



Into the garden

December's winter pause

Your seasonal sanctuary: part inspiration, part know-how, and a dash of dirt-under-the-nails wisdom. **Platinum's** monthly gardening pages are here to guide, cheer, and occasionally tease you through the year ahead.

ALAN'S TOP TIP
 'Keep an eye on overwintering plants in the greenhouse. A little dryness won't hurt, but clear away dead leaves and watch for pests. With no summer breezes to shift the air, trouble spreads fast.'

Did you know?

- Poinsettias hail from Mexico, where they can grow into four-metre shrubs.
- Mistletoe was once thought to guard against witches and lightning.
- Holly berries are poisonous to us, but thrushes tuck in like it's Christmas dinner.



ALAN'S ALMANAC: DECEMBER IN THE GARDEN AND ALLOTMENT

Alan Coxon: food and heritage expert, and *Platinum's* very own gardening voice. With a passion for the land, Alan will be our guide through the gardening year. Find out more at roaming-the-paths.co.uk and alans-almanac.co.uk.



WORDS: EMMA COXON, ALAN COXON. IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK

● **Feed the birds.** Keep the buffet stocked – seeds, fat balls – and don't forget the water dish. A splash of ice-free water is a lifesaver when everything else is frozen solid.

● **Plant ahead.** Garlic, shallots, onions and broad beans are perfectly happy snuggling into the winter damp. And if your bulbs mysteriously vanish, blame the mice!

● **Prune and polish.** Finish off the fruit trees, give shrub roses a light trim, but save the drastic cuts for later.



● **Tidy and prep.** Beds cleared? Mulch deep, add lime if needed, then let the empty patches rest under their cosy blanket while the worms do the hard graft.

● **Tools and kit.** A quick scrub of pots and trays now, a check on stakes and covers, and you'll thank yourself when the storms roll in.

● **Pots and planters.** Don't assume winter rain is reaching those sheltered corners – poke a finger in the soil. If it's bone dry, time for a good soak.

● **Step inside.** Houseplants are dozing, so ease up on the watering.

Rooted Christmas trees are thirsty beasts – keep their pots topped up.

● **Indoor crops.** For instant greenery, sow microgreens, mung beans and herbs on a sunny windowsill. For a fragrant head start, tuck sweet peas into loo-roll tubes.

● **Pause and dream.** Those seed catalogues are singing their siren song. December might look sleepy, but in a gardener's imagination, it's already spring.

● **Take it in.** Frost crunching, blackbirds rummaging in the hedge, breath curling in the chill – step outside with a hot mug and let the garden whisper its winter poetry.