

## Garden Work for January



Gardeners may be relaxing now and enjoying the rewards of earlier work. However, there are tasks which must be attended to in January if the display is to continue. Ex-

cept where mulches have been applied, the hoe or hand-fork should be kept busy among the plants helping to control annual weeds.

### Use of Water

Where beds and lawns are suffering from a prolonged dry period full use should be made of sprinklers and hoses. Plants should not be allowed to become excessively dry before water is applied because the roots damaged by such a drought will never completely recover. Flower beds, shrubbery, and lawns should be given a thorough watering at least every 3 weeks. This will mean that except where restrictions are imposed some part of the garden can receive a good watering each evening in rotation. This is preferable to sprinkling the whole area each day. Young plants and shallow-rooted types should be watered individually as soon as they show signs of wilting, and plants such as the autumn-flowering chrysanthemums, which should now be making good growth, can also be given extra water.

### Mixed Flower Border

The results achieved in the planned border should be noted as the season progresses and any desirable alterations recorded so that the display can be improved in future seasons. Such points should be written down so that they will not be forgotten during the annual overhaul. Where necessary extra support should be given to some of the larger plants such as dahlias, lilies, michaelmas daisies, and golden rod. Periods of gusty winds are often experienced in autumn and do severe damage where tying has not been adequate.

Chrysanthemums, dahlias, and other gross feeders will benefit from a further side-dressing of a general, balanced fertiliser. Delphiniums and michaelmas daisies should be checked for powdery mildew and sulphur sprays applied if necessary. Damage caused by thrips on gladiolus should be checked by spraying with DDT.

### Virus Diseases

Dahlias, lilies, chrysanthemums, asters, and zinnias are a few of a wide range of plants which are susceptible to various virus diseases, especially spotted wilt virus. Virus diseases can be recognised only by the symptoms

which they produce. These are many and varied, but the most usual ones are:—

1. Mottling or mosaic patterns on the leaves.

2. Stunting and sometimes death of growths and flowers.

3. Loss of colour along the veins of leaves.

4. Ring spots.

5. Distortion of the leaves.

6. Smaller flowers and breaking of their colours.

No sprays will kill viruses, but because many viruses are transferred from plant to plant by insects, plants should be sprayed regularly with lindane or malathion to reduce the insect population and the likelihood of their spreading these diseases. All diseased plants should be removed and burnt.

### Removal of Dead Flower Heads

Spent flowers should be removed as they appear, and with roses, they should be cut back to a good fat bud to induce further flowering. Most annuals respond well and can be kept flowering over a longer period if early treatment is given. However, any seed pods which may be required for winter use in floral arrangements should be judiciously guarded.

### Potpourri

While there is an abundance of flowers in gardens it is a good time to use any leaves or petals which have a pleasing fragrance to make potpourri. Some of the best are roses, lavender, lemon-scented verbena, jasmine, calendula, stock, mignonette, heliotrope, geranium, rosemary, lemon balm, southernwood, santolina, or dianthus, but rose petals alone may be used. Pick the blooms when they are in full bud. Fully developed flowers are unsuitable, as much of the fragrance will have dispersed. Spread them carefully on sheets of paper or strips of cheese cloth in a dry, airy room away from the sun and turn them daily until they dry out completely. Half a teaspoon each of

## WORK IN FLOWER GARDEN



Applying a side-dressing of balanced fertiliser to a chrysanthemum plant.

cloves, cinnamon, and mace may be added to a quart of dried material before storing in an airtight jar for future use in sachets and gift jars.

### Preserving Plant Material

Throughout the season pickings of everlasting flowers should be made as each individual reaches suitable maturity. They make useful additions to the range of material available for winter floral arrangements. The daisy types such as helichrysum, rhodanthe, and acroclium should be picked while the flowers are still in bud. If flowers are completely stripped of their leaves, tied in loose bundles by the ends of the stems, and hung upside down in a dry, airy place for about 3 weeks, they should be completely dried and stored until required for winter decorations. Blue butterfly delphinium, celosia, teasels, grass-heads, and yellow yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*) if picked before the flowers in the centre are quite out, will make useful additions to the range. The blooms of lavender should be picked as soon as they are fully opened. As the seed heads of rhododendrons, iris, lilies, and green ixia mature they should be stored carefully.

Now is an excellent time for preserving the leaves of the copper beech.