

The Lady

EVERY FRIDAY

21 OCTOBER 2011

Lorraine Pascale
...and other hot dishes for autumn

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GARDENING LETTERS



MARTINE DAVIS, owner of the *Balcombe Street Window Box Company* in London, answers your questions.



House your potted trees in an autumnal arboretum

Send your questions for our gardening expert to: **Garden Questions, The Lady, 39-40 Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ER**, or email letters@lady.co.uk

BALD PATCH

Over the summer I have noticed bare patches developing across my lawn. Why is this happening and what can I do to prevent it? *Mary Rainbow, Leicestershire*
MD There could be a number of reasons for the grass not coming up – wind or bird damage, or under-watering. The best way to help the bare patches revive is to re-seed. First, put a little new topsoil down. Then sprinkle seed over and spread a small amount of soil on top. Keep it well watered. It will need monitoring, so remember to keep checking.

If your lawn is in a sunny

spot, use a multi grass seed; if it is in a shady area, then use seeds suitable for shade. Most local garden centres will stock a variety of seeds.

COLOURFUL COMBINATIONS

I would like to plant something different in my window boxes and pots this season. Any suggestions? *Arabella Walters, via email*
MD There is a wonderful variety of berries, flowers and plants in autumn with not only jewel-coloured flowers, but ornamental chillis, peppers and cabbages too. The chillis come in yellow, orange and red and the peppers yellow or red. The cabbages

'Autumn has a wonderful variety of ornamental chillis and peppers'

are a wonderful purple. Try using a herb as your evergreen – bay or rosemary is a good choice – then trim with coloured heathers for a show-stopping look. Here are a few combinations to consider.

CUTTING COMMENTS

When and how do I prune philadelphus? *Jackie Thomas, Halifax*
MD As soon as the shrub has finished flowering, cut out all

the stems that have just flowered. Prune them back to around a third of their length. They will soon start to produce new stems, which will provide the flowering stems for next year. Do not just prune little bits off the ends of branches – prune right back into the bush.

Two: Plant a row of red and yellow ornamental peppers alternately, placing a small bay in the middle. In the front, plant a row of yellow-dyed heather and red cyclamen. This will most definitely be eye-catching. Don't forget to plant some bulbs too – tulips are always lovely and come in a variety of sizes and colours, including striped.

Three: Plant a back row of rosemary and in front, a row of purple ornamental cabbages. Team with purple heather and in between plant a couple of purple/white violas. Pop in a selection of bulbs too, perhaps snowdrops and iris.

All these ideas can be used in a trough, hanging basket, window box, pot, or indeed a flower bed.

♦ *Martine Davis has been running her Window Box Company in Marylebone for six years. For individually-designed, ready-filled containers delivered in and around central London and on-site planting: 020-7586 2614, www.window-box.co.uk.*

Coco's corner

Dear Readers, I don't know whether I've told you the playroom has been redecorated a bit like a cheap hotel lounge in Bangkok? Black walls, huge plasma screen, new windows with wooden shutters and last but not least, a sumptuous red velvet sofa for me to lie on.

That's what I thought, anyway. So on the first night after the sofa was heaved into position, I left beddies in the inglenook and snuggled up on it. I slept soundly until I heard the sound of the paperboy shove all the newspapers through the letter box, and then I leapt like a salmon off the sofa and when she came down I pretended that I had slept all night in beddies as usual.

'Stop making your morning face!' she said, as I bared my teeth to remind her to feed me before she made her own breakfast.

Then she spotted the playroom door was open.

And the scene that followed was ugly. I heard the sound of repeated thumping as she tried to rid the sofa of my hair. And then a shriek. She rushed through for a cloth.

'I can't believe you've drooled all over the sofa, Coco,' she shouted, rubbing away. I couldn't believe it either. I am very house-proud. I hardly ever walk through mud and on to just-cleaned carpet. Or go through the black sacks when she forgets to put them outside and leaves them in the kitchen overnight. Once a week, at most.

Now I've been banned completely from the new sofa. So unfair! If only she knew that the very first time the youngest pup sat on it, he was eating a bowl of Coco Pops and managed to spill the entire contents on the velvet plush.

They should really ban the pups, not me.

Till next week,

COCO
Office Dog

