

## Tips and Rants

Summer is heading to Biggar! The sun is shining and a new museum is emerging at the top end of the town, completely transforming what was 'Jimmy's Garage'. Ice cream and chips are being happily licked and munched and residents and visitors alike are walking around, taking the air.

Up here in the shop, plants have arrived for outside tubs and baskets, bowls, tin cans, jars, or anything else you want to stick them in. According to the 'it mags', use lots of tubs/pots/old tin cans, and fill them with a single variety of plant and/or herb and group them together - okay dokey! Sounds good, but if you are doing that, buy a well-established plant ("2.50-£5.50 say) and pot it up in these containers. You will get a quicker show than buying some of the 'bargain' trays you see - as your granny might say 'You get what you pay for - eh!'

Also, when selecting a plant, give it a wee shake and look under the plant leaves at the root. If anything comes out and says 'hello', discard it and look under another one. Feed your baskets and tubs regularly, not just one feed all summer. You will be rewarded with endless flowers and healthy plants.

On our travels delivering flowers, we encounter some dodgy-looking pots. For goodness sake, folks, de-clutter your pots, throw out old faded, half-dead plants. Give them a decent after-life by sending them to the compost bin in the sky - please! Clean out the pot and sterilise it (i.e. wipe it out with disinfectant and rinse clean with fresh water. Don't spray it with the old 'whizz' spray cleaner with bleach and leave - you'll probably kill your next plant if you do that! Put in some broken bits of old pots as drainage, or buy special lava/drainage balls and shovel some into the bottom of your pot. Fresh compost - please - not that 10 year old stuff you found in the garden shed under that old wheelbarrow with the dodgy tyre. That should be thrown out or dug in somewhere in the garden. Sorry - I've got my schoolteacher hat on again, but some of the tubs we see and the amount of cash spent on them, you'd be better booking a mini-break to Holland to see some really nice tubs and designs on people's balconies.

At last - back to normal - a summer rant!

In summer, the vase-life of all cut flowers is half what it might be in chilly winter, so please don't expect miracles. Use that flower food and mix it up as per the instructions (I know - no one uses it, no one mixes it up correctly and, if you've forgotten your specs, it might even be used to sweeten tea...)

As the summer flowers and plants arrive, so do summer fashions and seasonal food in Biggar. There is, unfortunately, a shortage of bins - or at least bins like we had in the old days which let you shove in a bag of rubbish. We realise there's a reason behind this and the design of the modern bin makes it easier for cheery SLC Council waste inspectors to maintain. However the down-side is that visitors, and sometimes residents too, arrive at the shop with half-eaten cones, bags with the wee leftover hard bits of chips covered in tomato ketchup and with a pickled onion on the side, empty cans of fizzy or not so fizzy juice and, yes, always sticky bits of tissue covered in... who knows what. They come in to buy a plant, awkwardly holding the aforementioned items and we always say 'Would you like us to get rid of that for you?' The answer is invariably the same, 'Yes, please, there's no bins up here' or 'They're a bit full down the road.' It's all in a day's work in a shop.

And, being a tourist stop-off - and not just tourists – the summer clothes arrive. ‘Haud me back’... but it’s good for a laugh. Please note, our own outfits are nothing of note (fleece numbers 1 and number 2, 3 and 4 - layered with thermals - plus trainers 1, 2 and 3, and, of course, woolly hats versions 1 and 2. But let us tell you about the summer fashions that pass by our window. Vogue fashion stylists head for Biggar NOW! Anna Wintour, editor in chief, take note!

1. ¾ length trousers, woolly socks and trainers or white socks and comfy sandals (stops the blisters)
2. shorts – ladies and gents, all lengths and fittings – maybe explains why so many ice creams are sold on hot days (to cool people down)
3. maxi-dresses worn by all ages. Sorry ladies, and being an old granny myself, leave the maxi-dresses to the young ones. Yes we all had one years ago, but enjoy the memory, don’t dig it out of the cupboard again!
4. Skimpy tea shirts – ladies and gents are all guilty of this. Looks great if you have the shape but not if it’s a bit tired and over-washed and grey or fits in the wrong places (or should I say clings?)

And finally in our summer bulletin, a note to pet owners. We have quite a few people leaving their cars under the shady trees. Great idea, but do please also leave a window open – and come back quickly! It’s a sad and worrying sight to see a thirsty dog in a hot car. By the way... someone locked their mum in a car outside the shop a few weeks ago, to go and get an ice-cream treat. We were just about to go hunting for the owner when he turned up 20 minutes later, set gran free and scooped the ice cream.

With that, we will head off and plant up some baskets and tubs. But remember, clean tubs, good drainage, fresh compost and lots of feed! Don’t be miserable with the number of plants – pack ‘em in and it’ll look great.

Have a lovely summer and see you soon!