

EVERY FRIDAY

The Lady

20 JANUARY 2012

WALLIS

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GARDENING LETTERS

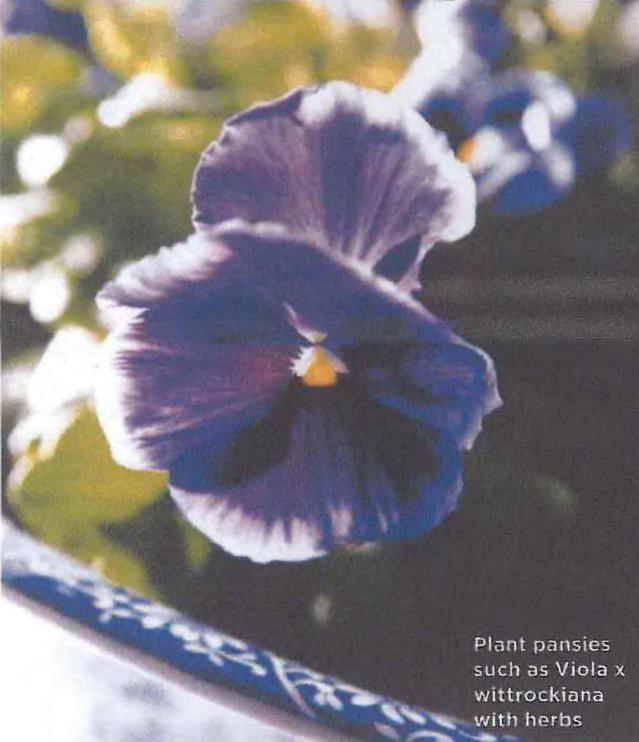


MARTINE DAVIS
owner of Balcombe
Street Window Box
Company, answers
your questions

BOXING CLEVER

How often should I water my window boxes in winter and what plants would fare best? *Lorraine Lee-Benson, via email* MD This is a good question, as it can vary depending on weather and the position of your pots. In mild weather, I'd say three times a week, but in midwinter, once a week is enough. However, the key thing is to check that the soil is kept moist. You don't want it to be flooded. Wind dries plants out, which is why I said that weather conditions can make your watering regime vary. The amount of water is also important. Your containers should have holes in the bottom to let excess water run through. For a 60cm window box, I'd say two litres; water slowly and evenly to avoid spillage.

As to what plants fare best in winter, you should pick something hardy. You can't go wrong with evergreens.



Plant pansies
such as *Viola x*
wittrockiana
with herbs

very hardy and can then be used in the kitchen with cooking, as can bay trees. If you want more colour, winter pansies and violas do well.

EDIBLE OPTIONS

To combine cooking and gardening, can you tell me what flowers are edible, and can they be planted in a window box?

J Salitan, via email

MD I have already mentioned herbs quite a bit as I like using them with other plants and flowers. If you are a keen cook, then grow edible herbs and flowers, such as

*If you are a keen cook then grow
edible herbs and flowers'*

Skimia is a good option, as it is evergreen and flowers. It starts in winter with dark-green leaves and branches with red berries making up a larger flower, then turns into a white flower towards spring. Buxus evergreen trees are also a good option. They come in a variety of clipped shapes and in various sizes; they look neat in a window box or as an entrance plant. Herbs such as rosemary are

nasturtiums, which have a peppery flavour, and pansies. Lavender is a great flower/herb and smells divine, so is an all-round winner. I would suggest that at this time of year you combine pansies with rosemary, bay and thyme. In summer you can add flowers such as

nasturtium and herbs such as basil, curry plant and chives. Don't plant mint in with the mix as it can take over.

EVERGREEN INTEREST
I want a window box that lasts all year but still has colour. What do you suggest? *Janet Kaplan-Marks, via email* MD You will definitely want an evergreen arrangement. Buxus trees come in a variety of shapes and sizes and look smart. You could arrange a row of buxus balls with trailing variegated ivy or have a central buxus cone with buxus balls either side. For a contemporary look, try a red or green spiky cordyline plant. You could have a row of alternate colours and trim with ivy. Another option is using herbs such as rosemary or bay. They go well with any of the plants mentioned.

Conifers also work in window boxes and come in dark greens to lime greens. Mix them with another plant such as euonymus, which comes in yellow with dark-green variegated leaves or a dark green with white variegated leaves.

* Balcombe Street Window Box Company offers individually-designed, ready-filled containers for delivery or on-site planting: 020-7586 2614, www.windowbox.co.uk

Coco's corner

Dear Readers,
She interrupted her constant monitoring of the Leveson Inquiry to move offices. This will mean moving the stripy dog bed, boxes of letters, books, pictures, Ladyship mugs, vitamins, creams, etc and so on, into a room with a view down Bedford Street instead of Maiden Lane, in case you were wondering (I've always thought our address should be *The Lady*, Maiden Lane, it sounds so right somehow).

So she finally tackled my groaning in-tray. On the top was a photocopied article from *The Lady* of 1934, which someone had handed her in a pointed way, called *Your Dog In Hot Weather*, all about stripping dogs with heavy coats. 'Not needed on voyage,' she said, scrumpling it up for the bin. Then she turned to the autumn issue of *In Full Cry*, the newsletter of the Beagle Welfare charity. Even though this had many interesting articles on rehoming, a poetry corner and letters from beagle owners, this too went into the bin. She did look at the accompanying letter though - addressed to me of course.

'Dear Coco, Much loved and pampered as you are, I am sure you must sometimes wonder how your life might have been had you not been "adopted" by all the lovely people at *The Lady*. So I thought you would enjoy reading this copy of *In Full Cry*. Having taken over as editor of *In Full Cry* in March, I can often be heard to yelp - I feel just like Rachel Johnson!'

I think what the editor means is that unlike 99.9 per cent of the public, she has actually read her book, *A Diary Of The Lady, My First Year And A Half As Editor*, a volume that she always adds is 'very much available on Amazon'.

Till next week,

coco
Office Dog

