



# THE AMATEUR GARDENER

by Vanda Lawrence

**O**ur 'Bowl of Beauty' Peony has been absolutely gorgeous this year – probably the best it's ever been, with masses of luxurious foliage and lots of beautiful fragrant blooms. I'd put the abundant foliage down to all the rain we had had and, because it was looking so glorious, decided not to spoil the look with stakes and twine. I thought that we couldn't possibly have any more rain for a while so they would be fine. Big mistake! We had those few sunny days which opened all the blooms then the weather did an 'about-turn' with more heavy rain and battered all those lovely flowers down. I'm so annoyed with myself.



But, 'onwards and upwards' as they say, so now it's time to collect our thoughts and organise the to-do list...

In the **VEGETABLE GARDEN** above all keep hoeing to remove the weeds.

- Pick runner beans regularly to stop them becoming stringy and to encourage more pods to form.
- Lift onions and garlic as the leaves turn yellow and leave to dry in a light, airy shed.
- Continue harvesting your other salads and vegetables and, in due course, sow autumn vegetables in vacant spaces.
- Spray potato plants with Bordeaux Mixture to prevent blight.
- Tomato plants will also benefit from this treatment and don't forget to pinch out side shoots and keep plants tied to support canes. Remember also to keep them well-watered otherwise the skins will split.

In the **FRUIT GARDEN** pick raspberries and cut down canes which have finished fruiting.

- Pick blackcurrants and then prune the bushes afterwards (although to make life easier you could 'prune' off the fruiting branches and take them indoors to remove the fruit).
- Weed the strawberry bed. If you need more plants then peg down the runners to allow them to root; if not, cut them off and dispose of them before they make a tangled mess.
- Thin apples, pears and grapes to let air circulate and so that the eventual fruits will be a good size.

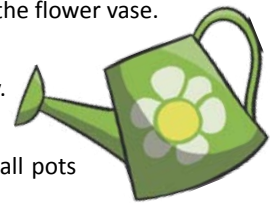
In the **HEDGEROWS** Elderflowers have been so noticeable this year, again presumably because we had so much rain, so let's hope the flowers set and we get lots of Elderberries to pick and make cordial, wine, jelly etc. Remember that Elderberries are fine when they are cooked but the leaves and stems are poisonous to

humans. I wish I'd thought to mention it last month, then you could have used this recipe for Elderflower cordial to serve with sparkling water or sparkling wine. Never mind, make a note of it now in readiness for next year:

1. Pour 3 pts boiling water over 2 lb caster sugar in a large basin.
2. Stir and leave to cool.
3. Add 2 oz citric acid and slices of scrubbed, unpeeled oranges & lemons (2 of each)
4. Wash about 30 flower heads and add to the bowl.
5. Leave for 24 hours, stirring occasionally then strain through muslin and store in sterilised bottles.

In the **FLOWER GARDEN** deadhead early flowering plants and shrubs and cut back to maintain a good shape.

- Cut Lupins and Delphiniums to ground level to encourage a second display.
- As Dahlias come into flower continue to support their stems by tying to stakes, and remove side buds for longer stems and larger blooms if you like to cut them for the flower vase.
- Stake Gladioli to keep straight stems.
- Deadhead and feed Sweet Peas regularly.
- Prune Wisteria.
- Collect seeds of Foxgloves to sow in small pots ready to plant out in the autumn.
- Propagate border carnations by layering. The new plants can be separated from the parent plant in about 8 weeks.
- Feed your roses and spray against blackspot and rust.
- Use a high potash fertiliser on all summer bedding plants to boost flowering.



So after all that hard work in the garden, when you finally sit down to relax are you plagued with mosquitoes? You can make a 'mizzie' trap to deal with the problem:

1. Cut an empty 2 ltr plastic bottle in half.
2. Mix 1/4 cup brown sugar with 1 cup hot water. When cool pour into the bottom half of the bottle.
3. Add 1 gram yeast - this creates carbon dioxide which attracts mosquitoes.
4. Place the funnel part of the bottle, upside down, into the other half of the bottle, taping them together.
5. Wrap the bottle with something black (mosquitoes are drawn to the colour black) leaving the top uncovered.
6. Place outside away from your normal gathering area.
7. Change solution every 2 weeks.

