bin or bay of material but then turn it into a second bin or bay to further aid the composting process. Finally the good stuff from the second bin can be turned into the third bin for final finishing off and it is from here you extract material to put back on your plot

COMPOSTING FOR A BETTER GARDEN

Composting your garden and kitchen waste is easy and rewarding, so start your heap today. Follow these simple steps to making great garden compost



TOP TIP

Keep a bag of shredded paper or cardboard handy. When adding lots of green waste to your compost bin, like annual weeds or vegetable material, mix in some of the paper and cardboard waste at the same time to create a good balance of green and brown waste



WHAT TO ADD AND WHAT TO LEAVE OUT

To maintain the balance within the heap and keep the process ticking it is important not to add too much of any one type of waste. As a rule of thumb try to keep the ratio of dry brown material to soft green roughly equal, but avoid adding lots of grass clippings all at once. Where they constitute most of the soft green waste, add them in thin layers, alternating with woodier prunings, shredded paper or straw.

DO ADD ✓

- Grass clippings in small quantities or thin layers
- Annual weeds that are not seeding
- Perennial weeds including roots that have been allowed to thoroughly dry out before adding
- Thin woody prunings and small amounts of shredded woody material
- Peelings and other vegetable waste from the kitchen
- Small numbers of fallen leaves (compost large quantities separately)
- Plant debris such as yellow leaves and trimmings from veg
- Small quantities of windfall fruit such as apples
- Tea leaves (tea bags do not rot easily due to small amounts of plastics used in manufacture)

DON'T ADD ✗

- Seeding weeds
- Overripe tomatoes (OK but the seeds will almost certainly germinate once the compost is spread)
- Pet faeces – strawy bedding is fine
- Large woody prunings
- Meat or fish scraps (these can be composted in other ways)
- Large amounts of paper or cardboard

CHOOSING A BIN

Which bin you choose depends in part on how much compost you have. Small bins are adequate for small quantities of compost but should preferably be placed in a cool, shady spot where they are less likely to dry out.

The larger the bin the better, with one cubic metre being the optimum size; the bigger volume of compost will hold more heat to fuel the composting process and is less likely to dry out.

Having two bins allows you to move the contents of one into the next, thereby mixing the hot middle part of the heap with the cooler outer bits to give a faster 'rot'.

The more often you can mix your compost the better – aim to do it once or twice during the life of the heap. Rotary composters allow you to do this with little effort.



What else do I need?

1. Garden and kitchen waste (see what and what not to compost in panel, right)

2. Moisture – but not too much. The green waste such as grass clippings usually provides enough of this, but if you find the heap is drying out you may need to add more

3. Air. Without this the compost will break down, but will tend to form a wet, smelly material and not the rich, dark compost we are looking for

4. Heat. This is generated by the bacteria as they break down the waste and helps to speed up the whole process. A well-insulated bin or one with a good volume of waste helps retain this precious commodity

5. Microbes and worms. The bacteria and fungi that break down the waste are naturally present so do not need to be added. If your bin is open to the soil below, composting worms (not earthworms) usually appear of their own accord or can be purchased from composting specialists





1



2



3



4



5



6

1. 30g Heavyweight Fleece
Protect your crops from frost

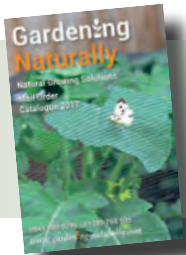
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7



8



9



10



11



12

7. Tumbling Composters
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10. Raspberry and fruit cages
Protect your fruit from birds

8. Swop Top Range
Easy cleaning and pruning at all heights

11. Fire Pits
Bring warmth and light to your garden

9. Aluminium Hoops
Cloches for all year round protection

12. Hedgehog Houses
Offer hedgehogs a safe retreat