



Wisley's Alpine Log

By Paul Cumbleton

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At this time of the year, while still enjoying the autumnal colours, the first frosts remind us that winter is not too far away. Much of our time this past week has been devoted to preparations for the coming season. Some of the glasshouses have heaters that we checked over to make sure they are working correctly:



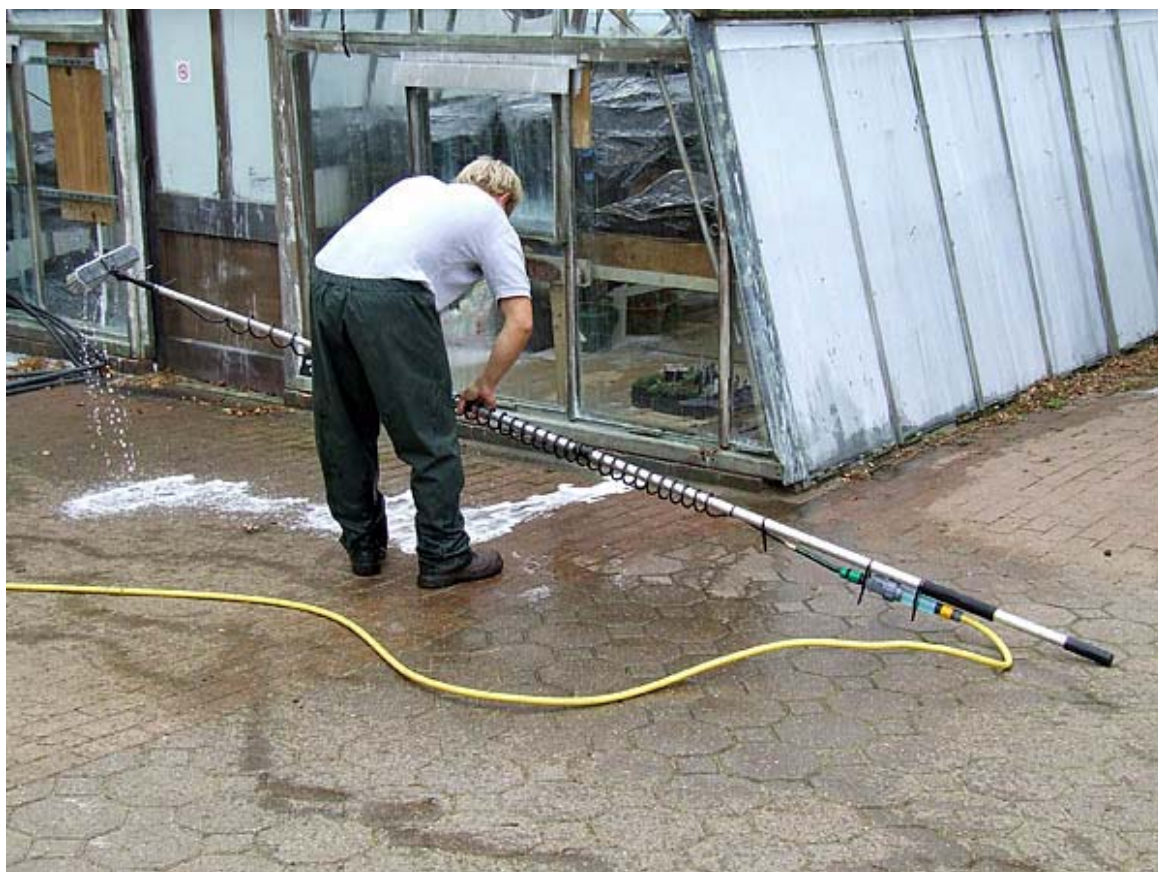
We also replaced the covers on the sand beds to keep off winter rain:



Another job is to clean all the shading off those glasshouses that have had it on through the summer. We use a traditional whitewash for the shading and for the sides of the smaller houses and it is easy to get this off with just a bucket of water and a cloth:



To get at the roofs, especially on our larger houses, is more of a problem as there are extra health and safety considerations. So for this job we have a special tool – a washing brush that is extendable to about 6 metres long. Here is one of our trainees, Jonathan, extending the pole:



Using this, the roof panes can be reached and washed while still standing on the ground, removing the need for ladders or steps.



Over in the shade frames the lights are ready to be put on when required – we tend to cover these frames during heavy winter rain so the pots don't get too wet:



As you can see in the photo, we lay them on raised bricks to allow plenty of air flow while still keeping off the rain.

Another task completed ready for winter was to put the sides back on the Elliott House. If you remember, we take these off for the summer to keep the house cooler and get better air flow.



Out on the Rock Garden, weeding is still ongoing with all beds also being given a general tidy up, removing dead leaves etc. Here is Anita and trainee Connor tidying the new carnivorous plant bog:



Potted plants also need a tidy up to remove faded flowers, decaying leaves and the like to avoid the possibility of botrytis setting during the damp autumn days. Here is one of our volunteers, Maureen, giving some plants some loving attention:



The Pleiones lose their leaves at this time of year and I go through these once or twice a week at this time removing the dead leaves. This, and all the other tasks described, will help ensure the plant collections will get through the coming winter with as little trouble as possible.

