



Work in the Home Garden in September

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SPRINGTIME is seed sowing time and in most gardens much seed sowing is usually done in September. Even in the colder districts the ground is warm enough for the seed of hardy plants to grow satisfactorily. In a few specially favoured districts even frost-tender plants such as dwarf and runner beans, cucumbers, pumpkins, marrows, and squash can be sown outside, but it is important to remember that the soil should not be worked or walked on if it is wet.

THOUGH generally the most important work is seed sowing, the setting out of plants raised from seed sown earlier will also be important in many gardens. The setting out now of well-grown and hardened plants raised under glass is the only way by which home gardeners in some districts can avoid the break in continuity of supply which is liable to occur after the finish of early spring crops which were set out in autumn or winter.

Early or late in September, according to the district, tomatoes, celery and celeriac, peppers, egg plants, melons, and cucumbers can be sown under glass. However, in most southern districts or where the last killing frost may occur as late as the first or second week in November there is no hurry yet to sow seed of cucumbers, marrows, pumpkins, and squash for growing outdoors. Seed of brussels sprouts, leeks, and cauliflowers can be sown in most districts in the open.

Seedlings of silver beet, lettuce, summer cabbage, and cauliflower can

be set out or gaps can be filled in earlier planted crops. Early planted potatoes will need protection from frost, and a successional planting can be made. Except in favourable situations the planting of the main crop is best deferred until the first or second week in October.

Tubers of Jerusalem artichokes can still be set out. In exposed situations broad beans may require support, which can be provided by strings tied at suitable heights to stout stakes placed at 5ft. to 6ft. intervals along the sides of the bean rows.

In many districts peas will need protection from birds. Wire netting guards or cotton stretched over the rows are effective, though a dusting of lime, superphosphate, or sawdust or similar substance is occasionally satisfactory.

Shelter for Early Crops

During September and October the greatest benefit can be obtained in most gardens from shelter such as is

provided by planting on the sunny, sheltered side of a wall, fence, or trellis. Advantage may be taken also of shelter such as a low hedge or even hardy, established crops such as broccoli or double or treble rows of broad beans.

Generally, semi-permeable or partly open shelter such as lattice work is more satisfactory in providing shelter over a considerable area of the garden than is shelter such as a solid fence. Such a fence may give almost still conditions close to it in strong winds, but may cause damaging turbulence a short distance away.

Plant Protectors

Good use can be made of cloches and frames and of special plant protectors or caps of waxed, bleached paper or linen. Plastic film, too, is specially useful. Even the very thin gauge plastic film which is made up into containers for fruit and vegetables and widely used in shops can be used in the production of early crops. Plastic film is now fairly generally available in long sheets of up to about 40in. wide and in different thicknesses.

The finer gauges of plastic film are transparent and the heavier opaque, but any of it can be made up into squares or rectangular sections for frames, lights, or cloches of various types, some of which are illustrated on page 140. The material may be used in place of glass in a glasshouse.

A few trials are at present being carried out in New Zealand with plastic film on glasshouses and frames. Overseas experience indicates that high light intensities weaken the film. In New Zealand it has been used successfully for 18 months and still appears sound. In fixing the film to any structure it is important not to staple the film close to its edge, as if this is done, it tends to tear away. A good practice is to fold the plastic near the edge and staple through the two thicknesses.

Asparagus

Established asparagus beds should be kept weed free and, if the soil is poor, may be fed with liquid manure made from organic material such as farmyard or poultry manure. Alternatively nitrate of soda or sulphate of ammonia at 1oz. to 2oz. a square yard is likely to give good results. Dried blood can be used, but on light, sandy soils lacking in organic matter late dressings of dried blood sometimes give a rather musty flavour to the shoots when cooked.

It is not too late to plant new asparagus beds, particularly in the south, but no time should be lost, as the young seedlings may be checked. The ground should be prepared by being deeply dug and cleared of weeds. Good drainage is essential and field drains should be installed if the condition of the ground warrants their use.