



Welcome to the Autumn edition of the TCV Newsletter packed full of ideas, tips and activities for all ages!

Jobs in the garden

It is generally thought that there isn't much to do in the garden at this time of year, but there are lots of little jobs that can still be done. Pick a dry day and wrap up warm.

Tulips

November and December is the ideal time to plant tulip bulbs, bringing joy and colour to the garden come Spring. Plant them deeply to protect them from squirrels.



Trees and Shrubs

If you feel you may have planted young trees and shrubs in the wrong position, then now is the perfect time to move them. When digging them out, make sure to take as much of the root ball as possible.



Hellebores

Remove old, damaged or diseased leaves from Hellebores to allow for new growth and flowers. Removing leaves can help prevent leaf spot and aphid attack.

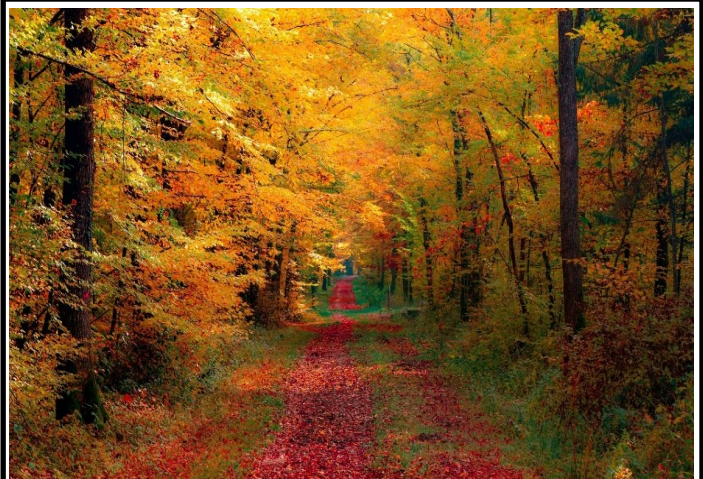


Containers



A container or window box planted with bright colours will bring joy to the darker days associated with this time of year. Start with a conifer for height and add trailing ivy, winter flowering pansies and primulas for colour.

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Tree Bathing

We all know that being outside in nature is good for us, but did you know that walking among trees is especially beneficial for our mental wellbeing?

According to research, forest therapy can help improve our health on many levels;

- Lower stress
- Reduce blood pressure
- Lift depression
- Improve mental health

To try tree bathing, first of all find your trees. They could be a forest or a patch of trees nearby. Find a comfortable spot where you can sit against a tree, turn off your phone. Focus on your breathing – inhale for four, exhale for four if you can. If possible, keep sitting, or gently walk, for around 30 mins and notice what's around you. Leaves rustling in the wind, light trickling through the branches, birdsong, the woody scents. At this time of year the forest floor will be ablaze with the colour of the fallen leaves.

As well as being relaxing, certain types of tree will emit volatile essential oils (like in aromatherapy) which will help to reduce the production of our stress hormone, cortisol.

Returning to the trees often, ideally weekly or daily if you can, you will notice the changes through the seasons and feel the benefits to your health.

For more help and info visit www.mindingyourhead.info

Leaf mould

Piles of leaves in your garden under hedges and shrubs provide shelter for animals over winter, but for the gardener, leaves can also be a rich harvest. When they break down they create leaf mould which can be used to add goodness to potting compost or as a mulch around woodland plants in the garden.

Stick to open spaces or paths and collect leaves, Ideally chop them up – use a mower to do this and make sure they are damp. You can make a bay to keep them in using chicken wire and just heap them in or put them in bin bags making sure to punch some holes in the bottom for drainage and fold over the tops. Forget about them until next Autumn, or preferably for two years, and you will have a lovely crumbly conditioner for your soil.

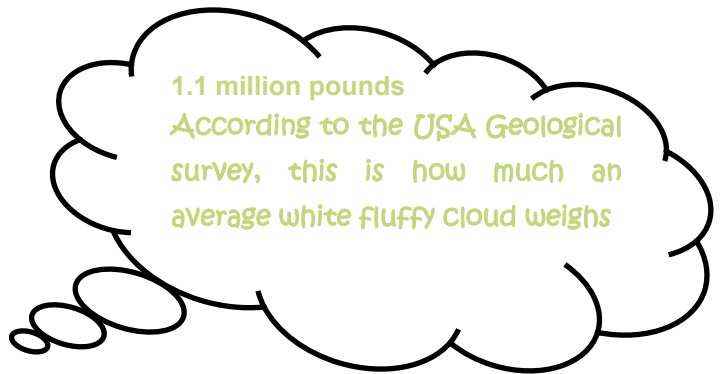


House plants

Some house plants like to be moved to brighter spots in the home at this time of year to make the most of the lower light levels. Reduce watering to weekly.



1.1 million pounds
According to the USA Geological survey, this is how much an average white fluffy cloud weighs



Go Green, Help the Environment

Lights Off!

With darker days and longer nights, we all need some extra lighting. Forgetting to switch lights off when you leave the room can add to your bills. Unnecessarily leaving one old style bulb on overnight between now and March could add £18 to your electric bill as well as 31kg in CO2 to the atmosphere. An energy-friendly LED bulb would be an extra £3 and 5kg in CO2 emissions.



Dry up!

If you use a tumble dryer when the weather doesn't allow for laundry to be dried outside, consider swapping dryer sheets for natural, chemical free, wool dryer balls.

Available in local bargain shops, they help to separate the laundry in the machine cutting down on drying times, saving money, and reducing static. They can be used lots of times and are even compostable!



Can it!

Recycling just one aluminium drinks can saves enough energy to run a TV for 3 hours.

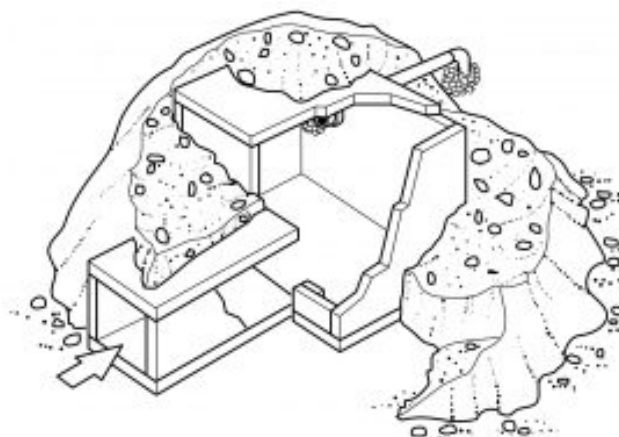
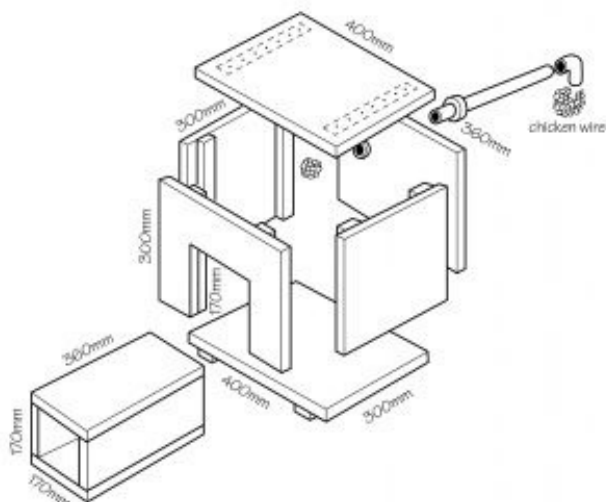


Hedgehog Hideaway

As Autumn gets underway and the temperatures begin to turn chillier, our native hedgehogs start to look for good places to make hibernation nests. These 'hibernacula' offer warmth and protection from predators when in use from November to March and may also be used as a nesting box for a mother and her hoglets in the warmer months. Our Scottish colleagues have some handy hints on helping hedgehogs at www.tcv.org.uk, search citizen science resources, click on the article and follow the links to HogWatch at Home. More information on hedgehogs can be found by visiting www.woodlandtrust.org or www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk. Want to build a hedgehog hotel for your own garden? See our plans on 'how to' below for a nifty hedgehog box. Pop some dry leaves or straw inside too as bedding for any prospective clients. Take a look at our kid's page for some more hedgehog facts.



Cover the box with dry grass and leaves to insulate it, and then cover the mound with a thick plastic sheet, leaving the entrance accessible. Anchor the sheet down around the edges to keep the house snug and dry through the winter.

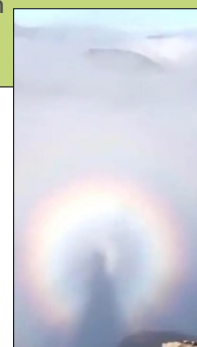


Natural Phenomena

While everything that happens in nature has its own beauty, some are more spectacular than others. Natural phenomena, an extraordinary occurrence found in nature, can occur at any time of the year but Autumn in the outdoors is the best time to observe nature at its most mesmerising. Here are some examples to look out for in late Autumn.

Brocken Spectre

An eerily enormous shadow, surrounded by a multicoloured ring of light, cast by the person observing, a Brocken Spectre is a trick of light associated with cloud inversions. It happens when walking in mountain peaks with cloud or fog below and the sun directly behind.



Starling Murmuration

Most commonly seen at dusk, Starling murmurations are formed when thousands of the birds flock together in a spectacular aerial display just before they roost for the night. A dazzling sight, it is believed murmurations happen for a number of reasons – to keep warm, protection from predators, or to exchange information.



Northern Lights

Also known as Aurora Borealis, the Northern Lights is a breath-taking natural light display in the Earth's sky. Appearing as large areas of colour including, pale green, pink and shades of red, yellow, blue and violet, they are usually seen at night in the direction of due north. They are best observed in areas where there is little or no artificial light pollution.



Spotlight on seasonal veg—Kale

A cruciferous veggie from the Brassica family, labelled a superfood or nutrient dense, it's easy to see why Kale is so good for us. Packed with phytonutrients and minerals, it has more iron than beef, more vitamin C than oranges and more calcium than cows milk. Low in calories and filled with fibre, Kale is versatile enough to be added to basically any dish you're cooking.

If eaten regularly, 'The Queen of Greens' can help support your body in a number of ways;

- Reduce your risk of chronic disease like diabetes
- Protect against vision loss
- Help lower blood pressure
- Strengthen your bones
- Calm nervous system
- Support hormones



Here's a tasty recipe to get you started on your journey with Kale.

Sweet potato, Walnut, Kale and Feta salad

- 500g sweet potatoes, washed and cut into small chunks
- 150g kale
- 100g walnuts
- 100g feta
- 2tbsp rapeseed oil
- 1 ½ tbsp clear honey



Preheat the oven to 200c, 180c fan, gas 6

Arrange the sweet potato on a baking tray, drizzle with 1tbsp of oil and 1tbsp of honey. Shake the tray to ensure the chunks are evenly covered. Roast in the oven for 15 mins until soft.

Put the kale in a large mixing bowl, drizzle over the rest of the oil and season with freshly ground pepper. Gently squeeze the kale to soften

Drizzle the walnuts with the remaining honey and add to the sweet potatoes. Roast for another 8-10 mins

Remove from oven and allow to cool slightly

Combine kale, walnuts and sweet potatoes.

Divide into four plates and crumble the feta on top.

Pickles and preserves

Autumn is the perfect time to make pickles and preserves. It is a great way to store the last of your vegetables from the plot and they make fantastic Christmas presents!

Red Onion Chutney

8 red onions
1 red chilli
2 bay leaves
25ml olive oil
200g brown sugar
150ml balsamic vinegar
150 ml red wine vinegar



Cut the onions and chilli into thin slices and put in a pan with the bay leaves and oil. Cook gently over a low heat for about 20 mins.

Once the onions are dark and sticky add the sugar and vinegars and simmer for about 30 mins until dark and sticky.

Pour the chutney into hot, sterilised jars and let cool.

Winter vitamin booster smoothie

This smoothie is packed full of greens and is great for lunch. Any leafy green can be used instead of kale or spinach, try lettuce!

Handful spinach or kale
4 large slices of cucumber
1 apple
Small slice of ginger
125ml water
Blitz all together for a healthy, tasty pick me up!



Crab apple jelly

4 kg crab apples
1 kg caster sugar
1 lemon, juiced

Makes 6 x 500ml jars - or use these proportions.

Wash the apples, removing any bruised fruit. Put in a saucepan, fill with water to just cover the apples.

Bring to the boil and simmer until the fruit is soft (about 30 minutes).

Pour the pulp into a jelly bag or several layers of muslin and let drip overnight into a pan. Do NOT squeeze the bag or it will make the juice cloudy.

The next day, measure the juice, and add sugar in the ratio of 10 parts juice to 7 of sugar. Add some lemon juice, then bring to the boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Keep at a rolling boil for 40 minutes, skimming off the froth. To test the set, chill a dessertspoon in the refrigerator.

When the jelly is set, it will solidify on the back of the spoon. Pour into warm, sterilised preserving jars and tightly seal while still slightly warm. Store in a cool dark place.



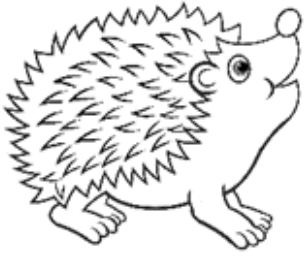
For more recipes and ideas to keep healthy visit, www.choosetolivebetter.com



Did you try any of the activities in this newsletter? Share your photos with us on our Facebook page—The Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland. Have any tips, handy hints or recipes? Share these with us too. We would love to hear from you!

Keep an eye out for an upcoming freebie!

Natural explorers



The world is full of so many incredible animals and plants.

Join us on our journey to discover a bit more about some of our local ones ...

H	A	L	I	S	F	K	G
E	E	M	H	P	C	W	A
D	I	D	P	I	E	O	R
G	S	K	G	N	P	R	D
E	C	N	U	E	W	M	E
R	J	T	O	S	H	A	N
O	A	G	M	U	N	O	S
W	P	A	R	K	T	L	G
S	D	S	L	U	G	S	E

Hedgehogs:

Love to hide in grassy areas of scrub, mainly found living in suburban gardens and parks. They are strictly nocturnal, which means they only come out at night. They forage around the ground for invertebrates. (slugs, earwigs, beetles, worms, centipedes etc.)

Word Search Can you find the following words in the grid

HEDGEHOG WORM SNOOT SPINES
PARK GARDENS HEDGEROWS SLUGS

Back Garden Treasure hunt

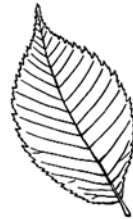
How many can you spot?

Colour as you find them

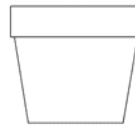
Twig



Leaf



Flowerpot



Grass



Bonus Hunt

Find something:

Soft.....

Hard.....

Spikey.....

Shiny.....

Round.....

Flower



Stone



Watering can

