

Susie's Garden



Expert gardener Susie White has the arts of drying flowers and beans all tied up – and explains how you can protect ripening fruit and tender plants



Cut helichrysums before they open fully

All Cut And Dried

There was a vogue for dried flowers back in the 1980s and I used to hang them to dry from the beams of the garden shop that I ran back then. They've been out of fashion since, perhaps because they would sit gathering dust in vases year after year. But I still dry flowers to brighten the house over winter, before throwing them away in the spring when I cut fresh flowers again. Straw flowers or helichrysums are top of my list. They are incredibly easy to grow, produce masses of flowers and you get several rows of plants from just one packet of

seed. Cheap and cheerful, when tied with a few strands of raffia they make good presents to take to friends or charity events. You need to cut helichrysums before they fully open out because as they dry they carry on expanding. I strip off most of the leaves, make them into small bunches for the air to circulate and fix them with an elastic band. It tightens as the stems dry so they don't fall out; then hang them in a dry place out of direct sunlight. Sun is needed, though, to dry beans, either to store for cooking over the winter or for sowing next year's crop. We picked these prettily coloured Borlotti

beans (below) to dry them on the potting bench in the greenhouse – but look who is also enjoying the sunshine! The warmth of the sun is bringing out droves of butterflies, especially to the sedums that are now turning deep pink. On either side of the central path it's a sedum fest for butterflies and bees! The flowers look amazing and the honey smell is incredible.



Glorious sedums



Watching the beans dry...



Keep up with dead-heading

In The Garden

- ◆ If you want to learn more about drying flowers, visit the National Trust for Scotland's Priorwood garden in Melrose – it has growing areas, drying sheds and a fascinating range of dried flowers. Contact 0844 4932257.
- ◆ If you grow tender plants for summer colour, you need to think about bringing them in to a greenhouse or conservatory before the first frosts.
- ◆ The pear tree that David pruned in July is now bearing fruit. Golden and sweet, we pick them promptly and ripen them indoors so that the wasps don't get them!



Beat the wasps!

Reader's Tip



◆ Chamomile tea is great for keeping plants healthy. Use it to ward off bacterial and fungal infections and to prevent young seedlings damping off. Make sure it's completely cold before watering your plants. **Matt Read, Essex**

Do you have a garden tip you'd like to share with fellow readers? Send it along with a photograph to the address on page 5 or email it to myweekly@dthomson.co.uk. We'll pay £25 if we use your photograph and tip.

Best Buys



✿ Midges can spoil your time in the garden, so this spray could be just the job. It's made with essential oils and costs £6.50 for 50ml from The Wee Midgie company. www.theweemidgie.com

✿ I've been looking for ages for a hosepipe that doesn't get kinked so I'm delighted with this Kink-free X-Hose hosepipe that I saw advertised in... My Weekly! It expands, is very lightweight and easy to store. From £22.99 www.officialxhose.co.uk/myweekly

