

A gravel path winds through a lush garden. The path is flanked by green grass and various plants, including purple flowers, red-leaved plants, and tall grasses. In the background, there are several trees, including a large evergreen and a bare deciduous tree. The sky is clear and blue.

HRAA St IVES GARDENING CLUB
WEDNESDAY 21ST MARCH 2018

GARDENER'S QUESTION TIME

Q1: From Richard:

I wonder if you can offer a bit of advice. I have a customer who had her garden landscaped some time ago, with Phormiums (New Zealand Flax) planted in raised beds bordered by oak sleepers (see photos attached).

The plants have grown so well they are now in my opinion outgrowing their space.

It is more noticeable to the customer since we had the recent snow, but I have been thinking for a while that they need sorting.

For scale reference, the wall in the photos is about 8ft high from the decking at the base of the beds to the top of the wall.

I am assuming that soon we will need to dig them out, split and replant.

Would you agree, or is there an easier solution ?





You can cut out some of the older leaves and dead leaves of the Phormiums at base level to encourage new foliage, but bear in mind these leaves are very, very tough and you will need to use a good well sharpened blade / knife.

One of the problems with Phormiums is that they do grow into very large plants - in ideal conditions can make 8 ft. They are extremely tough but you can, by using a very sharp spade, cut through and divide the clump and the time for dividing is usually the autumn time.

It might be a bit late for this year especially after the cold snap - the plants might already be stressed.

It might be worth trying to cut out a couple of rhizomatous shoots and pot these on for 2018 and replant in the ground in the Autumn, having then removed the old parent plant / clump.

This will be a very tough and heavy job – be prepared!

Q2: From Sally

- (a) Last year you told us about and showed us some pictures of raspberries that fruited twice a year, can you let me know the name and details again.

- (b) What time of year can I prune lilac, I think its over 20 years old and untidy. What is the best way of doing this?

- (c) When can I prune a Crab Apple tree that is overgrown? I would like to reduce the height and thin it.

Raspberry Primocane Var 'Paris' Planted July 2016

Spotted in France around 5 years ago this new Primocane variety with its large berries which had not only the most memorable of flavours, being really sweet and juicy, but were incredibly aromatic as well. The berry size was big too with each weighing, on average, between 5g to 6.5g – one of the largest of Raspberry fruit varieties.

The self-supporting canes are both strong and vigorous and have a very erect habit which means they are easier to manage and care for and fruiting occurs mainly on the top half of the cane, so picking is easy too. Due to its habit, Paris is the perfect variety to grow in containers and is also suitable for 'double cropping'. Coupled with good disease resistance along with exceptional flavour, Paris has been found to be a reliable variety to grow, standing up well to the vast majority of raspberry diseases such as cane and spur blight.

Double Cropping of autumn fruiting Raspberries (Primocane types) Double cropping of Primocane raspberries is ideal if you don't have room to grow standard Floricane types (summer fruiting) in addition to Primocane varieties. Paris and Sugana are one of the best varieties for double cropping, but Polka would be another good choice. Simply follow the below points to achieve the best results; • Normally, you would prune the previous season's canes to ground level in February, but to start the double cropping technique, leave around 7-8 of the strongest shoots per one metre (3ft) row.

Then, prune the top of these canes down to where the fruit was produced last autumn. Prune the rest to ground level as normal.

A crop of berries will be produced in the summer from the 7-8 canes which were left unpruned (this crop will be a little less than the one picked in the autumn).

Cut back the canes immediately after they have finished cropping in the summer. Repeat the above process each year.

(b) **Pruning Lilacs?**

If lilacs are left to grow and spread on their own, without maintenance pruning, they will eventually only flower on the top branches. You will get shrubs reaching 15 - 20 feet in height and all the blooms will be way above your head.

Lilac plants that have a good balance of new and older stems, will be the best bloomers. The newer stems won't bloom for a couple of years, but to keep the flowers coming steadily, you need to constantly renew the plants.

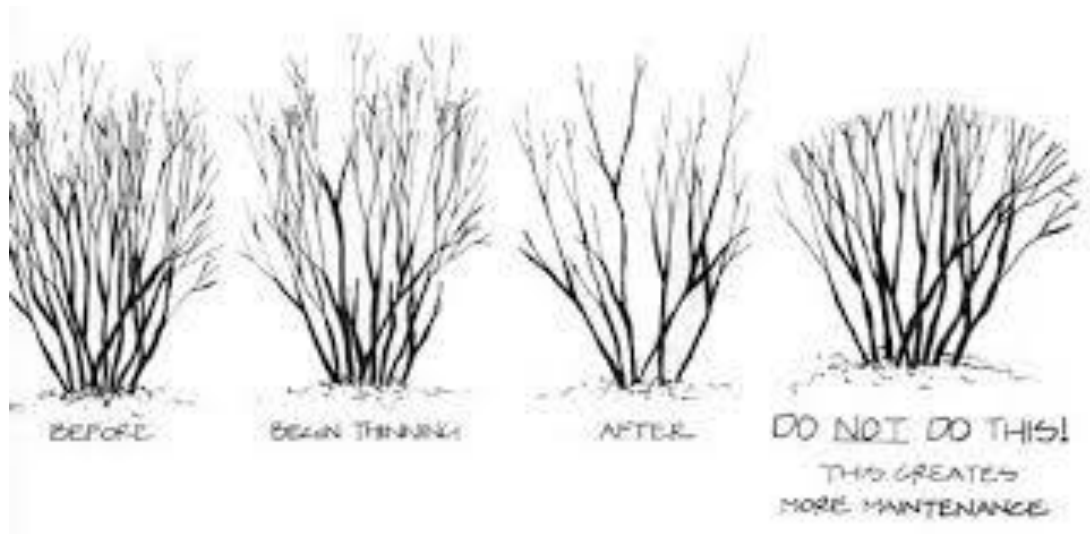
In general, by the time a stem reaches more than 2 inches in diameter, it should be pruned out. If you are diligent with yearly renewal pruning of your lilacs, your shrubs will be about 8 feet tall, with flowers throughout the branches.

When to Prune Lilacs

New lilac bushes don't require maintenance pruning until they are about 6 feet tall. The time to prune mature lilac plants is just after the flowers have faded. This is the critical time. They set the next season's flower buds almost immediately, so **late pruning** will mean sacrificing next year's flowers. Pruning early also gives the new shoots more energy to develop and 'ripen'.

How to Prune Lilacs (Maintenance Pruning)

The pruning rule of thumb is to **cut no more than 1/3rd** of a shrub's stems each year, similar to the pruning of Red, White and Black currants.



That will help the plant rejuvenate, with new stems developing and older stems peaking and blooming. Your goal is to have a lilac bush with somewhere between 8 -12 stems of various ages, but all between 1 - 2 inches in diameter. You won't always need to remove 1/3 of the plant, so use some discretion.

Begin by pruning out:

dead or diseased stems; then - pencil thin suckers and twiggy growth; then - stems thicker than 2 inches.

Regular pruning of old stems should keep your lilacs from becoming too tall and cumbersome. What you do not want to do is cut off just the tops of branches. Cutting back just the tops of long stems leaves the plant with an odd, unnatural shape. You are better off completely removing any stem that has become overgrown.

If you want your lilac to fill in more and become shrubbier, after pruning out the older stems, prune a few of the remaining new stems to an outward facing bud. This will cause more branching.

Reviving an Old, Overgrown Lilac

Older lilacs can have stems as thick as small trees and will flower only on the top most branches. Fortunately, it is pretty easy to rejuvenate an old lilac in about a 3 year period. There are two approaches you can take:

1. The less drastic approach to getting an overgrown lilac back into shape is to use the 1/3 rule of thumb. Prune 1/3 of the oldest branches each year, all the way to the ground. Start by taking out the thickest stems first. Although you'll be losing some flowers for the current year, pruning overgrown lilacs is easiest early in the spring, before the branches leaf out. You can really see into the shrub and there is easier access to the base of the stems. After pruning your overgrown lilac by 1/3 for 3 years, the new shoots should be the bulk of the plant, the plant should begin to bloom all over and you can do simple maintenance pruning from then on.

2. If you can't stand the look of your old lilac or you just want a quicker approach, you can take the drastic measure of cutting back the entire lilac plant to about 6 - 8 inches from the ground, again in early spring. New shoots will start to develop throughout the growing season. Let them grow during the summer. The following spring, begin pruning out the spindly growth and maintain the healthiest shoots, giving consideration to the shape and structure of the plant. Then cut back the remaining shoots to just above a bud to encourage branching. Carry on with maintenance pruning.

Do You Need to Deadhead Lilacs?

The only time deadheading seems to help lilacs bloom better is during the first few years of growing. New lilac plants should begin blooming within 2 - 5 years. While the plants are young, deadheading the spent flowers puts the plant's energy into setting more buds.

Once the plant has matured however, it doesn't need this encouragement and hopefully, you'll have so many flowers the task would be too time-consuming.

As with any plant, some years your lilacs will bloom magnificently and some years not so much. Bloom is often weather dependent. A pleasant summer will reward with abundant blooms the following year. A stressful summer will yield fewer flowers. So don't panic and give up on pruning. As long as your lilac is healthy, the flowers will follow.

(c) Pruning Crab Apple Trees:

This is definitely a job for late Autumn through to mid late winter. Definitely no later than late February unless you want to severely interfere with potential flowering in the current year. Late October / late November is definitely the best. Apply the principals used for the Syringa. Prune out all diseased wood then about 1/3rd of all old wood. So if for example you have 7 branches from the main trunk seek to cut out up to three of the eldest. Leaving 4 or 5 where then the twigs on each should be pruned back by a half to a third to a fruiting spur/swollen bud/flower bud. This should open the tree up, get some air circulating and still flower in the forthcoming season.

Q3. From Steve:

I have recently started to grow Heucheras and I would like to know little bit about their management such as pruning, how or if one can propagate them and any nutrition if required. (The ones in my main garden have survived the Beast from the East well but more established one in the front garden have succumbed to vandalism.)



Heuchera 'Caramel'



Heuchera 'Marmalade'

HEUCHERAS: Cultivation and Propagation

Once established, and that takes only six months, Heucheras will grow in a large variety of positions and almost all soil types. Vine weevil apart, they are very healthy plants and will look after themselves if you give them a once a year 10 minute clean up in spring.

Their one downside is that after three or four years they will almost certainly start to look a bit bedraggled as their stems turn woody and spread over the soil surface. But see later down this article to learn how to reinvigorate the plants and very easily take cuttings.

Heucherellas are a cross between a Heuchera and the closely related Tiarella. The plant breeders have created a plant which can be treated exactly as a Heuchera but the range of colours and leaf shapes has been increased enormously. Heucheras are native to North America

Use the checklist below to decide if Heucheras are suited to your preferences and garden conditions: They grow to roughly 20cm to 50cm high (8in to 20in) with a spread of 60cm / 2ft plus.

In the very warmest parts of the UK, foliage will remain all year round. In most other areas, the foliage will appear in March time through to November.

Flowers appear above the foliage normally from early June onwards although this does vary slightly depending on the variety. They tend to produce masses of flowers for the first month or so but continue with slightly less vigour for three months after that.

Heucheras grow in alkaline to acid soil (they have a minor preference for slightly acidic soil). They will suffer if the soil is water-logged so add grit and well-rotted organic matter to clay soils before planting. They do well in all well-drained soils, from chalk to clay.

Most prefer semi-shade. As a rule of thumb the darker coloured Heucheras withstand full sun better than the lighter coloured ones.

They will tolerate dry soils but only when established - normally six months after planting.

They make good cut flowers but only last three days or so and are messy.

They can be successfully grown in containers. They are fully hardy in all parts of the UK.

HOW AND WHEN TO PLANT HEUCHERAS

Planting from pots is the most reliable method as described below

Choose a partial shade position. Heucheras will not tolerate water-logged conditions at all, the crown will rot. They are tolerant of dry conditions.

If the soil is heavy or is not free draining add lots of well rotted compost and / or grit to the area and dig it in well.

They can be planted all year long if the soil is not frozen and you can water well when conditions are dry. Mid March to April and mid September to October are the best times to plant Heucheras.

Dig a hole twice the root ball width. Sprinkle a handful of blood, fish and bone into the ground.

Place the plant into the hole, filling in with soil so that it is at the same depth (or just slightly higher) as it was in the pot. If the crown (top centre of the root ball) is planted below the soil surface you will run the risk of it rotting in autumn and winter

Fill around the root ball and firm the soil down gently but firmly. Water well to settle the surrounding ground around the root ball.

CARE OF HEUCHERAS

The key care tasks for Heucheras are listed below. More information about each care item can be found below the list.

Dead head the flowers throughout the year

Mulch in spring with well rotted organic matter.

Feed with blood, fish and bone fertiliser in spring.

Clear away dead and damaged foliage in spring.

In spring check that the plant hasn't lifted during winter

Divide every three or four years and replant

DEAD HEAD FLOWERS

Most Heucheras produce flowers, typically beginning in late spring or early summer. To help prolong the flowering period, snip off the flower stems just below foliage level when the flowers die.

This will also prevent the dead flowers and stalks falling into the plant which would reduce air circulation leading to fungal diseases.

FEED

Heucheras are not heavy feeders and need little fertiliser to grow well. The combination of mulching and a handful of fish, blood and bone in spring will provide them with all the nutrients they need.

Avoid feeding them with nitrogen rich fertilisers such as Growmore or other general fertilisers. This will simply encourage fleshy foliage which is prone to rotting.

SPRING CLEAN

Spring is the best time to refresh your Heuchera. Remove and dead or damaged leaves from the foliage. Separate the foliage carefully with your fingers to look for any woody stems. Often these will be longer than recent growth and will have little new growth along them. Cut these out with a pair of sharp secateurs. At the same time check that temperature changes haven't caused the plant to lift out of the soil. If this has occurred, fill in any gaps with crumbly soil or dig up the plant and replant at the correct depth.

MULCH

Applying a mulch in spring will help conserve moisture throughout the dry summer months. It will also provide a low level of nutrients as the mulch decays. The best mulch is well rotted organic matter; your compost heap is a good source of this.

During freezing weather in winter, Heucheras can sometimes lift out of the soil leaving gaps around the shallow roots. A spring mulch will not only help to prevent this but it will fill in any gaps around the crown. Do not mulch the centre of the plant, this could cause the crown to rot.

HOW TO DIVIDE HEUCHERAS

After about three years, certainly after four years, your Heuchera will begin to look bedraggled and the foliage will no longer be standing proud and upright. That is the time to divide it and grow as many new plants as you require. Late May to early July are good times to do this because the new plantlets will root quickly.

Lift up the foliage and you will see that stems are lying horizontal along the ground. You can easily pull these stems away from the plant. What you then have is the horizontal stem which is not rooted and at the far end of it will be foliage which has turned upwards.

Remove all the stems which are not growing in tufts. You will then be able pull off tufts of stems at the point they join the main horizontal stem. Each stem will likely provide you with four or five healthy plantlets ready to be planted in a pot of multi-purpose compost.

Remove any dead or unhealthy leaves from the plantlet so that you end up with a small stem that has four or five good quality leaves. The smaller leaves are the best ones because they are less likely to be infected with rust or other diseases.

Fill a small pot with good quality multi-purpose compost, make a small hole in the surface and insert the plantlet so that the crown (the point of the stem where the leaves are growing from) is level with surface of soil and firm it in well.

Water well and place the plants in a shaded position out of the wind for six weeks until the plant has rooted. It can then be planted in the ground or in its final pot. Make sure it is kept moist at this early stage of its life.

GROWING HEUCHERAS IN CONTAINERS

Heucheras grow very well in containers (ensure they have drain holes) and as far as care goes they can be treated as described above. The main concern will be keeping the soil moist. Be sure to water well in summer months but at the same time don't let autumn and winter rain water log the plants. Keeping the pot on stands a couple of centimetres high will help greatly.

A mulch in spring is also essential although don't cover the crown of the plant. A mulch however will only provide low level nutrients and also reduce the need for watering considerably.

A 30 cm wide pot is about the smallest possible but 50cm is probably better. The roots of Heucheras are very shallow so pot depth is not crucial. But deep pots are less likely to dry out and they will reduce the need for watering.

If you are going away for a summer holiday, move the container to a shady position if possible and then move it back when you return. A couple of weeks in the shade will do no damage but will significantly reduce the need for water.

PESTS OF HEUCHERAS

VINE WEEVILS

The first symptoms of vine weevils are little notches in the edge of the leaves caused by the vine weevil eating them at night. The second symptom is a plant which appears to be failing through lack of water. In fact the vine weevil grubs have eaten most of the roots by the time you notice the problem



Q4. From Colin

Is there a guide as what to deadhead and what should not ?

The simple answer is: NO

Dead heading provides specifically for the plants energies to be devoted to continued growth of itself rather than putting its energy into fruit and seed production and thus regeneration.

However many plant fruits and seed heads are visually or aesthetically pleasing and thus the gardener needs to weigh up the priorities of what is desired and also the plants ability to propagate by alternative methods.

There are however plants which need dead heading no matter what unless you want to be a plant breeder, developing your own cultivars.

All exotic spring flowering bulbs; Tulips, Hyacinths, Daffodil cultivars, Scillas, Lilies (Crown Imperial), Grape Hyacinth should all be dead headed. An exception to this rule are the Alliums (ornamental onions) as the inflorescences once dried on the stem are as aesthetically pleasing as when in initial flowering.

Certain herbaceous material also fits the aesthetic criteria for retaining the seed heads for as long as is possible. In addition the importance of ornamental grasses cannot be overstressed.

We should also not forget that early flowering annuals can often benefit the gardener by being dead headed to secure a second flush of flowers and allowing these to set seed for germination the following year. Sweet Peas are the classic example here where by continuing to cut stem of blossom throughout the early summer the parent plants will continue produce new flowers often week after week in the right prevailing weather conditions. So there is no hard and fast generalisation each genera species or cultivars need considering in their own right.

Carnations, Pinks, Dahlias, Gladioli, Fuchsias, Roses, Freesias, Penstemon, Gaura, Geum, Delphiniums and Iris germanica are but a few which need to be dead headed either to ensure the plant puts its energy into its own well being or to continue producing blooms well into the autumn.

In the case of the latter 2 plants the former will produce a second flower flush whereas the latter will be putting energy into it's rhizomes for flower the following year.

Lets look at some plants which need the gardener to decide what the priority needs to be. Also bear in mind seed heads provide a source of food for wildlife during the harshest of winters. They can also afford protection to developing buds beneath the flowers.

Ornamental Grass
'Bunny Ears'



Burdock





Echinacea purpurea (American Cone Flower)



Monarda didyma 'Cambridge Scarlet' (Bergamot)



Erigeron seed head



Hydrangea flowerhead



Ornamental Onions



Ornamental Grasses



Left: Physallis (Paper Lanterns)

Below: Poppy seed pod





Sedum spectabile 'Autumn Joy'



Teasel Seed heads / pods



Umbelliferous seed heads



Verbena bonariensis



Verbascum Flower stalks



...and of course
Heuchera varieties

Q5: From Dave and Sue

What is the best way to protect rhubarb over winter, I've tried covering with compost which seems to encourage the birds to peck at it. I find if I cover it with a pot, it seems to grow too soon.

Does rhubarb need winter protection?



Basically, there are few plants that prepare so well and as early for the winter as rhubarb. Already in the summer, it begins to die back and now in December one sees only a few dried leaves left over the earth-covered rhizome. There is hardly a reason to think about protecting the rhubarb plants during the winter. Obviously, they protect themselves and die back for underground hibernation.

Rhubarb came to Europe from China

Add to this the fact that today's rhubarb came to Europe from China basically via Siberia and Russia. On the hundreds of years long journey from China via Siberia to Western Europe, various Chinese Rheum species were crossed and mixed – and then, miraculously, at the beginning of the 19th century, suddenly and surprisingly, there was the rhubarb for eating, first at the market gardeners of London, then across the UK, and 50 years later in the entire Western world. Of course, this development also suggests good winter hardiness, otherwise the rhubarb would not have survived its centuries of origin across Siberia and Russia to Western Europe.

Two special cases of rhubarb plants that need winter protection

Nevertheless, there are two special cases in which it is worth protecting the rhubarb plants with insulating material during the winter. It is important to know that the protection applies to both the cold temperatures as well as to the solar radiation that is too warm. The latter indirectly causes more harm to the rhubarb than the cold.

Second: protecting ‘everbearing’ autumn rhubarb

The particular feature of the new hardy autumn rhubarbs such as the variety ‘Livingstone’ continues to develop new leaves almost without interruption, even after the longest day, and ultimately is less sensitive to extreme temperatures. Interestingly enough, these autumn rhubarbs do not only grow at high temperatures (perhaps with a brief period of weakness in mid-summer), but they also start fresh growth when the temperatures in the winter are mild. In other words, they only enter winter hibernation at very low and permanently low winter temperatures (ultimately with constant ground frost). Once the soil is no longer frozen, they start to get active again. Straw compacted, as much as possible, is the best insulating material. Terracotta pots should only be used for forcing varieties. Avoid mulches and composts which can get very wet. Straw though compacted will not retain moisture to the same degree.

Q6: Also from Dave & Sue:

Is it best to store potatoes in Hessian sacks or normal paper sacks in my shed?

Checking your potatoes

First things first, you need to separate your potatoes so you know what you can use in the short and long term. If you spy any bruising or broken skin, use them up sooner and leave the unscathed potatoes for later on. Be sure **not to wash** your spuds before storing, the exposure to moisture invites rotting and greening to spread and will ultimately shorten the storage life.

Where should I store them?

You need to keep your potatoes in a dry, dark place. It should also be frost free. Exposure to light or moisture can bring on rotting in the skin. You'll also need to allow your spuds to be **well-ventilated** so avoid any air tight containers or spots – a netted bag (like those used for carrots at horse stables), hessian sacks or even a wicker basket should do the trick. Be sure your potatoes are kept in cool conditions as it increases storage length. Kitchen cupboards or cellars are the ideal location as they tend to tick most of these boxes.

How long will they last?

Storing your potatoes in the correct way should see them lasting for several months, be sure to **keep checking up on them** as any rot can soon spread if the potatoes are in close contact with each other. If you do spot any signs then you may need to throw them out. There are several ways to further elongate the lifetime of your spud! If you place your potatoes in a dark place on top of sheets of newspaper at a slightly warmer temperature the skin will thicken making it less prone to bruising and rotting.

Ideal Storage Temperature: [2C] **4C to 8C** [10C]

Q7. From Jenny:

We have a very lopsided apple tree in our front garden- see attached photos. The wind blows down the side of the house and then blows the tree over. We have tried using a stake which helped straighten the tree a little but not much. What do you suggest?



When to stake trees

Stake trees as soon as they are planted and replace stakes whenever they fail. **Check stakes and ties every year** to avoid tight tree ties damaging the stems and to replace any ties that have frayed or broken. Once the tree can stand unsupported without bending or shifting in the ground, remove the stakes. This usually takes **eighteen months to three years**, but may be longer for semi-mature trees or ones on weak rootstocks, such as dwarf apple trees.

How to stake trees

There are a number of different staking methods, depending on the type of tree, tree size and method of planting.

All stakes should penetrate the soil to at least 60cm (2ft) deep. If the stake moves in the ground, it will not anchor the plant.

Single stake

This is the standard method for staking bare-root trees, with the stake inserted **before planting**.

For most trees: the stake should be one-third of the height of the tree. This anchors the roots and allows the stem to sway and thicken;

For trees with long or flexible stems: use long, vertical stake, cutting it lower in the second year. There should be a gap of 2.5-3cm (about an inch) between the stem and the stake

Stakes should be inserted on the side of the prevailing wind so that the tree is blown away from the stake.

Double or triple stake***

This is the standard method of staking container-grown and rootballed trees. Two or three stakes can be inserted opposite each other, or equally spaced around the tree outside the root ball, and secured to the trunk by long ties or a timber crossbar and tie. This method is also **useful on windy sites**.

I would recommend Jenny uses this system coupled with some pruning of the lop sided branches

Q7. From Colin:

Some of the beds in the Waits are plagued with Chickweed that got completely out of control last year after the judges had been fortunately.

My problems last summer slowed me up and I was a bit concerned about Darwood Pond anyway. This year HDC seem to have that under control.

I have hoed twice in the Waits this year so hope to stop things getting out of hand.

However, come the Autumn clearance it might be possible to apply some weed killer before the next planting. What one would you recommend and how long before planting could begin?

Discussion topic as most pre planting weed killers to my knowledge are spring applications

Weed control:

Is mineralised straw such as Strulch worth considering for Westwood Road?

In small quantities i.e 100 litres it is quite expensive and only available locally from Arrington. But it could be worth a try.

Sadly won't be much good for perennial weeds.

I know nowt about Strulch but the following is on the manufacturers web site

What is Strulch

Strulch is a light and easy to use **garden mulch** made from wheat straw for organic gardening. A patented process is used to 'preserve' the straw so that it lasts for up to two years and gives an earthy brown colour. Strulch has a neutral pH and can be used throughout the garden on borders, raised beds, around cultivated fruit and on vegetable plots.

Spend less time weeding

Strulch reduces weed growth by up to 95%

Save water

Strulch helps retain moisture around plants

Improve your soil

Strulch enriches soil and its structure

Use all around the garden

Strulch is suitable around flowers, shrubs, fruit and vegetables

Save time and money

Strulch, the mineralised straw garden **mulch**, lasts up to two years, spreading the cost, saving water and fertiliser, making your plants grow healthier and stronger and giving you more time to relax.

Slug and Snail deterrent

The physical properties of Strulch together with the embedded minerals deters slugs and snails

RECOMMENDED FOR USE ONLY AS A GARDEN MULCH

Strulch is manufactured in Britain, entirely from locally sourced quality wheat straw with added iron minerals. The patented process stabilises and colours the straw producing an easy-to-use garden mulch. For use on borders, raised beds, around cultivated fruit and on vegetable plots. Leave on beds for more than one year or work into the soil at the end of the season to improve soil structure and drainage. Please note that Strulch darkens with age when spread or in the bags to produce an earthy brown colour.

PREPARATION

Remove existing weeds and spread around established plants and shrubs to a depth of 3-4 cm on bare soil. The 100 litre bags from our stockists each cover up to 3 square meters. Our 150 litre bulk bags will each cover up to 4.5 square meters. Water the mulch to fix it in place, leave space around woody stems.

PRECAUTIONS

Wear gloves when handling. The packed product may contain traces of iron which will be absorbed by the straw after spreading. Keep away from sources of ignition when dry.

SLUG AND SNAIL DETERRENT

The physical properties of Strulch, together with the embedded minerals discourage slugs and snails.

LASTING WEED CONTROL

Strulch inhibits weed germination and growth by blocking out light. The mineralisation process inhibits the rate at which the straw breaks down and depending on the application rate and local conditions, can act as an efficient barrier to light for up to two years.

REDUCED WATERING

Mulching is widely recommended as good gardening practice. It reduces water loss from evaporation especially during summer months.

ADDS ORGANIC MATTER

Strulch is biodegradable and will break down over time, adding valuable organic matter and nutrients to the soil. N – 0.6%, P₂O₅ – 0.2%, K₂O – 1.6% percentage dry matter, plus calcium, magnesium and iron (0.75%) and organic acid preservative. Strulch encourages earthworm activity by acting as a long term food source for surface feeding species.

ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY

Strulch is made from renewable and local resources which do not harm the environment and Strulch is verified for use in organic growing systems.

AVAILABILITY

Directly from Strulch Limited In 150 litre bulk bags (25 or 50 bag pallets) each bag weighs approximately 13.5 kg and spreads up to 4.5 sq m.

From retail outlets 100 litre retail bags are available from retail outlets. See our stockists list and links to online stockists.

Retail outlets can purchase pallets of 48 x 100 litre bags. Minimum order 1 pallet. Each 100 litre bag weighs approximately 9kg and spreads up to 3 sq metres.

Cost example: 50 x 150 litre bags of Strulch will cover up to 220 square metres. [35ft x 55ft] (12yds x 18.5yds) Price per bag: £7.10 (equivalent to £4.74 per 100 litres) Weight per bag: 13.5kg ; £355.00 (£295.83 ex VAT); £ 1.62 per M²; £ 1.60 per sqyd.

Nearest Supplier: 14.0 miles away Arrington Garden Centre, Ermine Way, Arrington, Royston, Cambridgeshire SG8 0AG Tel: 01223 208194

Testimonials:

John Cavill: RHS and Gardeners World Award Winner

After years of looking for the perfect organic garden mulch I found it and I now use Strulch with every planting scheme and garden I design and build. It keeps the weeds from coming through, prevents slugs and snails from playing on the plants plus it looks and smells great! I can truly recommend Strulch for large and small gardens, I have used it in over 50 gardens so far and cant now do without it.

Chris Nichol: Head Gardener Britwell Priors

Congratulations on your awards, I thought you might like to see where some of your products are used. I use it on both the rose and herbaceous beds, this garden is on chalk which presents its own difficulties, so different from the gardens where I worked when I lived in Halifax and later near Doncaster. As this is a private garden it is never open to the public so there is no need to advertise it. Both I and Sir Anthony have been delighted with Strulch and I think we were one of your first customers in the South of England, hopefully we will be ordering for many years to come. All the best! From a highly satisfied customer.

Les Armstrong: Head Gardener Eaton Hall (Duke of Westminster Estate)

We are into our second season of using Strulch and we are extremely pleased with the product, very good weed suppressant, good moisture retention, this year we have used it around fruit trees, this has worked well as a cushion for windfalls, so not a lot of bruising to the fruit and there is no doubt we will use Strulch in the future.

Adrian Lovatt: Assistant Temperate Curator, Eden Project

We have used Strulch successfully on our Tea Exhibit (currently the only Tea plantation on public display in the UK) for the last 4 years. Tea plants(Camellia sinensis) require continuous soil moisture especially during the summer months and weed free conditions. Strulch provides these conditions and is long lasting with only a light top up of fresh Strulch needed once a year. Our tea plantation is authentically grown on a severe slope nearing 45 degrees. The strulch once wetted and settled down stays in place remarkably well.