

OLD LORE REMINDER

'Dry August and warm doth harvest no harm'



Sweet peas flower into early autumn

The abundance of August

This is the month of the garden's slow exhale – ripe, warm and buzzing with life.

This is the month for savouring what you've grown and beginning to think seriously about what comes next. Keep harvesting, keep deadheading, and resist the urge to tidy too soon – the garden still has plenty to give.

● Deadhead without mercy
Dahlias, roses, sweet peas and cosmos need regular deadheading to keep the flowers coming. Miss a week and they'll set seed and give

up on you entirely. Ten minutes every few days is all it takes.

● Pot on rooted cuttings
Hydrangeas, lavender and penstemon root easily from cuttings and now is a perfect time to check on any you have on the go. Give each pot a gentle tug – resistance means roots have formed and they're ready to pot on into fresh compost before autumn sets in.

PLATINUM EXPERT

Alan Coxon
Food and heritage expert, and curator of projects from *Roaming the Paths* to *Alan's Almanac*, Alan is Platinum's gardening voice. With a passion for the land and a gift for unearthing timeless wisdom, Alan is our guide through the year – sharing know-how, inspiration and a few winks of humour along the way. Find out more at roaming-the-paths.co.uk and alans-almanac.co.uk.

● Harvest beans and squash daily
The moment you stop picking, the plant stops producing. French and runner beans need checking every day – a bean left to bulk up signals the job is done. Summer squash is the same. Keep at it and they'll crop into September.

● Collect seed from your best plants
Poppies, foxgloves, aquilegias, nasturtiums – now is the moment to save seed from plants you love. Wait until the seed heads are fully dry, cut into a paper envelope and label at once. A free way to carry this year's garden into the next.

● Cut back straggly perennials
Hardy geraniums and catmint often look exhausted by mid-summer. Give them a hard cut back and a good water and they'll reward you with fresh growth and even a second flowering before autumn. It feels brutal, but they love it.

● Watch out for late blight
Warm days and cool, dewy nights are perfect conditions for potato and tomato blight. Keep a close eye on foliage for dark blotches and that musty smell. Spot it and remove affected growth immediately – bin, don't compost – then consider lifting potatoes early.

Book of the month

The Kindest Garden: A Practical Guide to Regenerative Gardening
By Marian Boswall

This won Gardening Book of the Year, and it's easy to see why. Landscape designer Marian Boswall goes beyond sustainable gardening to show how even a windowsill or shady patio can actively replenish biodiversity, with stunning photography throughout.



ALAN'S TOP TIP
Keep your strawberry runners going. Pin the little plantlets into pots of compost while still attached to the parent plant – once rooted in a few weeks, snip them free. Sorted for next year's crop!



Free strawberry plants for next year!

Did you know?

- Figs ripen from the inside out. By the time the skin softens and droops at the neck, the fruit is at its sweetest – and a fig that looks almost ready usually needs another day or two. Patience is the secret ingredient.
- Dahlias were grown as a food crop in Mexico long before anyone in Europe thought to value them for their flowers. The Aztecs cultivated them for their edible tubers – proof that the garden's most glamorous residents often have the humblest origins.
- Garden scent changes dramatically after dark. Evening primrose, night-scented stock and tobacco plant save their fragrance for dusk, when their moth pollinators are active. A warm evening in a well-planted garden is a sensory feast.
- Spiders become far more visible now as they reach full size and spin larger webs – beautifully revealed by morning dew. Garden spiders quietly catch aphids and other pests; a web in the border is something to celebrate.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

● Rutland Flower Show, Rutland Showground, Oakham
14-16 August
A relatively young show with real ambition – Carol Klein and Adam Frost from *Gardeners' World* are appearing this year, alongside flower club competitions, show gardens, artisan stalls and live music. A friendly, unhurried day out well worth the trip. rutlandflowershow.co.uk

● Southport Flower Show, Victoria Park, Southport
20-23 August
The UK's largest independent flower show, running since 1924 and every bit as impressive as its famous counterparts. Naturalist Iolo Williams and wildlife presenter Megan McCubbin appear this year, alongside show gardens, competitive horticulture, live entertainment and food. southportflowershow.co.uk

● Raby Castle in Bloom
Now until the end of August
Raby Castle in County Durham is transforming its grand rooms with breathtaking floral installations, including dramatic suspended pieces by renowned florist Anna Potter from Swallows and Damsons. Entry is included in standard castle tickets, from £23 for adults. raby.co.uk



Florist Anna Potter installing Raby Castle in Bloom