

A GARDENER'S LAMENT

I HAVE SOWED AGAIN some of the biennials, and I am at present potting baby wallflowers, sweet williams, pansies etc., to nurse them along until November. Meanwhile we shall have to live on the cowboys diet – beans in tomato sauce and large steaks – but I have never before been hungry for green vegetables!

One more moan, early – I mean April – frosts ruined the strawberries, a holiday in July meant no currants, no raspberries, and that frost I referred to in April meant no apples – what a tail of woe!

So what can we do to alleviate our suffering? Sow kale and cook the leaves, sow hardy spinach beet, or fallow the garden until spring, and hibernate!

Shrubs have suffered but the majority will survive, so just prune the wall roses hard back to two or three buds, clip the lavender back hard because they will give a lot of lush growth when they do get wet, and pray that we may have a dry mild spring and a moist summer. Hot summers may be lovely but we cannot eat hay – and treat the sprouts with reverence, because they will be very scarce.

I started gardening when I was fifteen years old, and with the exception of military service for five years, I have done nothing else, yet never before have I seen gardens in such a sorry state as they are at present.

Seedlings frizzled up in the temperatures in the nineties, potatoes with nothing under them, winter greens almost non-existent, in fact in store is a winter of discontent; discontent because the hours of labour are going to produce almost nothing, and to cap it all, being asked to write a few lines on non-existent horticulture.

The very thought of Christmas minus sprouts and swedes to keep the turkey company borders on the impossible.

To add to the tale of woe, the pheasants I had befriended and fed throughout the winter picked up every pea I sowed, and adding insult to injury, gave an 'encore' performance with the second sowing. I blamed them for no carrots, and having watered the runner beans copiously the moles came and ruined them!

Unfortunately I did not suffer alone, we all suffered similarly, but it still hurts.

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