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ADDING a conservatory gives a new dimension to your home, whether you need extra family space, a quiet place for studying or working from home, or somewhere to relax and unwind.

Many of us are looking to maximise our existing space to avoid moving - and a conservatory is often the perfect answer. Looking to the future, it can also increase the value of your property, with a possible 75% of the cost being recouped if and when you decide to sell.

With adequate heating, a conservatory can be kept in continuous use to maximise its potential whatever the temperature outside. If you plan to use your conservatory all day every day - and cost is not an issue for you - then central heating is a good choice. You will need to find a competent plumber or heating engineer who will not upset the balance of your current central heating system and/or put too much load on your boiler.

The main drawback is having to plan ahead and ensure the heating is turned on well before the time it is needed.

A more versatile and economical option is LPG portable heating which offers instant warmth where and when you want it, as well as small amounts of moisture which have been deemed to be good for the skin and plants.

Heaters come in a range of styles and, because they are portable, it means that you can store them easily in the summer, and move them back into the conservatory as and when the need arises.

Calor's Provence portable heater, complete with a realistic coal fire effect and traditional cast iron stove design will keep your conservatory cosy through the chilliest months, for the perfect winter haven.



HOT STUFF: Provence Matt Black heater adds style to any conservatory

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Still plenty to do in the garden

A DECENT spell of dry weather in early October could be your best chance to get a few jobs done around the garden before winter sets in.

Experts at the Royal Horticultural Society have drawn up a checklist which includes painting fences, sheds and other wooden features with a preservative, fixing leaky shed roofs and cleaning garden furniture ready to store away until spring.

Hose down the greenhouse with a forceful jet of water, and then use a safe cleaning product and non-abrasive scourer specifically recommended for cleaning glass.

Replace any broken glass panes in the greenhouse and also take the opportunity to check for lost glazing clips or worn putty. As temperatures fall, shading paint should be removed, and any blinds lifted or removed as light levels are steadily decreasing.

Greenhouses can be insulated using plastic bubble wrap, which will help to reduce winter heating bills, but take care not to block out too much natural light.

Another priority is to clean up patios and hard surfaces to get rid of moss and algae. Taking action now will prevent them becoming slippery during the

winter.

Fallen leaves should be raked off the lawn before they block out light and air penetration to the grass. On large lawns a leaf-blower will make the job much easier.

Recently sown grass areas can be mown to neaten them up before the winter. Don't cut lower than 2.5cm (1in). Topping with the mower will also prevent weeds getting out of hand.

Ponds need to be cleared out to get rid of debris, weeds, and excess oxygenating plants which should be left on the side for a couple of days before composting

them, so that wildlife has time to escape back to the pond.

Remove pumps or fountains and removable lighting systems and clean them, before storing away. Rescue tender water plants and remove any dying foliage. Place the plants in trays of deep mud or damp sand, or even in a bucket of water, keeping them in a frost-free place such as a conservatory or greenhouse.

Also bear in mind that October is an ideal time for moving and planting trees, shrubs and climbers, as well as for hedge planting.



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