



# The Millbrook Garden Centre Guide to Autumn Planting




## Why is Autumn the best time to plant?

Spring might get all the glory, but Autumn is the season that serious gardeners swear by. Here in Kent and the South East, we're blessed with relatively mild Winters and soils that hold Summer warmth long into October. This combination of warm soil, cooler air, and reliable rainfall, creates perfect conditions for strong root growth, establishing a strong foundation before Winter.

While top growth slows, plants are busy underground. By Spring, they're ready to surge into life ahead of anything planted later.

Autumn planting also means less watering and less stress on young plants.



Autumn is about preparing the garden for a glorious Spring...

## Planting Window

Plant by early November for best results!



- Mid-September to mid-November.



- Bulbs can go in until the ground freezes.

The perfect time runs from mid-September to early November, though in sheltered areas you can continue into late November for hardy trees and shrubs. Spring bulbs should ideally go in by the end of October establishing a strong foundation before Winter. Tulips are the exception. Plant those in November once it's cooler, to avoid disease.



# Preparing Your Soil

Healthy soil is the key to successful planting...



- Clear the ground - remove weeds, spent Summer bedding and debris.
- Improve the texture - on chalky Kentish soils, add compost to boost organic matter. On heavier clay inland, fork in grit or well-rotted manure for drainage.
- Check drainage - Autumn can be wet, so avoid planting into waterlogged soil. Raised beds or planting on a slight mound can help.
- Mulch - once you've planted, add a 5cm mulch of compost or bark to insulate roots and improve soil health.



With falling leaves and end-of-season cuttings, Autumn can generate mountains of garden waste. Make it work for you!



- Leaves - don't send them all away! Bag them up in hessian sacks or bin bags with air holes to make leaf mould, a superb soil conditioner in a year or two.
- Cuttings - chop herbaceous stems and add to your compost heap, balancing with Autumn leaves for the right mix of brown and green material.
- Woody prunings - shred for mulch, or stack neatly to create a wildlife habitat.



# What to Plant in Autumn

Autumn planting is about preparing the bones of the garden - the structure, the backbone and the early colour.

**Spring bulbs** - plant daffodils, crocus, hyacinths and alliums from September to October. Tulips: wait until November. Expect the first shoots in February and March, with displays through to May.

**Trees and shrubs** - plant fruit trees, roses, evergreens and flowering shrubs before the soil turns cold. They'll root over winter and be ready to grow in Spring.

**Perennials** - hardy plants like echinacea, rudbeckia, hellebores and hostas can all go in now. Many will establish quietly this year and burst back strongly in late Spring or early Summer.

**Fruit bushes** - currants, gooseberries and raspberries all establish well when planted in Autumn.



## Tools you'll need

- Spade & fork - for digging holes and improving soil.
- Hand trowel - perfect for bulbs and small perennials.
- Bulb planter - optional, but makes neat work of bulb planting.
  - Secateurs - for tidying and taking cuttings.
- Compost and mulch - to enrich and protect your soil.
- Watering can or hose - yes, even in Autumn! Always water new plantings in well.

## Autumn is Kent's Season of Generosity

...orchards are heavy with fruit, gardens glowing gold, quietly preparing for their next chapter.

So pull on your boots, sharpen your spade, and make the most of this golden window! Come Spring, when your bulbs emerge and your shrubs leap into life, you'll be glad you did.







# Autumn checklist

## September

- Plant Spring bulbs: daffodils, crocus, hyacinths
- Divide & replant perennials
- Sow hardy annuals (cornflower, Nigella, poppy)
- Harvest & store apples and pears
- Net ponds to catch leaves
- Prepare soil with compost/manure
- 20th September Millbrook Autumn Garden Festival!



## October

- Plant trees & shrubs
- Plant tulip bulbs (later in month)
- Lift & store tender bulbs (dahlias, gladioli)
- Rake leaves; start leaf mould
- Cut back faded perennials
- Protect half-hardy plants (use fleece/bring in)
- Clean & store garden furniture



## November

- Finish tulip planting
- Plant bare-root roses, hedging & fruit bushes
- Insulate containers (bubble wrap/hessian)
- Mulch borders against frost
- Clear lawns/paths of fallen leaves
- Prune apple & pear trees (once dormant)
- Clean & sharpen garden tools



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