



## What to do in the garden: Autumn Term

Welcome to our Autumn Term 'Get Growing' newsletter which will give you ideas and inspiration about what to do in the garden with children throughout the year.



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### General tasks

- In the garden, it's time to begin the autumn clean-up. As the growing season winds down keep on top of things by removing plants as they die and adding them to compost bins. Remove veggie crops when they are finished and clear away weeds to leave your plot clean and tidy for the winter. Don't forget to keep a record of what was growing where so you can refer back to your notes next spring and avoid planting the same crops in the same place.
- Saving seed from your garden plants is easy to do and will provide you with plenty to sow next season and save you money. Leave a few seed heads on your veggies, flowers and herbs after they've finished flowering for collecting. Keep them in a glass jar or plastic box in a cool, dry place until spring. Garden Organic have a useful produce a useful handout on seed saving on their website....  
[http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools\\_organic\\_network/leaflets/SavingSeed.pdf](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools_organic_network/leaflets/SavingSeed.pdf)
- Garden centres and mail order specialists are stocked up with spring-flowering bulbs such as [daffodils](#), [crocus](#) and [hyacinths](#). So now is the time to buy. Remember that some bulbs are toxic and contact with them may irritate the skin so always wash your hands after handling them.
- This is the time of year to make full use of all the resources an autumn garden can supply for your compost and leaf mould heaps. Making compost and leaf mould stores and recycles plant foods. The resulting products are just what your soil needs to keep it healthy.
- Keep on planting: Garden centres are full of cheap winter/spring bedding plants so without spending too much money you can have colourful plants in your garden all rear round. And you can also continue to grow your own delicious vegetables and herbs in the winter months.
- If you have Lavender growing in the garden, autumn is the time to give them a trim to keep them looking neat. Choose a dry day and be careful not to cut through any woody parts of the plant. Collect the flower heads & tie them together. Hang them upside down to dry them. Once dried you can use the dried flowers to make lavender bags.
- Make your own leaf mould. Autumn leaves rot down to make leaf mould which is a good soil improver and mulch. And it's free! Children will enjoy collecting the leaves. You can collect the leaves in black plastic bags. Get the children to jump up and down on the bags to break up the leaves. Then make a number of holes in the bags. Dry leaves will not break down so make sure they're wet before you tie up the bag. Store them in a quiet corner of the garden.
- If you made leaf mould last year you can apply it as a mulch to protect bare soil over the winter months. Always aim to avoid bare soil, protecting it over winter is the best thing you can do for your garden.





- Cuttings are an easy way to reproduce new plants for next spring. Semi-ripe cuttings can be taken until late autumn. Semi-ripe means that the base of the stem to be cut is firm and only slightly flexible. Have a go at propagating lavender, rosemary, sage or thyme. For info on how to take semi ripe cutting check out <http://apps.rhs.org.uk/advicesearch/profile.aspx?pid=404>
- When the temperatures begin to drop move tender plants inside. Before you move them under cover, check them for pests: slugs & snails. And look for curled up leaves and webbing which usually indicate the presence of tiny caterpillars. They will continue to munch all winter long if not cleared out.
- If you have plant pots over wintering outside move them to a sheltered spot in the garden, e.g. next to a wall. By raising your pots off the ground it will give them some protection from the frost and can stop the frosts from cracking terracotta pots. You can buy pot feet from garden centres or use pieces of wood or bricks.
- As the garden begins to clear, collect up your plant supports (bamboo canes/willow sticks) clean and store them in a dry place over winter
- When the weather turns frosty worm bins should be insulated with bubble wrap, or moved into a warmer spot, such as a porch or greenhouse. This will help to keep the worms working well over winter.
- A wide variety of bare root trees and shrubs (including fruit trees & shrubs) are available to buy, online or at garden centres, from late autumn to early spring. Bare root plants are dormant; you can plant them anytime the ground isn't frozen. And the good thing is they are a lot less expensive than buying plants grown in containers.
- Wash, dry and store any used pots, seed trays and containers to remove over wintering pests and diseases that may infect your plants next year. Make sure gardening tools are cleaned of soil and debris.
- Order seed catalogues so you can place your order in January.

### Vegetables & Herbs:

- Make sure you harvest regularly to encourage more food to be available.
- Pinch out any flowers that form on tomatoes growing outdoors as they are unlikely to turn into ripe fruits this year. It's a good idea to remove lower leaves from tomato plants to improve air circulation.
- If, towards the end of the September, you still have lots of green fruits on your outdoor tomatoes, don't let them go to waste. To help them ripen, pull up the plants, then either hang them upside down in a greenhouse or pick the fruits and put them in a brown paper bag, add a ripe apple or banana to speed up the ripening.
- During September continue to sow autumn crops such as spring cabbage, spinach, turnips, chicories, kale, swiss chard, endives & rocket. There is a wide choice of oriental salads to sow now to give a supply of salad



or stir-fry leaves over the autumn and winter: Mizuna, Mibuna, Giant Red Mustard, Indian mustard and Pak choi. All can be grown in a relatively small space in a window box or in containers. As autumn progresses cover them with a cloche to save as much of the day's warmth as possible.

- To test if your sweet corn is ready to harvest, pinch a kernel - it will release a milky sap when ripe. If the kernels are starchy you've left it too late, if they're watery they need a little longer to ripen!
- Help your [pumpkins](#) ripen by removing or pulling back any leaves shading the fruits to expose them to the sun. Place pumpkins and [squashes](#) on a piece of slate or wood to raise them off the wet soil and prevent rotting.
- As days get shorter and temperatures fall, herbs such as parsley, basil and chives stop producing new leaves. You can prolong their life by putting them undercover either in a cold frame, a greenhouse or indoors on a bright windowsill. Pot up some mint and [parsley](#) from the garden for the kitchen windowsill, to use through the winter.
- During October / November seeds of hardy peas and broad beans can be sown for an extra-early crop next summer. Broad Bean Aquadulce or The Sutton are suitable for autumn planting. As for peas choose Winter-hardy pea 'Meteor'.
- If you are growing winter and spring cropping brassicas such as Brussels sprouts, cabbages and sprouting broccoli cover them with netting to stop the birds eating them.
- As your vegetable patch starts to clear, it's a good idea to plant some green manures.
- Dig over vegetable beds once crops are finished to remove weeds and crop debris
- If you have access to fresh manure, now is the time to spread it across the surface of your vegetable beds to rot down over winter.
- If you want to grow onions and garlic that you can harvest before the summer holidays, plant them by the end of term. If you wait until spring they won't be ready to harvest until after the school holidays-worth remembering if your school closes and plants are not watered for 6 weeks. They don't take up much space so they're great for growing in containers too. See below for info on how to plant onions & garlic and stockists.
- Dig a compost trench. This was a traditional way of composting kitchen scraps over the winter months. Children can dig a trench – around 20-25cm deep and wide. Place the dug out soil to one side of the trench. You can then add your kitchen peelings and fruit and veg waste (don't add cooked food) into the trench and cover it with soil (which will conceal any smells.) Work along the trench, layering the scraps till it is full. This will rot down nicely producing a rich bed. Next season you can grow moisture-loving crops such as runner beans or pumpkins on the site.
- In December harvest winter lettuce, either picking young leaves or cutting the whole plant when mature. Brussels are ready for harvesting; pick the buttons as soon as they are large enough. Spring cabbages planted in autumn can be harvested







in December as greens.

- Cover young plants with bottomless milk jugs, plastic water bottles or horticultural fleece to protect them from frost.



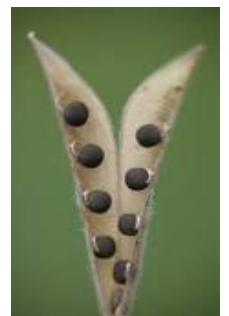
**HOMEMADE PROTECTION FOR YOUR PLANTS: WATER BOTTLES & MILK CARTONS**



**HORTICULTURAL FLEECE & PLASTIC CLOCHES ARE AVAILALE FROM GARDEN CENTRES**

## Flowers

- Keep deadheading annuals and perennials to extend their performance. Remove old summer bedding plants if they're finished flowering.
- Collect ripened seed and store for planting in autumn or next spring.
- Some hardy annuals can be sown in the autumn. This will result in early flowering displays next spring. Poppies, love-in-a-mist, marigolds, honesty, and cornflower seeds can be planted in the soil. At the same time, sow some seeds in pots too (just in case!) Sow your saved sweet pea seeds in pots. Pots can be kept over the winter in greenhouses, mini greenhouses or in a sheltered spot in the garden-where they should be raised off the ground.
- Continue to [feed](#) and dead-head your hanging baskets and container plants - they will often keep going until the first frosts





- Spring bulbs (Daffodils, miniature Daffodils, Crocus, Muscari, Anemone and dwarf Iris) are perfect for containers. They can be crammed in to provide a succession of spring flowers. Children like planting bulbs; they're nice and bulky for small hands. When planting bulbs in the garden, as a general rule, plant bulbs two to three times their own depth and around two bulb widths apart. When planting bulbs in containers, you can plant them closer together, so they are almost touching. Plant layers of different varieties of bulbs in one pot and you can create a spring display that will flower for weeks. Cover pots with a piece of chicken wire to prevent squirrels from digging them out and remove it when shoots appear. Handling bulbs can sometimes cause irritation so always wash your hands after handling them.
- Collect and dry teasels and use them for winter decoration, but leave a few to provide food for goldfinches. Spare stems can be used around plant pots planted with spring bulbs to keep squirrels off.
- In December Harvest holly with berries for making Christmas garlands and Christmas wreaths; stand them in a bucket of water until you're ready to use them.

### Fruit

- Keep a check on apples and pears. To determine if the fruit is ready to be picked, place a cupped hand under the fruit, lift and gently twist. If the apple doesn't come away easily in your hand, then it's not ready to harvest. Pears should not be left to ripen completely on the tree; pears need to be picked while still firm.
- If you want to grow more fruit next season, now is the time to look through catalogues for strawberries, raspberries, blackberries or currant bushes. These plants are best planted during the dormant season, i.e. when the plants have (temporarily) stopped growing.
- Take a look at fruit trees and soft fruit bushes available to buy from mail-order suppliers. They sell bare-rooted plants which are only available to buy during the autumn and winter months. This is the cheapest way to buy these plants, much cheaper than buying container grown plants from garden centres or nurseries - and you get much more choice. You can plant bare-rooted fruit canes, bushes and trees until the end of February. Don't plant them if the ground is frozen.
- Over the summer months your strawberry plants will have grown runners. It's very easy to make new strawberry plants from runners: Cut the runners off the main plant and put them in a pot to root and grow. You can use a length of bent wire (or a paper clip) to staple the runner on to the soil to take root. Try and plant your runners before the end of September as any later will hinder the development of a good rooting system before the winter sets in. Ensure new plants are well watered.
- Tidy up your strawberry patch and clear away any used straw, as this will harbour pests and diseases over winter.



- Continue to pick autumn fruiting raspberries. Summer fruiting raspberries can be cut down to just above ground level. Tie in new canes and remove any weak or damaged canes. Autumn fruiting raspberries can be left until late winter before you cut them down.
- Clear all weeds around fruit bushes and trees. Mulch around the base, taking care not to let the mulch touch any stems or trunks.
- In December remove any remaining damaged or rotted fruit from bushes and trees on the plant itself and any on the ground.
- Also in December cut out dead growth from raspberry canes, other soft fruit and prune grape vines.

### Wildlife

- Continue to feed birds and put out fresh water for birds every day in frosty weather. Give them a variation of food which you can buy from the supermarkets, pet shops and garden centres. Or why not make your own.....
- Tidy up the garden to eliminate any plant pests sheltering over winter, but don't be too tidy! Let the grass grow tall in some places, let fallen leaves and wood piles remain undisturbed as these area can provide valuable habitats for insects. Good places for children to go bug hunting! A pile of stacked logs makes a good home for hibernating frogs, toads and newts. They like to retreat into the crevices as the weather starts to turn cold, ready to emerge in the spring to hunt down slugs and other pests. . Leave an upturned plant pot or two lying around so insects have somewhere to shelter.
- Make bug boxes around your garden for insects and other critters to crawl into over the winter. Design your own old bricks, tiles, bamboo canes, drilled pieces of wood and other materials. If space allows why now build your own bug hotel. Useful websites for instructions: [www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/bug\\_home](http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/bug_home) [www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org/letnature/resources/bughotel.eb](http://www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org/letnature/resources/bughotel.eb)







### Inside tasks

Create colourful classroom with beautiful bulbs.

"Forcing" is the term used to describe the process that stimulates bulbs to bloom out of season. Among the most commonly forced bulb flowers are amaryllis, paper-white narcissus, muscari and hyacinths.



When selecting bulbs for forcing, you will need to buy 'prepared' bulbs; these have been treated to speed up their development. Once you invest in bulbs, you can enjoy their blooms year after year, without further investment. Bulbs are on sale now and check out RHS website for instructions on how and when to get started

### WINTER GREEN MANURES *(from Garden Organic website)*

Why plant Green manures?

- While it is growing it suppresses weeds, protects the soil from erosion and leaching and then, when it is dug in, it provides valuable bulky organic matter.
- Prevents loss of soil nutrients over the winter.
- Protects the structure of the soil
- Boosts fertility

Plant	Type	Fixer or Lifter?	Sowing time	Place in rotation
Field beans	HA	Fixer	Sept-Nov	Pea and beans section
Fodder Radish	HB	Lifter	Aug-Sept	Cabbage section
Grazing rye	HA	Lifter	Aug-Oct	Anywhere, except where small seeded crops are to be direct sown next spring
Tares	HA	Lifter	Mar-Sept	Pea and bean section; excellent where cabbage family are to grow next season
Phacelia	HHA	Lifter	Mar-Sept	Anywhere

HA - hardy annual

HHA - young plants can be fairly frost hardy, but not reliably frost hardy

HB - hardy biennial

'Lifter' – stores soil nutrients over winter

'Fixer' – takes up nitrogen from the air.





## PLANTING ONIONS & GARLIC



**ONIONS SETS**



**GARLIC**

Onions and garlic are satisfying to grow, they don't take up much space and they are not difficult, even for a beginner. Great for growing in containers if space is tight! It may be necessary to protect them from birds: homemade cloches or horticultural fleece will do the job.

- Onion sets are small, immature onions, and they can be planted in spring and autumn. The sets increase in size and each forms one full-sized bulb when ready to harvest. Plant the onion so that the top (pointed) end is sticking out above the soil and plant them 10cm (4in) apart. Plant in a sunny spot in the garden.
- When planting garlic break the bulb apart, plant the cloves with the pointed end up, around 2.5cm (1in) below the surface of the soil, 5cm (2in) for larger cloves. Space each clove about 10cm (4in) apart. Plant in a sunny spot in the garden.

Planting in small pots or module trays:

- A good way to protect your onions & garlic from birds is to plant them in pots or module trays of multi purpose compost and keep them in a greenhouse, mini greenhouse or in a sheltered (bright) spot in your garden. In the spring you can transplant them into the ground or into larger containers.
- If planting in pots ensure that the tips of both the garlic and onions are showing above the surface of the soil.



## MAKE YOUR OWN LEAFMOULD

Autumn leaves rot down to make leafmould - a pleasant, dark brown, crumbly material. It takes around 1 year for this process to happen. It has huge benefits for the garden and it's a free resource. You can use it as a mulch to cover bare ground or dig some into your vegetable beds to improve the condition of your soil and add organic matter to it which helps it retain moisture.



- Collect fallen leaves and place them in black bags or place them in a homemade leaf mould bin. Don't forget to let some of the leaves linger in the garden for insects.
- If the leaves are dry add water as this will help them to break down.
- Put lots of holes in the bottom of the bags with a fork and leave them in a quiet corner in the garden.
- After 1 year it will be ready for use.

### HOMEMADE LEAF MOULD BIN.

It's easy to make your own leaf mould bin and it's a good project to do with children.



- A suitable material to use is plastic coated wire mesh which is available to buy from garden centres. Choose one that is 0.5cm high so that children can have easy access to it. Create a large circle and ties the edges together with garden twine or garden wire. Secure the bin to the ground with metal garden pegs (also available from garden centres.)
- Select a quiet, shady corner of your garden for your leafmould bin. It's best placed on open ground so bugs can access it. Children can collect the leaves every week and add them to the bin. Leaf mould provides a great habitat for worms and *insects* so in no time at all it will provide an excellent place for children to go bug hunting.

### RECIPE:

#### ROASTED PUMPKIN WEDGES

Cooking: 45 minutes

#### Ingredients:

- 1 pumpkin, seeds removed and cut into wedges around 2cm thick
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- salt and freshly ground pepper





## Method:

1. **To Roast:** Preheat an oven to 250°C. Place all the pumpkin wedges in a roasting pan with the olive oil and season them with the salt and pepper, place them in the preheated oven. Leave the pumpkin to cook for 15 minutes, then turn them and reduce the temperature to 200°C and leave them to cook for 30 minutes, turning them once again after 15 minutes.
2. The pumpkin wedges should be crisp and dark golden brown. Keep warm until ready to serve.

## Fruit Leathers/ Pureed Fruit-a delicious and nutritious snack.

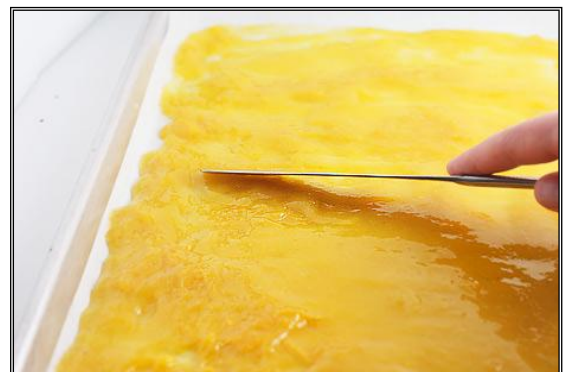
### Ingredients:

- Mixed fruit of your choice (apricots, peaches, plums, berries, apples, pears, grapes)
- Spices such as cinnamon, vanilla or ginger
- Honey or apple juice concentrate and lemon juice (optional)



### Method:

1. Chop fruit into large pieces. For every 4 cups of fruit add 1 cup of water and add spices
2. Simmer until the fruit is soft
3. If you need to remove seeds from the pulp, rub it through a sieve.
4. Return pulp to the pan. You may want to add lemon juice. If you want to sweeten the mixture, add honey or apple concentrate, a little at a time and keep tasting.
5. Pour the mixture onto a baking tray lined with parchment paper. The mixture should be no more than 1cm thick otherwise it will take too long to dry out.
6. Place the baking tray in the oven (set at its lowest setting) and leave the oven door open. This allows air and moisture to escape. Allow the puree to dry for 4 to 8 hours. The total time of drying varies depending on the type of fruit. Rotate the tray every hour.
7. Your fruit leathers are dry when they no longer feel sticky and





peel away from the paper easily. Allow it to cool to room temperature.

8. Roll them up and wrap tightly with plastic wrap. Place in an air-tight container, and store in a dry, dark place. (Light will cause the fruit leather to discolour.)

4 cups of fruit yield about one baking sheet of fruit leather.

## Recipes for our feathered friends to enjoy:

### BIRD CAKE

#### YOU WILL NEED:

- Any combination of the following: wild bird seed, currants, sultanas, oats, bread and cake crumbs, grated cheese and peanuts. If you have children who are allergic to nuts, try this without adding peanuts – and make sure your bird seed doesn't contain nuts.
- Suet or lard. You may have to visit one of the large supermarkets to find vegetable suet/lard. Often, smaller shops only stock animal derived fats.
- Yoghurt pots; string; mixing bowl; scissors



#### Method

1. The best ratio for this recipe is one part fat to two parts dry mixture.
2. Melt some lard or suet in a pan and add the dry mix. Stir well until the mixture sticks together.
3. Pierce a hole in the bottom of either the yoghurt pot (or plastic cup) and thread the string through tying a large enough knot so that it won't go back through the hole. Leave enough string so that you can tie the pot to a tree or your bird table.
4. Fill your yoghurt pots with bird cake mixture and put them in the fridge to set for an hour or so. When set, hang the cake out in the garden, you can leave the pot on or carefully cut and peel it off.
5. You could add a little perch for the birds to sit on using lolly sticks or twigs form the garden. See picture.

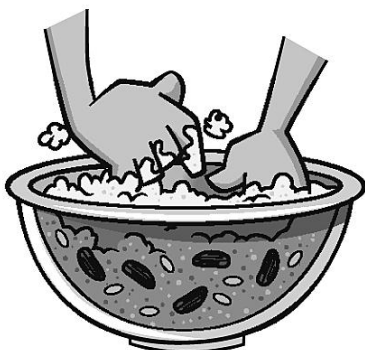


### CRUMBLE PASTRY MAGGOTS

#### YOU WILL NEED:

- 85 g flour, 30 g lard and a mixing bowl

1. Put the flour into a bowl.
2. Mix in the lard with the tips of your fingers.







3. Rub the dry mixture into little pieces that look like maggots!
4. Sprinkle these onto the ground, on your bird table or around bushes and flowerbeds.

## CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

### TREE DRESSING DAY



Tree Dressing Day is based on many old customs from all over the world and it aims to encourage the celebration of trees in city and country, and to highlight our responsibility for looking after our trees. It takes place on the first weekend in December.

### POPCORN AND CRANBERRY GARLAND

Making these tree decorations is a great, easy-to-do project to do with children and the birds will enjoy them.

Use large (blunt tipped!) darning needles.

- Thread the pieces of popcorn and cranberries (dried cranberries are easier to thread and less messy!) onto strong cotton.
- Don't make the cotton too long as it will end up in knots. Use short lengths of thread and just tie the lengths together to make a longer strand. Drape the garlands over the bushes and trees in your garden or in your local park.



### Orange, Lemon & Apple Decorations



These are easy but effective hanging decorations for the Christmas tree. You can also make lots of these and make into a simple festive potpourri mix with pine cones and cinnamon sticks.



You can use: Oranges, lemons and apples.



1. Slice the fruit and pop them directly onto a wire rack.
2. Bake them in the oven set at its lowest setting for about 3-4 hours.
3. Then pierce a hole near the top and tie a length of ribbon for hanging.

## Orange Pomanders



Orange pomanders fill the room with a delicious scent, and look pretty too. Children will enjoy making it with adult assistance.

Children can push the cloves into the orange if it is soft enough. If they find it difficult they can use a toothpick to make small holes in their orange and then fit a clove carefully into each hole

Hammersmith Community Gardens Association has been delivering educational sessions for over ten years. We have a team of school gardeners who provide environmental education sessions in schools on a weekly basis. These include formal curriculum-linked activities as well as lunchtime and after school clubs. Our staff are highly trained in environmental education, food growing and wildlife gardening.

We have built up a collection of activities and have worked with many schools and nurseries in the borough, running one-off workshops, short-term projects and longer-term contracts around growing, food and environmental art.

We also guide groups on how to make their premises more environmentally friendly and give technical growing advice. We have designed growing and wildlife areas in several local schools and our teams of volunteers have undertaken the landscaping work during school holidays.

We have been awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge for our educational work on-site at our community gardens.

For further details about arranging one-off or regular sessions please contact [info@hcga.org.uk](mailto:info@hcga.org.uk) or 07890 514 050