



Aughton & Ormskirk U3A GARDENING GROUP NEWSLETTER December 2016

Welcome to this the eighth of the Gardening Groups newsletters which we hope you will find of interest. We would also wish you Season Greetings and every happiness in the NEW YEAR.

Full details of the Gardening Group can be seen on the U3A website at <http://aughton-ormskirk-u3a.co.uk/groups/gardening-group/>

As indicated in the September Newsletter we will not be holding formal meetings of the gardening group but will be circulating occasional newsletter which hopefully you will find interesting.

It may be that in the future the group can once again start holding monthly meetings but only if members are prepared to become involved in running the group.

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CHRISTMAS FLORAL DECORATIONS



1) An easy to create table centrepiece that can alternate as a door hanging can be created from a ring of foam and short sprigs of mixed foliage from the garden.

If a foam ring is difficult to obtain use a cake tin with a hole in the middle and pack with foam.

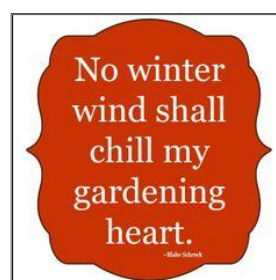
If short of garden plant material take the bottom branches from the Christmas tree and cut into small lengths to create a foundation before adding sprigs of Buxus (box), Hedera (ivy), Heuchera, Choisya, Taxus (yew) and anything else that is in scale and available.

Add any berries you may have in the garden together with cones sprayed gold or silver and some wired orange slices - you will have no need for flowers

2) Baubles give sparkle and shine and can make your flowers and foliage go further.

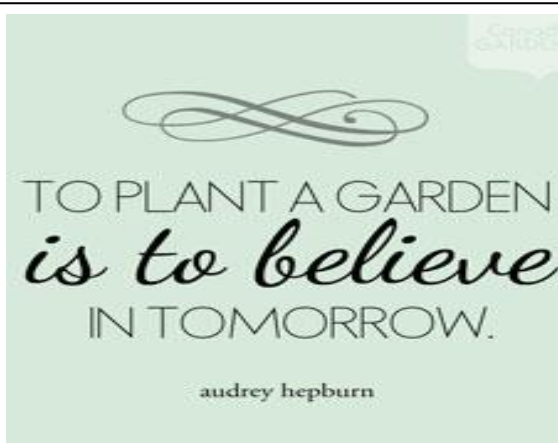
Place a vase in the centre of a low bowl and fill with dried Betula (birch) stems sprayed a colour of your choice, or stems of Ilex verticillata (deciduous holly).

Add colour co-ordinated baubles in the gap between the bowl and the base.





- Do not walk on the lawn when it is covered in frost
- Make sure you have cleared all the leaves off the lawn so that the grass plants are not smothering the grasses
- Control any worm casts
- Spend any milder days trimming the edges of the lawn



Garden Jobs for December

- 1) Prune open-grown apples and pears (but not those trained against walls)
- 2) Deciduous trees and shrubs can still be planted and transplanted
- 3) Take hardwood cuttings
- 4) Insulate outdoor taps and prevent ponds from freezing
- 5) Reduce watering of houseplants

HARDWOOD CUTTINGS

Hardwood cuttings provide an easy and reliable method of propagating a range of deciduous climbers, trees and shrubs, and as bonus, they are taken from mid-autumn until late winter when more time is usually available to the gardener. Some evergreen plants, hollies for example, can also be taken at the same time of year as other hardwood cuttings.

- Select vigorous healthy shoots that have grown in the current year
- Remove the soft tip growth
- Cut into sections 15-30cm (6in-1ft) long, cutting cleanly above a bud at the top, with a sloping cut to shed water and as a reminder which end is the top
- Cut straight across at the base below a bud or pair of buds and dip the lower cut end in a hormone rooting powder (this promotes root formation, it also contains a fungicide, protects against rotting). Cut through the 'heel' where the shoot joins a branch for shrubs with pithy stems such as *Sambucus* (elder)
- Prepare a trench outdoors in a sheltered site with well-drained soil. Dig in a bucketful of garden compost or other organic matter every square metre or yard
- Insert the cuttings into the ground or pot with two-thirds of the cutting below the surface, with a layer of sand in the base. The roots will form along the stem. A few buds remain above the ground to allow the plant to grow away in spring. Where a single stemmed plant is aimed for, such as *Populus* or gooseberry, either leave only one bud above ground or rub off surplus buds
- Allow 10-15cm (4-6in) between cuttings and 40cm (16in) between trenches
- Check the trench after frosts and firm back if required
- Cuttings should be left in place until the following autumn ensuring that they do not dry out in dry periods in summer

Full details on hardwood cuttings can be found at: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=387>