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Winter's tails

BY STUART WINTER Follow him on twitter: @birderman or email stuart.winter@express.co.uk

The Birdman

It's time to start mowing, but don't forget to help our feathered friends

GARDENING does not always have to be back-breaking work to get pleasing results. Spring's balmy temperatures may well have set your mind to the joys of the lawnmower, but success is not all about mowing and sowing or digging and weeding.

Working even the humblest of plots to make them what you want them to be is a pleasure as well as a chore. Today sees the advent of National Gardening Week, with beautiful gardens throughout the UK opening up their gates to visitors, but by putting up a few extra things you can help to make your garden a more attractive and colourful selection of creatures to our herbaceous borders and shrubberies or even a humble window box.

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Don't let rogues sell you a pup on the net

ONLINE dog trading has seen Britain evolve from a nation of puppyeers into a society of puppyeers finding bargains. We spent more than £1.6 billion online last year on everything from groceries to a permanent de-commissioned fighter jet. While most internet shoppers are savvy enough to spot the "too good to be true" signs, there are a lot of rogues out there who are looking to take advantage of their money.

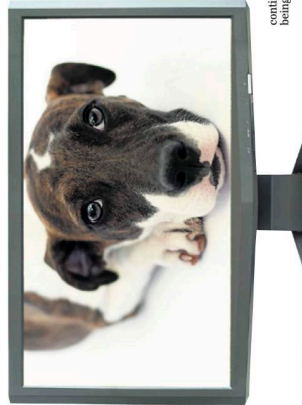
Animal lovers looking for new pets are no exception when it comes to being exploited by rogues. A Government-backed initiative to stamp out rogue online dog sales is the great success. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has revealed that more than 130,000 dogs have been removed from websites through leading animal welfare charity Dogs Trust and has regular online pet sales which are aimed at illegal trade in dogs and imported animals.

Looking at some of the websites that have been shown to be selling dogs, people will stop to claim about the illegal hunting prowess of dogs are among the most popular. The dog has fallen foul of the standards introduced in 2013 and agreed by the Pet Advertising Advisory Group to ensure the website is clear, honest and provides relevant information for the puppy's parents and a spokesperson.

"It can be overwhelming for buyers to know who to trust and how to avoid the risks of the puppy in its breeding environment and with its mother, and insist on seeing the microchipping documentation, relevant health certificates for the puppy's parents and a recent photograph and the age of the animal that they are advertising so welfare issues are covered," says the Kennel Club's head of welfare, Dr. Sarah E. Jones.

The Kennel Club's new minimum standards for dog sales are being implemented in clamping down on rogue online dog sales. There are those who continue to fall into traps by not being aware of what to expect from a breeder at the next door.

"Once they have found a breeder via a compliant online platform, they always ask to see the puppy in its breeding environment and with its mother, and insist on seeing the microchipping documentation, relevant health certificates for the puppy's parents and a recent photograph and the age of the animal that they are advertising so welfare issues are covered," says the Kennel Club's head of welfare, Dr. Sarah E. Jones.



Signatories are also running automated checks on potential buyers for blacklisted words and phrases, as well as filtering out inappropriate or illegal adverts for "dangerous" animals. The scheme also includes a recent photograph and the age of the animal that they are advertising so welfare issues are covered. The Kennel Club's head of welfare, Dr. Sarah E. Jones, says: "It is a private or commercial sale or is being placed by a rescue/returning centre. Minister Lord de Mauley has congratulated the scheme and said it is a great success. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has revealed that more than 130,000 dogs have been removed from websites through leading animal welfare charity Dogs Trust and has regular online pet sales which are aimed at illegal trade in dogs and imported animals. Looking at some of the websites that have been shown to be selling dogs, people will stop to claim about the illegal hunting prowess of dogs are among the most popular. The dog has fallen foul of the standards introduced in 2013 and agreed by the Pet Advertising Advisory Group to ensure the website is clear, honest and provides relevant information for the puppy's parents and a spokesperson. "It can be overwhelming for buyers to know who to trust and how to avoid the risks of the puppy in its breeding environment and with its mother, and insist on seeing the microchipping documentation, relevant health certificates for the puppy's parents and a recent photograph and the age of the animal that they are advertising so welfare issues are covered," says the Kennel Club's head of welfare, Dr. Sarah E. Jones.

CHAS'S ROLL ALLOTMENT

THE "EAT ALL" URRIPIPS and radish seeds I sowed three weeks ago that Kris Collins from Thompson & Morgan sent me to try are just poking their seed heads out of the soil. The seed leaves, and some of the seed heads, are the first to appear. The true leaves follow, with a slight delay for the first time this year. A crop that went to seed last year seemed to be growing wild. Very handy. It is 'Perennial Spinach' by the way. My parsnips didn't germinate very well early and the cold, damp weather rotted 'em. Anyway, the lady down the post office told me how she does hers. She put newspaper in the bottom and stood 28 tubes of soil on top. I got a seed tray, put newspaper in the bottom and stood 28 toilet roll tubes (or kitchen towel tubes cut in half) in it like little soldiers. Then I filled each one up with general seed sowing compost and sowed three seeds in each. I'll thin 'em out to one plant per tube if they all come up all right. The plan is to plant each tube whole into the ground when the seedlings are about two or three inches high. This way (and it is about three inches high) the soil in the pot does not get disturbed. Plant out about this apart.

If you try this out let me know how you get on and I'll tell the lady down the post office.

● All About Us: The Chas & Dave Story written by Chas Hodges is published by The Chas & Dave Publishing Co. Ltd. ● An Audience with Chas Hodges on DVD is now available at chashodges.co.uk ● Chas & Dave play The Lighthouse Theatre, Kettering, April 18

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Water likes the way I cook it. I use more than the recipe suggests as it is very "thony" and the little or no water method leaves my teeth feeling slightly washed, chopped up spinach and half fill it with water. Add a good 2oz of butter and some ground pepper. Bring it to the boil and then turn it down to a simmer. Turn off the water and it's ready. Don't know how "proper" cooks do it but this is how I do and it tastes great.

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