

October – the in-between month

I hate October.

I really welcome November 1st – winter is here at last! Everything will be cold, dull, wet and grim for the next 3 months, at least that's clear.

But October is such an in-between month.

September is like an extension of summer – there are still butterflies and dragonflies and flowers in the borders. But then come those gales in early October for which the month is so famous (remember the “hurricane”?), and it all shuts down.

On the bird front, all the summer visitors (swallows, warblers) have gone and yet the winter visitors (thrushes and starlings) have barely arrived. The garden is empty. Even all the lovely windfalls are ignored. But once those hungry Fieldfares, Redwings and Blackbirds arrive from Scandinavia (in November usually) it will suddenly get very busy.

Of course birds are on the move in autumn and the Gann can be alive with waders passing through in September and October. However, watching them in an October gale is less pleasant than balmy September sunshine!

The trees in October can't make up their minds. The leaves look pretty dull – dark green, curling up and going yellow at the edges – but they are not really changing colour or indeed falling much. (We don't get much autumn colour here - wrong trees and wrong climate! I noted the other day that the Whitland bypass looks lovely - much Field Maple has been planted along the roadsides. But elm, oak, sycamore and willow are not noted for their autumn colours).

Wild and garden plants are generally starting to collapse and look a mess but it's a slow process.

The lawns start to grow vigorously with the onset of rain and much mowing is required again.

And there is not a lot of agricultural work in the fields to entertain us and the sheep seem to have temporarily disappeared!

One of the few saving graces in October is the apple crop. They look wonderful on the trees and most reach their peak of tastiness in October. The early apples are over but the main crop and those that need to be kept are usually picked in October, leading to much stressing as to where to put them all. “Apple Days” such as took place at Walwyn's Castle and St Brides can be great fun (weather permitting). And all those apple baked products – Apple Suet Pudding, Tarte Tatin, Apple Cake – yum!



So roll on November – my favourite month when I was a child because I just loved fireworks and then after all the excitement of the bonfire, fireworks and toffee apples I woke up the next morning to my birthday!