

## Allotment and Gardening Jottings

### Dilly's Diary

Autumn will be with us as you read this. I'm writing at the end of August, and looking back none too fondly on a summer in which sunshine was lacking and rain over-abundant!

**10 July:** A rare fine morning. After putting in some late-sprouting broccoli plants I fork out a bulb of garlic from last winter's planting; bulb is a good size but the soil is far too wet so decide to leave for a few days. Pick sugar-snap peas, the first courgette, raspberries and several strawberries. Cut four Globe artichokes and allow a picking of a small bunch of orange and yellow marigolds.

#### In July the Sun is Hot?

**13 July:** 'Feeding and Weeding' session, administer blood, fish and bone to leeks, brassicas, beans and onions. Then dig the garlic, which has lovely large purple heads, and leave to dry in the sun; fork over the bed wondering what will go in next. Dig some King Edward potatoes while they are new and smallish. Weed strawberry bed and feed plants.

**21 July:** Take along some *Charlotte* potatoes which have chitted after being left unused in kitchen, decide to plant intending them to be ready for digging at Christmas!

**11 August:** 10 days away in a wet August allows nature to reassert its authority with a fresh surge of meadow grasses. But the copious rain and warmth have brought the crops on, thankfully (!). The continental lettuce is a rash of bright green and dark red frilly leaves; the French climbing beans are well up the canes with pods dangling; and tomatoes

are beginning to appear at last, but will they ripen? It looks as if the sugar-snap peas are almost over, while the leeks have begun to add girth. The *Charlotte* potatoes are through. Various brassicas are much leafier though some have succumbed to pecking by birds, snails and slugs.



#### August is a Wicked Month

Some of the chard is bolting while the two pumpkins don't appear to have moved on. As I look beneath the large, prickly-leaved courgette plants there are quite a few fruits including several which have exploded into marrows despite my having removed all small ones before going on holiday. More raspberries have appeared (though a neighbour advises the birds had a feast in my absence!). The purple and magenta *Matucana* sweet-peas, which were very late going in, and didn't look likely to do much, have burst into flower and I pick a bunch to keep them coming.

**16 August:** Dig most of the KE potatoes before they become too large, then fork through an overgrown bed. Pick some lettuce leaves and small bunch of chard.

**24 August:** Harvest the small crop of onions which is not as good as last year's. Strawberry bed is overgrown again so weed and pin down new plants from the runners. After a picnic lunch, watching the swallows elegantly swooping across the field, I resume work digging a small patch of *Pink Fir Apple* potatoes (elongated tubers with a waxy texture). Make a mental note to sow spinach, chard and leaf lettuce before Autumn sets in.

**Dilly Marigold.**