

A.W.S.L.G. TRADING CENTRE NEWS ADDISCOMBE, WOODSIDE & SHIRLEY

JOBS TO DO IN DECEMBER 2025

VEGETABLE CARE:

Parsnips can be left in the ground until needed, or lifted and then buried in a shallow trench for easy access. They taste better when frosted. Make sure to mark the trench as you need to remember where they are and cover it with a protective layer of cardboard if hard frosts are forecast.

If you have Brussels sprouts ready for harvesting, pick the largest sprouts from the bottom of the stalk first. Earth up any Brussels sprouts stalks that look leggy and vulnerable to wind rock.

Remove yellowing leaves on Brussels sprouts and cabbages to prevent grey mould from becoming troublesome.

Continue winter digging as this exposes soil pests to frost and bird predators. Frost will help to improve the condition of your soil by breaking down larger clods. Spread well rotted manure, well rotted leaf mold or compost on empty beds to improve the soil structure. As we have clay soil that can get quite compacted and possibly acidic you might want to test the pH level. If needed you could apply lime.

Try a crop rotation plan as different crops have different nutrient requirements. Changing the positioning of crops annually reduces the chance of particular soil deficiencies developing as the balance of nutrients removed from the soil tends to even out over time.

Clear polythene or **fleece** increases the soil temperature which will help to have earlier spring sowings.

Use **Black polythene ground cover** to prevent re-colonisation by weeds, this also helps to keep the soil drier which saves yourself a back-breaking task in the spring. Covering also helps to prevent erosion and compaction from heavy rain.

Observe good, basic hygiene rules by removing all plant debris from your plots to reduce the spread and the overwintering of disease and pests.

Place **mouse controls** near stored vegetables and fruit.

This is a good time to make a manure hotbed by combining a mixture of manure, straw and leaves into an square, empty compost bin. Cover with a layer of **John Innes no 3**. Place a cold frame on top and then you are all set to benefit from the heat generated by the rotting manure as this will aid the germination of crops that can be started in January. prior planting out in February.

FRUIT CARE:

New fruit trees and bushes can still be planted providing the ground is not frozen or waterlogged. If the planting site is not ready when they arrive, then heel in the bare-root ones in a spare piece of ground, and leave containerised ones standing - but water them when needed.

Check tree stakes and **ties** while doing your winter pruning. They may need loosening, replacing, or removing.

Grape vines can also be propagated using eye cuttings. These are shorter than standard hardwood cuttings (having only one bud, or 'eye'), and are used commercially to produce a large number of plants. Only attempt these if you are confident, as longer cuttings have more buds to rely on for rooting.

Divide and plant rhubarb. Clumps can be lifted and prepared for forcing in early spring.

Net crops to reduce pigeon/parakeet damage.

Apply fatty acid-based winter washes to dormant fruit trees in order to control pests, making sure you treat all the nooks and crannies.

Insulate the greenhouse from frost, we have a good quality **bubble wrap** which works very well.

PLANNING & WINTER CHECKS

Walk round the plot regularly but avoid stepping on waterlogged soil. If you have any problem areas cover with layers of cardboard and spread a thick layer of compost/manure, a good way to get rid of the nastier weeds.

Greenhouses and ploytunnels: Deep clean glazing/plastic inside and out. Remove any dead, diseased or pest-ridden plant material. Check for tears in ploytunnel plastic and repair with proper tape. Ventilate on mild, dry days as this reduces humidity and mould.

Wash pots and trays ready for spring sowing. Sow salad leaves, such as mustard, mizuna and winter lettuce. Sow overwintering broad beans in pots.

Finalise your crop rotation plan for next season. Order seeds before the popular varieties sell out. Make a map of which beds will need extra soil improvement in the spring.