Mr B's School Garden Calendar 2018

Beauties for January

For the fair-weather gardener, the January days maybe dark, cold and wet where there is nothing much to see or do in the garden, except watching the odd black bird making a complete mess of the bird table or wreaking havoc with the berries in the holly tree.

For the true out-door gardener January is a time of year when evergreen trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants are looking stunning. There are seasonal beauties, four of which I would recommend you try growing. Holly: (1) Ilex aquifolium 'Ferox Argentea' (we have a baby one in PCS) with its purple stems and silver-edged leaves armed with clusters of short spines (it's also easy maintenance). Silver variegated ivy, like (2) Hedera helix 'Glacier' with its green-silver and cream leaves, is a beautiful ground cover plant or can be used as an effective tree climber (requires steady maintenance). (3) Hellebores are a beautiful winter flowering, perennial, seen in many gardens all over Leigh Park. This is one I recommend you try planting. They bloom in late winter to early spring, sometimes while the ground is still covered with snow. Different varieties of the hellebore plant offer a range of flower colours, from reds to purple and white to black; my personal favourite is Helleborus orientalis 'Red Lady'. Hellebores are easy to grow and can be planted in shade, but also do well in direct sun light (it's also easy maintenance). (4) Cornus Alba 'Sibirica' (also known as dogwood) produces brilliant, bright red stems and not only gives a real Christmas glow to the garden during the festive season but also offers year-round interest to the garden, with small, creamy-white flowers appearing amongst a mass of ovate dark green leaves, from May and June. This is one I recommend you try planting this one (maintenance is easy).

Why don't you try one or two of these in your garden?

Ilex aquifolium 'Ferox Argentea' | Hedera helix 'Glacier' | Helleborus orientalis 'Red Lady'

Cornus alba 'Siberica

Without leaves around Christmas and with leaves in from late spring

Jobs of the month

1 One important Horticultural job that will start in January is moving many of the shrubs from the shrubbery at the back of the field (sitting on a heavy clay sub-soil) to the raised beds near the poly tunnel and tech. Repeated, waterlogging has started to take a toll on many of the shrubs and tree specimens, leaving them in a sorry, dying state.

2 Resolve the waterlogging by digging in soil improvers, like manure, wood chippings and gravel.

3 Planting seeds in January

- Broad beans - I
- Sweet Peas - O
- Leeks - O
- Cauliflower - O
- 'All Year Round' lettuce - O
- Onions - O
- Peas - O
- Tomatoes - O

Fruit and Veg

Start/complete winter digging ready for spring crops- cover beds to warm soil and stifle weeds.

Spray fruit trees with a plant oil winter wash if aphids have been a problem

Check fruit tree ties to staking supports. Remove and repair if required.

4 Essentials

- o   Build bird boxes
- o   Bug houses
- o   Compost beds to improve soil
- o   Pot cleaning
- o   Tool cleaning and repairs
- o   Clean poly tunnel
- o   Repairs to equipment

I	Sowing inside - under cover
O	Sowing outside

Prune/ plant out Blueberries - make sure they are in ericaceous soil.

Peaches, Nectarines, Apricots, Plums and Gauges can be planted out

Black currents, Blackberries, Cherries, Figs and Gooseberries can be planted out now.

Remember, if in doubt, ask me and I will do my best to help you.

A word of warning:

Mistletoe: Viscum album, a pretty festive rarity on the school site (though parasitical living on the nutrients of its host tree), can be found on a variety of trees like Hawthorn, Willow, Crab apples and Oak and others, and shrubs like Cotoneaster (I noticed some mistletoe in one of the school's Hawthorns last February, but didn't see it this year). It is a great source of winter food for various wild birds but is poisonous to humans if eaten, (requires specialist handling not for beginners) so look, but leave well alone.

Mistletoe: Viscum album,