

November 2023

Hello everyone,

Hope you are all keeping well?

Well, we've certainly had our fair share of rain over the past week or so from storm Babete and I hope you've not been affected too much by it? Where we are in Lincolnshire there's been lots of local flooding, but fortunately we've not been affected, although the garden is very soggy! As I write, storm Ciaran is approaching the south coast, so it looks like we're in for another battering.

Before the storms, we did manage to get some work done on our lawns. Moss and weeds are a problem and the surface is very bumpy, so I decided to set about trying to improve them. I'm not looking for a bowling green, just a lawn that's in reasonable condition with more grass than moss! To start the process, which will continue next spring, I've been trialling a new cylinder mower from Cobra that has changeable cartridges to scarify, de-thatch and aerate the lawn. I ended up with a mountain of moss and a bare lawn which got a few comments from Mrs F. To my relief after a couple of weeks the lawn is greening up and already looks much better – phew!

Some of you may have heard about the changes to local BBC Radio across the country. Basically, weekday programmes after 2pm and all weekend programmes will become regional as several local stations join up. This means some programmes will finish, including the Sunday show on BBC Radio York where I was one of the gardeners. I did my last programme just over a week ago which was a sad occasion. In total I've done 30 years on local BBC Radio, including 15 years at York, and I'll miss answering listeners question on Sunday mornings.

However, as one door closes another one opens and just after I'd finished on York, Radio Lincolnshire got in touch to ask me to be part of a new mid-week gardening feature, which I'm really looking forward to.

And, more exciting news, we are launching our own weekly Podcast. This is all new to me but I'm told it's a radio show that you can listen to anytime, just like catch-up! It's called Pots & Trowels (like the videos on YouTube). Each week we'll chat to a guest from the world of gardening, give some seasonal gardening advice, Jill will share some of her cookery tips using produce from the garden and I'm also going to answer gardening questions – just like the radio! Sean, who we work with on the videos is the technical side and will also join us on the Podcast as he's keen to develop his small garden. You can find the Pots & Trowels Podcast on the normal platforms, and we're delighted that Arit Anderson from BBC Gardeners World has agreed to be our first guest, so I hope you'll give it a listen - Details will appear very soon on our website potsandtrowels.com

With our best wishes

Martin & Jill

Jobs for November

Leaves are just starting to fall from the trees now and these are great for adding to or for starting a new compost heap, When mixed with grass clippings and old plant remains, they quickly heat up and start to break down. Even on their own leaves will break down to a crumbly compost by next year so don't let them go to waste.

In wet conditions keep off the lawn, but when we get a dry spell, take advantage and spike any areas of the lawn with a garden fork that stand in water after rain. Ideally spike 4-6 inches deep to help surface drainage and get air down to the roots.

If squirrels are a problem (they are in our new garden) they will be looking for food at this time of the year and freshly planted bulbs and food on a bird table are top of their list. Covering newly planted bulbs with chicken wire will help or you could try mixing chilli pepper with your bird food. The birds don't mind it, but squirrels don't like it at all!

As the soil starts to cool down it's the perfect time to plant tulip bulbs into the garden. The cooler condition help against the possibility of bulbs being damaged by the fungus tulip fire. (see above about squirrels)

Make sure sheds, garden gates and fences are all secure against strong winds. Any loose panels need securing and doors fastening to prevent them bowing open.

We're now coming into the bareroot planting season for roses, hedging plants and fruit trees. Bare root plants are usually a little cheaper and if planted properly they will quickly establish and make strong plants. If bare root plants are delivered and you can't plant straight away, unpack them and heel them in. This is when you make a trench in the garden to place the roots in and cover over with soil as a temporary measure to keep the roots moist. They can be left like this for several week if necessary.

November is the ideal time to take hardwood cuttings of many deciduous shrubs and fruit bushes. Select this season's new stems (that are now woody) and trim to around 8in long, cutting just below a bud at the base and above a bud at the top. Either root in deep pots of compost or outside in the garden soil. By spring they should have rooted.

Now is a great time to mulch any borders or bare patches in the veg garden with homemade garden compost or well-rotted manure if you can get it. This help to protect the soil over winter and as the worms pull it down it will gradually improve the soil structure.

There's still time to plant garlic cloves outside in the garden. Plant so the tips of the cloves are around 1inch below the soil surface.

Check apples in store and use any that are showing signs of bruising.

For more weekly gardening tips and advice from Martin visit "Pots & Trowels" on Facebook or subscribe on YouTube for free, plus our new Podcast coming soon.

Happy gardening

Martin Fish. www.martinfish.com