

## Allotment and Garden Jottings

### Dilly's Diary

*We are delighted to introduce our new gardening correspondent*

Recent weeks have seen the weather warming up, plus longer evenings during which more gardening jobs can be fitted in. Just under a year ago, I took on an allotment ('the plot' from now on) and in this and later articles, selected entries from the gardening diary aim to give a snapshot of some of the labours associated with cultivating it. This first contribution gives a flavour of April's work, which, in a nutshell, involved much digging, potato planting, weeding, feeding and seed-sowing...but read on.

**10 April:** I set about two main tasks. First, in a bid to tame the wild section at the far end of the plot, I lay out a piece of black plastic bought weeks ago. Thankfully, it is a relatively calm day for this: wrestling with metres of plastic sheet in even the slightest breeze can be a challenge. To weight it down, use is made of several wooden bearers and as many stones as possible from the little piles amassed when digging. Next, more potato tubers need planting (these having been left to sprout for some weeks in a cool light place at home). Today the main crop varieties are going in; *Pink Fir Apple* and *King Edward* (my first early *Maris Bard* went in on 1<sup>st</sup> April). A newly-dug patch is used for the PFA while the KE go into another bed nearby that had sprouting broccoli last season.

**13 April:** A crown of *Timperley Early* rhubarb and *Green Globe* artichoke are planted. At the same time, the existing artichokes are weeded and given a feed

of 'blood, fish and bone' fertiliser. Some general digging is done and any emerging dandelions are beheaded. Other assorted perennial weeds are growing vigorously, including lovely blue speedwell and a few patches of nettles which I want to retain.

**22 April:** After a short holiday, am shocked to find that the plot is liberally covered by hundreds of dandelions in full bloom, though none have yet formed 'clocks' with their millions of seeds. While I like these flowers (so do the bees) and the leaves are said to be good in salads, fellow allotmenters may be less charmed, so I spend most of the brief time available today removing dandelion clumps plus some general digging.

**26 April:** More dandelions, so another blitz is needed, after which I feel more in control. The leaves of the first early potatoes are nicely through, and make a mental note to look out for late frosts

**28 April:** Complete the potato planting and sow a couple of rows of radishes (*French Breakfast*) and mixed lettuce leaves along the edges of several beds. Then weed and feed the garlic, which was planted out as cloves in late October, and the winter onions, as well as some broad beans (now in flower) sown in November and grown under fleece. As I finish work, am happy to discover two clumps of marigolds from last year have survived the winter. Then rain stops play!

**Dilly Marigold**

