

the Saturday

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● IT'S time to pot bulbs like hyacinths to flower indoors over the winter. Use prepared bulbs, water and put in a cool, dark place until the yellow shoot is about 2in high (8-10 weeks). Keep them in a cool place indoors until the tips turn green. When flowers start to show, the bulbs can be planted into bowls of single or mixed colours. You can pick bulbs to balance growth since no two colours develop at the same rate. See our hyacinth offer below.



Time to bring indoors



Good root system



Ready for bowling



Add to bowls



WITH STEVE & VAL BRADLEY

peterseabrook

NO GARDENING JOBS ARE TOO BIG FOR FERN

HER name is Fern – but her magic touch is entirely for TREES.

Fern Snowling, 25, is in charge of moving towering specimens to new homes on her trusty forklift.

She can swing them through the air so smoothly they barely rustle.

Steve McCurdy – her boss at Majestic Trees near Luton, Beds – said: "Fern can make big trees dance."

"She has such control of heavy-lifting equipment – 40ft semi-mature trees are lifted, transported and tipped through ninety degrees straight into the lorry without a branch broken."

Bright

Fern now commands a salary of more than £30,000 – proving wonderful opportunities are available in horticulture for people who are bright and prepared to work hard.

Fern, who left school at 16, started at Majestic as a receptionist before being won over by the outdoors.

She first learned to drive, then trained to use forklifts, cherry pickers and HGVs and was soon in charge of all the firm's logistics in shipping their trees.

Of course, there is nothing new about moving big trees – the Victorians did it with horse and manpower.

Today it's all much easier but, as always, the critical part is planting and securing the new transplant.

Majestic Trees, whose specimens cost from £100 to £10,000, has a demonstration area showing a variety of ways to anchor trees in their new homes.

It may seem tricky and expensive but when we buy specimen trees we are buying time.

And if we choose wisely, we leave a good investment for the next generation



Pictures: TERRY RICHARDS

The lady who makes trees dance



BRANCHING OUT... Fern moved from receptionist to logistics

YOU ASK VAL

WHAT can I use to stop moles tunnelling in my garden?

Mrs A SWANSTON
Irvine, North Ayrshire

Try planting a bulb called Sork which produces a scent that drives moles away and is effective within six weeks of planting. The bulbs are available from Pomona Fruits (0845 676 0607).

HOW do I get my bird of paradise plant (Strelitzia) to flower?

Mr H RAY
Blackpool, Lancs

Strelitzia usually takes five to seven years to flower after the seed has germinated – and only then when looked after very well. Patience is crucial – along with a weak solution of tomato feed at three-week intervals.

WHEN is the best time to prune a Gaura bush?

Mrs J RUDD
East Grinstead, West Sussex

In spring before new growth starts. Remove old flowering stems and trim back frost-damaged shoots, then feed with a general fertiliser to promote new growth.

HOW can I get rid of scale insects on my greenhouse nectarine?

Mr P BARTRUM
Preston, Lancs

Spray the dormant plant in December-January with Winter Tree Wash from Vitax. The best time for summer spraying is in early July when the newly hatched scale are most vulnerable to chemicals such as Plant Rescue Fruit & Vegetable Bug Killer from Westland.

● Follow Val on Twitter @valgardening

TIMELY TIPS

REMOVE all summer shading from greenhouses, cold frames and cloches and thoroughly clean glass inside and out, to let in all available autumn light.

Put all plant debris from summer crops on compost heap and prepare for winter digging – but delay starting to dig until deciduous tree leaves have fallen.

PLANT OF THE WEEK



COLCHICUM SPECIOSUM (Autumn Crocus).
Pronounced: Kol-chi-come
Type: Upright, perennial producing funnel-shaped purple-pink flowers in autumn. Leaves appear from the corm after flowering.
Grows: Up to 8in high, forming clumps up to 3ft wide.
Likes: Fertile, well-drained soil in sun or dappled shade.



FRAGRANT hyacinths are great for growing in and outdoors. This week we have three amazing offers.
COLLECTION A: 30 bulbs, ten each of City Of Haarlem yellow, Gypsy Queen apricot and Delft Blue for £11.99 (saves £12.43 on list prices).
COLLECTION B: 30 bulbs, ten each of Carnegie white, Woodstock burgundy and Pink Pearl for £11.99 (saves £12.43).
Collection C: The two above, 60 bulbs for £19.99 (saves £23.90). Prices include P&P and VAT. To

SAVE £23
on **HYACINTH BULBS**

order, make a cheque out to Suttons, state collection wanted, then post with name and address to Suttons Hyacinths, SU312, Woodview Road, Devon TQ4 7NG. Offer closes October 27. Dispatch in seven to ten days.

