

# HOW TO...

## PREPARE YOUR GARDEN FOR WINTER

WITH a frosty bite in the air and the nights drawing in, winter is well and truly on its way. But before the green-fingered among us can sit back and let nature take its course in the garden, there are a few things that must be done in preparation for the long-awaited spring.

Gardening supremo ANNIE GUILFOYLE, director of Creative Landscapes and garden design director at KLC School of Design in Chelsea Harbour, shares her easy guide to putting the garden to bed.

### DIVIDE & CONQUER

DIVIDE any perennials (plants that die down in winter, but reappear year after year), such as sedum and perennial geraniums, that you feel are getting too large. Using a knife or spade, just prise apart the root.

It might seem brutal, but they are pretty hardy and you can then take your divided plants and fill empty gaps in the garden. It will also help keep your plants healthy and vigorous.

Do take care to make sure that the new location has the right growing conditions for the divided plant. For example, a sun-loving perennial such as sedum will not relish being stuck under the shade of a tree.

### GET ORDERING

ORDER your seed catalogues for next spring and summer — it's a great way to find inspiration and maybe try something new.

Chiltern Seeds (01229 581 137; [www.chilternseeds.co.uk](http://www.chilternseeds.co.uk)) is a good place to start, where you can buy every kind of annual (plants with a lifecycle of a year, such as nigella and poppies), perennial and vegetable you could imagine.

It's always a good idea to liaise with green-fingered friends so you all grow something different and share the young plants with each other.

With vegetables you always want a good stock, but some packets have hundreds of seeds and you don't want a garden full of just one type of plant.

### SNAP HAPPY

TAKE photographs of your garden throughout the year and note down the things you were happy with — and those you were not happy with.

It is also worth noting the plants that flourished and those that didn't do so well, whether caused by the soil type or shade. Year on year, this will help you to plan and improve your garden.

### DON'T BE TOO TIDY

GARDENS benefit from having a layer of leaf litter and foliage, so put the rake down.

By leaving leaf litter on beds of perennials, you are providing them with a kind of duvet to protect them from harsh frosts and snow. This is the one time of the year the garden can be less than pristine.

And it's also a nice way to provide a home for creatures to shelter from the cold weather.

### GET PLANTING

NOW is the time to start planting shrubs for next spring and summer — viburnum, choisea and olearia are particularly popular — as well as perennials before the winter really closes in.

This will ensure their roots can establish before the spring, and it gives them a head start on growth for next year.

It is also much easier to do this before the frost hits and the ground gets harder to dig.



Rake: But don't tidy away all leaves

### GET POTTING

SPRING bulbs — daffodils, tulips, alliums and crocus — should be planted by the end of November. They need the winter in the ground to help them grow, so it's worth planting them in old black plastic plant pots, so they are portable.

This way, you can position the pots around the garden wherever you like and can just pick them up and move them next spring when you know what you want the garden to look like.

It saves disturbing and digging them up if you have a garden redesign.

### LOOK AFTER WILDLIFE

WINTER can be tough on garden wildlife, so it's always good to give them a helping hand where possible.

Aside from feeding the birds, it's worth making overwintering places for creatures to find refuge. For example, piles of logs will offer a safe place for endangered stag beetles and amphibians such as toads and frogs — the gardener's friend because they love eating slugs.

When it comes to bonfires, be careful to bring together your garden debris only at the last minute because they are a popular hiding place with hedgehogs (another slug-eating friend).

### LEAVE GRASS ALONE

DON'T be tempted to cut back ornamental grasses in beds and pots because this can kill them at this time of year. It's best to leave these until spring when the new growth is just emerging.

As for the lawn, once you have got rid of perennial weeds and moss, and pierced the lawn with a rake to aerate it and help with drainage, you can sit back and put your feet up until spring.

KATE MELHUISH

## MODEL OUTFIT SHEARLING

### JACKET

LAYER a shearling jacket over a winter maxi-dress for aviator-inspired chic. Add a pair of ankle boots to finish your look.



Oakwood jacket, £475, **Donna Ida**, [donnaida.com](http://donnaida.com)  
Maxi dress, £35, **Wallis**, [wallis.co.uk](http://wallis.co.uk)  
Lace-up shoe-boots, £94.90, **Massimo Dutti**, 020 7851 1280

### COAT

SHEARLING is a great investment for winter. Wear over skinny jeans, boots and a cosy knit.



Coat, £625, **Toast**, [toast.co.uk](http://toast.co.uk)  
Purple top, £95, **reiss.co.uk**  
Navy cardigan, £98, **John Lewis**, [johnlewis.co.uk](http://johnlewis.co.uk)  
Houlihan navy trousers, £245, **Trilogy**, 020 7397 7972  
Suede wedge boots, £94.90, **Massimo Dutti**, as before

### GILET

THIS luxurious cover-up will add glamour to any daytime outfit. Keep your silhouette sharp by pairing it with skinny jeans and ankle boots.



Karl Donoghue gilet, £669, **Fenwick**, 020 7629 9161  
Green cashmere top, £275, **Chinti & Parker**, [chintiandparker.com](http://chintiandparker.com)  
Oslo jeans, £148, **Mih Jeans**, [mih-jeans.com](http://mih-jeans.com)  
Boots, £120, **River Island**, [riverisland.co.uk](http://riverisland.co.uk)

ELIZA SCARBOROUGH

Hug-starved Americans are queuing up to squeeze total strangers. But will we shy Brits embrace the trend?

by Sophie Morris

**W**HAT moments do you treasure in your relationship? Could it be those one-off romantic gestures such as the time he treated you to an expensive restaurant or gift, or could it be the simple pleasure of snuggling up to him in front of the TV?

Cuddles are crucial in any successful relationship. Studies have found that when we hug each other, the chemicals released have profound physical and emotional effects.

They make us feel warm, wanted, safe and secure. They make men and women fall in love. They bond parent and child. In fact, after food and water, psychologists believe cuddles provide one of our most basic needs — loving human contact.

But what if you've no one to hug? According to the New Policy Institute, there are almost seven million single people in England, compared with three million in 1971. That's projected to increase to around nine million by 2021.

The number of single women has more than doubled over the past three decades, according to official figures, with nearly a third of us living alone by the time we reach retirement age. One in five of us will never have children.

Perhaps this explains the rise in the hug as greeting, which has become inexplicably popular in recent years. I admit I do bridle at cuddling someone I only vaguely know. To me, a quick kiss on the cheek is less intimate.

It's not only singletons who might be lacking in the intimacy stakes. Even those in relationships can lack affection and intimacy. One married friend, Sarah, confesses that the only time her husband touches her is when it's a preamble to sex. What she really craves is a cuddle. I know the feeling.

Being single, I realised recently that what I missed most about being in a relationship wasn't sex, but the intimacy of human touch.

Then I heard about so-called cuddle workshops — a huge trend in the U.S., which has spread across the pond. The workshops sprang up with the aim of bringing people together for affectionate, strictly non-sexual physical contact.

### POWER UP

THIS week's competitors in the London to Brighton vintage car run might wish they had packed this solar car battery charger if they run into trouble. It connects in seconds via the cigarette lighter or a crocodile clip.

■ £25.99 from Nigel Eco Store: 0800 288 8970.

