

## Allotment and Garden Jottings

### Dilly's Diary

*As the New Year (2009) beckons, it has to be said that November and December proved to be a rather fallow period as regards developments at the plot. Not least, the digging programme is behind schedule. But there is success with Paperwhite bulbs planted at home for Christmas, and plenty of food for thought as the new season approaches and seed-sowing plans loom into view...*

**16 Nov:** Late morning visit to plot as drizzly rain sets in. Most of the garlic (planted in October) has not sprouted yet; hope it has not rotted off and that roots are going down. Some of the winter onions do have little green shoots though, which is encouraging. Dig the *Charlotte* potatoes originally intended for Christmas, and turn over the soil in the cleared patch ready for future use. Cut several small cabbages and dig up some leeks for cooking in a stew later.

**25 Dec:** At home on Christmas morning, discover that the *Paperwhite* narcissi bulbs are coming into bloom. These were bought in October but remained unplanted in their brown bag in the cool kitchen until early December when shoots were already appearing. These indoor subjects were potted up in moist compost leaving the tops of the bulbs exposed and surrounded by horticultural grit and left in a cool, light, window. On transferring to a warmer location, the flowers yield their wonderful scent and the stems grow taller.

**26 Dec:** A sparkling, cold, Boxing Day morning, ideal for a reconnaissance visit

to the plot. The garlic and winter onions are sporting bright green shoots now. The various brassicas - which have not been covered with nets, leaving them exposed to feasting birds - are doing well, except for the sprouts. Several patches of leeks look splendid but must leave digging some up until next time. Globe artichokes have produced a flush of silvery leaves which should probably be protected by fleece or straw against

the increasingly cold and frosty weather. Clumps of marigolds are still in leaf and I wonder if these will survive again into the spring as they did in last year's much milder conditions.



**31 Dec:** Freezing cold hoar frost today! Before year-end celebrations get under way, spend a happy hour taking stock of numerous varieties of seeds intended to have been tried out last season but which were passed over amid adverse cold and wet conditions. Ten or so are singled out which must definitely be put into production in 2009. These include a so-called Asparagus Pea (from Thompson & Morgan) which is ornamental (red flowers) as well as edible and apparently very easy to grow (!); Italian Kale (Taste of Italy) that can be used for small summer salad leaves or as a winter vegetable; an old lettuce variety called *Merveille de Quatre Saisons*; Winter Savory, a perennial thyme-flavoured herb; and *Red Giant* Mustard, a cut and come salad leaf (these last three from Sarah Raven).

Await further reports to see if these come to fruition!

**Dilly Marigold**