

MOORSIDE NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2010

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our newsletter. On page two you can read and see photographs taken at our annual show.

Nature's free harvest!

For me, the most important task of the Autumn season is to collect the free harvest of leaves that fall all around us. These can be turned into leaf-mould which is the finest soil conditioner you can get – and you cannot buy it. The best way to make it is to create a wire box to store it in. Take four wooden corner posts and fix a small gauge wire netting around them to make an open topped box. If you can create a small hinged flap at the bottom of one of the sides, all the better. A cubic metre is a good size. Then all you need to do is fill it with leaves and forget about it. Each year you can top it up with new leaves. As the leaves break down you can remove them from the bottom. It can be used after one year for digging in, but definitely improves it you leave it for two to three years.



If you are not able to make a wire mesh box then it is also possible to store the leaves in plastic sacks. Punch a few holes in the bottom and tie it loosely at the top. Make sure the leaves are damp when you put them into the sack. Then leave them behind your shed for a year or two.

The reason you do not usually put large amounts of leaves in a compost bin is because they break down in a different way to ordinary garden waste so it is better to keep them apart.

The start of the year

For a gardener October is the start of the gardening year. It is a great time to take stock and to make plans because nature is about to give you time to do so. The current growing season is also fresh in your memory so you can still remember what worked and what did not and adapt accordingly for next season. We also have time stretching ahead of us so we can get all of the hard-landscaping changes done: changing your bed system, building frames and cloches; laying new paths; repairing sheds; erecting or fixing greenhouses. There is never time to get these tasks done in the main growing season.

We can also have a good clear-out and tidy up of the plot which is very satisfying. Do not leave old unwanted plants lying around in the soil as it encourages pests. Put them in the compost heap. We can also use this window of time when the beds are mainly empty to dig in manure or lime them if they are becoming too acidic. Never do both of these tasks on the same piece of soil in the same year though.

Finally, it is the time to sit and reflect, to make plans for next season and to catch up with new developments in the world of gardening. The RHS and Garden Organic are both great sources of information. The seed merchants' catalogues which will be available now are also a good read.

Finally, a little tip. Hobby gardening is meant to be fun! "Little and often" is the secret to success. And always stop working before you think you need to. If the allotment becomes a wearisome chore then you are on the road to giving up.