



## Lawn Care and Garden Services

... an environmentally friendly way

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### Summer 2014 Newsletter.

Welcome to the Summer newsletter. The Met Office reported that the UK had the 3<sup>rd</sup> warmest spring since records began and it the warmest in Scotland. So, in Newcastle I wonder if our spring was closer to the UK or Scottish record. All in all a very different start to the year compared to the cold and wet start to 2013.

As a result some plants came into flower earlier this year and our shrubs, trees and especially lawns have flourished. The majority of regular maintenance we provide is on a fortnightly basis which at this time of year can see lawns put on 10cm (4inches) or more between visits. More frequent grass cutting, ideally once or twice a week, whilst desirable is often not a practical or affordable option. However, if you would like to have the lawn cut more frequently at peak growing times please just ask. The good news is that if we move into a dry, hot summer then the growth can quickly slow down as the grass protects the root system rather than producing lots of leafy top growth.



Not only are plants flourishing but the lambs are growing up too! Here's a picture (left) of the lambs in Rothbury at the end of May, it's hard to tell them apart from their Mothers. You may remember how small the lambs were in the Spring Newsletter (right), how they have grown!



#### **SUMMER LAWN CARE**

Summer lawn care may include regular mulch mowing, where the grass is mowed with a mulching lawn mower which finely chops the cuttings and forces them back into the sward where they decompose and release nitrogen which is required for green leafy growth. Mulch mowing also helps to provide improved moisture retention. Alternatively to regular mulch mowing a lawn feed can be applied.

#### **FENCING.**

As a result of increased demand for fencing this year, demand for timber has outstripped local supply and fence suppliers have had to search hard and wide for timber. The good news is that quality supplies continue to be sourced as can be seen with this closed boarded fence, with timber boards from Ireland. We had the privilege to install this fence for a Client who maintains a beautiful, tranquil and well loved garden. It's a handsome sturdy fence installed with



**heavy duty posts**, set in concrete, and 3 rails. Boarded and then *topped* with **fence capping** to give a smooth clean finish. The vertical fence boards rest on a horizontal **gravel board**. This gives the advantage that the fencing can be installed close to ground level and future-proofs the fence in the knowledge that if the bottom of the fence suffers from rain or snow rot in years to come, then the gravel boards only can be easily replaced rather than all of the fence boards.



## HEDGES.

*Fagus sylvatica* (copper beech) and *Fagus sylvatica* 'purpurea' (red beech) are best pruned in August to encourage the autumn leaves to last through the winter. However, beech can put on tremendous growth in early summer and it may need trimming earlier for practical purposes. It's not surprising how much growth copper beech can put on when grown as a hedge, as the same plant left to mature as a tree could reach a height of 160 feet with a trunk diameter of 10 feet.

## HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS.

**Perennials** are plants which come back year after year, for example most shrubs and trees are perennials. **Herbaceous perennials** also come year after year but are non woody so the top foliage dies back each year but the roots remain and produce new growth next year. Herbaceous perennials have the advantage over annuals in that they don't need to be replaced each year. Examples of herbaceous perennials include the tall and slender verbena bonariensis (left), lupins (right), astilbes and many more. Due to the lack of a woody stem, taller perennials may need staking or supporting as they grow. They may also need to be tidied at the end of the season by cutting down and removing dead foliage.



## PERENNIAL WEEDS.

Some weeds are perennials which mean that they come back year after year! These tend to include some of the most difficult weeds to eradicate and the most unwanted of all weeds. For example Horsetail (right) or Marestalk (Equisetum arvense) and Ground Elder (left). Rather than eradication it is often more a case of trying to keep these weeds in control and tackle the weeds on a regular and systematic basis digging them up or hoeing off the green foliage to weaken them through attrition over time.



The picture to the right that was taken at the end of May is from a wayside in Whitton, Northumberland and shows Ground Elder and Cleavers (right) (Galium aparine) the sticky grass, which has been prevalent this season. The stone building is Sharp's Folly in Whitton and it shows just how beautiful nature is with large meadow buttercups, stinging nettles, Ground Elder and Cleavers all looking magnificent. But, perhaps not quite what we may want in a domestic garden where the definition of a weed tends to be 'a plant which is growing where it's not wanted'.



## *THE ANNUAL WILDFLOWER SPECTRUM*

*(White - Yellow - Blue - Red - Purple)*

Have you ever noticed the colour of wildflowers and wondered if there is a sequence of colour? If so, you may be interested to read this fascinating article by Michael Newton on the annual wildflower colour spectrum.

Colour clusters can be picked out in the annual appearance of wildflowers. Starting at the white, cold end at the beginning of the year, the only really obvious wildflower to present itself is the delicate Snowdrop. And that is it, until the beginning of Spring when it is possible that other whites show themselves in the form of Wild Garlic or Ramsons and Greater Stitchwort. Depending on the severity of the winter and how early spring arrives, there may be a little overlap.



The next colour to really show after the whites are the yellows of Spring in the form of Wild Primroses (almost always yellow in hue) and Cowslips (left). Daffodils are another flower of Spring, however wild, native Daffodils are more common in Wales.

Sandwiched between Spring and Summer are the blue of the carpets of Bluebells in May and also the less conspicuous Germander Speedwell (right). Many other speedwells, of the Figwort family, are also blue in hue.



In Summer the reds (and pinks) seem to have a dominance. Red Campion, Ragged Robin (left), Herb Robert and Bloody Cranesbill all show over the summer months. Bloody Cranesbill was chosen as Northumberland's regional wildflower as it grows native here and fits the county's chequered Border Reiver past.

Later summer sees the reds turn purple in the form of Heathers and Heaths and some later flowering Thistles and Burdocks.

Throughout the year there are two threads of colour; yellow and white, which, depending on the time of year, are shown by similar wildflowers.

The white thread of colour comes from the clustered heads of the Carrot family (in the classic Cow Parsley appearance). The first to arrive is the Pignut, later the Cow Parsley, then later again the deadly Hemlock (right), Pepper Saxifrage and Hogweed and, finally Yarrow towards the end of the summer. All show the small clustered white flowers but of various sizes and appearing across the year. They all belong to the Carrot family except Yarrow, which is in fact a member of the daisy family.



Regarding the Daisy family, the other yellow ribbon of wildflowers throughout the year comes from the Daisy family. However, not via the common White Daisy, but from the yellow dandelion-looking wild flowers of the same large Daisy family. The Dandelion itself flowers more or less continuously, but there are other yellow wildflowers, which look like the Dandelion appearing across the flowering season at different times. These are, in rough chronological order; Colt's-Foot, Goat's-Beard, Mouse-Ear Hawkweed, Nipplewort, Cats-Ear and finally and aptly named Autumn Hawkbit (left).

*Happy Gardening! Tony.*