



Callicarpa



Notes for November from Martineau Gardens

November is an interesting garden month. We can start off in autumn with wonderful leaf colour and by the end the month, we are hanging bird feeders on bare wintry branches.

It can be a very good planting month with the soil still warm and moist enough to help shrubs, trees and perennials to settle in before the worst of the winter weather hits us. Many perennials can be lifted and divided now. Replant with fresh growth from the outside of the clump for more vigorous plants next year. If you make your own compost, it is a good time to turn the heap and use any of the compost which is ready to enrich the soil for planting or to mulch the beds. A little extra around hardy Fuschias will give them a bit of protection in case we have a hard winter. If you are thinking of planting any of the great variety of these wonderful late flowering shrubs, wait until May so that they have time to settle in well before the next winter.

There is still just time to plant out biennials such as wallflowers, foxgloves and forget-me-nots for colour in the late spring and early summer. Tulips can still go in too – either in the beds or in pots to plunge in the beds when they come into flower. A sowing of sweet pea seeds in pots will give sturdy plants for next year if they can be kept in a cool green house or cold frame.

We have plenty to enjoy in our community garden, Martineau Gardens, just now. The winter-flowering Viburnums and Mahonias look surprisingly fresh and smell beautiful too. To add to the colour there are plenty of berries, from the strange purple of the Callicarpa to the reds of rose hips and various Cotoneasters. The coloured stems of the dogwoods and willows can be an eye catching display of reds, yellows and oranges. If you are thinking of planting any of these, try to put them where the winter sun will catch them; they can really light up the garden.

In the vegetable garden any vacant beds can be dug over and left rough for the frost to break up. This is great for good old Birmingham clay, but if you do have a lighter soil, fork it

over and cover with a good layer of compost or other soil conditioner. Winter hardy broad beans can still be sown for an early crop next year. The plants may need covering with fleece if we have a very cold spell but they will often manage without protection at all. If they do fail, another sowing in early spring will soon catch up. We will be harvesting leeks and Jerusalem artichokes now – just the thing for late November soup along with the winter squash and pumpkins which have been brought indoors to store.

And finally, we are bound to get some days when we can't get into the garden at all, but that is when the seed catalogues come into their own. Browsing through them gives us lots of ideas for growing old favourites and for trying something new.

Happy gardening!

Stewart and the Martineau Gardens' Team

NB Martineau Gardens, 27 Priors Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B5 7UG, is open daily (except Sunday) 10am – 4pm. Admission is free. www.martineau-gardens.org.uk