

October

Growing Guide with Ed at Fibrex



Preparing pelargoniums for winter: a practical grow guide

Pelargoniums may be tough in summer, but they're tender perennials at heart meaning they won't survive a UK winter outdoors. Whether you're nurturing scented varieties like Sweet Mimosa or Candy Dancer, a little autumn prep goes a long way in keeping your plants healthy and productive for the next season.



Step 1: cut back for winter

Start your winter prep from late summer through to the end of October, before temperatures drop too far. Cut each plant back by half, just above a leaf joint. This encourages fresh growth and gives you ideal material for cuttings. After pruning, remove all remaining leaves from the plant.

This reduces the risk of overwintering pests and fungal spores hiding on the undersides. If you're managing a larger collection, consider a light spray with a general fungicide to prevent botrytis. Don't worry, your plants will look bare, but they'll bounce back quickly.

Step 2: take cuttings

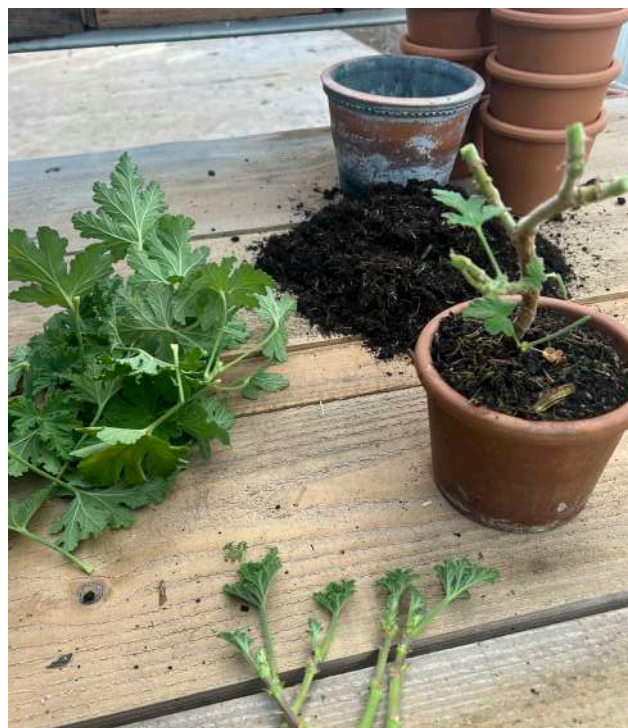
Pelargoniums root easily, making them perfect candidates for propagation. Choose healthy, non-flowering stems around 3–6 nodes long. Cut just below a leaf joint using clean, sharp scissors. Remove the lower leaves and insert the cutting into a gritty, well-draining mix (compost, sand, and perlite works well).

You can dip the base in rooting hormone, but it's optional. Place the cuttings in a bright, frost-free spot with good airflow. A propagator or clear plastic bag can help maintain humidity, but avoid excess moisture, pelargoniums hate soggy feet.

Step 3: report and refresh

After cutting back, repot your plants into fresh compost. If space is tight, gently tease out old compost from the root ball and return them to the same pot. Water well and place in a bright, frost-free location.

Minimum overnight temperature should be around +5°C. If your space dips below that, keep the plants drier and hope for the best. Avoid garages and sheds unless they're insulated and have natural light—pelargoniums need both light and airflow to overwinter successfully.



Step 4: watering and feeding

Watering in winter is all about observation. Water thoroughly when the compost is dry, ideally on a sunny day, and avoid wetting the foliage. Let the compost dry out between waterings—this helps prevent rot.

As days lengthen in February, your plants will start growing again. That's the time to resume feeding, starting with a general-purpose fertiliser. Save high-potash feeds for later in spring when flower buds begin to form.



Spotlight: Sweet Mimosa & Candy Dancer

Sweet Mimosa: A scented-leaf pelargonium with soft, feathery foliage and a delicate citrus-rose fragrance. It's a joy to propagate—cuttings root easily and mature plants respond well to pruning. Overwintering is straightforward if kept dry and well-lit.



Candy Dancer: A scented pelargonium with vivid blooms, compact growth, and aromatic foliage. It's a reliable performer but benefits from careful pruning and good airflow during winter. Cuttings from Candy Dancer tend to root quickly, making it a great candidate for expanding your stock.

Both varieties thrive in bright conditions and appreciate a gentle start to spring. Keep an eye out for rust or mildew — especially if plants were left in damp conditions while you were away. Remove affected leaves and improve airflow to help recovery.



Final tips

Label your cuttings, especially if you're growing multiple varieties.

Don't be afraid to compost tired or woody plants. Fresh cuttings often outperform older specimens.

If you're short on space, prioritise your healthiest plants and most treasured varieties.

Keep an eye out for pests like aphids or whitefly. A quick rinse or neem oil spray can help.

With a little care now, your pelargoniums will reward you with lush growth and vibrant blooms next season. And if Sweet Mimosa and Candy Dancer are anything to go by, you'll be off to a flying start.

About the author

Fibrex Nurseries is a long-established, family-run business founded over 64 years ago and now managed by Ed and Laura. They grow and tend all their plants in-house, nurturing each pelargonium from seedling to showpiece. Renowned for their unique pelargoniums, Fibrex never buys plants in, instead cultivating and caring for every specimen themselves. Their dedication to quality and variety ensures that every plant leaving the nursery is healthy, vibrant, and full of character.

Where to find out more

Instagram: @fibrex_nurseries
www.fibrex.co.uk

