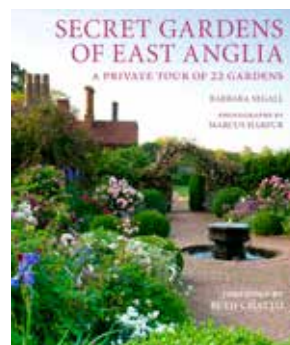




A HANDSOME EVERGREEN

I've always found the easy-going glossy-leaved evergreen *Fatsia japonica* to be a useful shrub for introducing interest into a difficult corner and now there's another variety, 'Spider's Web' (left), to try. Its large, palmate leaves are heavily laced with white, so it would complement a white flower border or can be grown as a specimen plant in a large container, in loam-based compost. A great choice for partial shade, it costs £14.99 for a 1.5-litre pot from Crocus (01344 578111; crocus.co.uk).



A GOOD READ

East Anglia is still a relatively unsung part of the UK, so it's good to have Marcus Harpur and Barbara Segall's insider knowledge on the area in which they live. *Secret Gardens of East Anglia* (Francis Lincoln, £20) will take you on a tour of 22 privately owned gardens in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex, where challenges such as droughts have been turned to advantage to create beautiful and inspiring plots. A lovely book that will have you itching to visit some of them yourself.

garden notes



Everything you need to know to get the most from your plot in October

WORDS BY PAULA McWATERS

that an irksomely large shrub is finally reduced to the desired size.

Of course, some jobs have a definite window of opportunity that will slam shut if you leave it too long. Included in this is autumn sowing of hardy annual flower seeds. If they go in now, they will have a chance to build up a root system, resulting in stronger plants for next year. Top of my list are *Ammi majus*, *Ammi visnaga* and the soft apricot pot marigold *Calendula officinalis* 'Sunset Buff', along with a stunning white love-in-a-mist *Nigella hispanica* 'African Bride' (above left), which has rich purple-black stamens (chilternseeds.co.uk).

SAVE THE DATE: On 3 October all RHS gardens are open free of charge. See rhs.org.uk for details.

MY FAVOURITE gardening teacher Tessa always advised us that the best time to perform any given maintenance task in the garden is when you have the time and energy to do it. This realistic approach is one I can identify with as you can't always get round to moving or pruning plants when the books tell you to. So, while everything is a little quieter, and before bad weather sets in, I shall be nipping out to see what tasks are still outstanding. After all, sacrificing one year's flowers by cutting at 'the wrong time', for instance, is worth it if it means



WHAT TO DO

Plant any new herbaceous perennials to establish roots before winter

Harvest and store apples

Weed paths to neaten them for winter

Plant new rhubarb crowns and lift and divide old ones

Ripen squashes and pumpkins off the ground

Gather autumn leaves and store to make leaf mould

Prune and tie in stems of climbing roses to prevent wind rock

Plant garlic cloves in soil enriched with well-rotted organic matter

Clear old leaves around strawberries to prevent pest build-up

Begin sowing sweetpeas under cover in deep pots