

Allotment and Gardening Jottings

Dilly's Diary

The hedgerows sprang into life in late March, and the latter part of April saw the fresh green foliage unfurling, along with the return of the swallows. Summer beckons!

2nd Mar: Not sure where to start. Fork over several beds used last year which have become weedy over the winter. Find that the rhubarb I'd presumed lost after the snow and ice was coming through. Aerate soil around the two gooseberry bushes and blackcurrant and add a little fertiliser. Ditto the raspberries (though am not sure if they have survived). Put a section of black plastic down and weed herb bed.

Using last of the 2008 garlic crop (planted autumn 2007). Sow sweet peas into compost-filled loo and kitchen roll tubes arranged in small cardboard boxes. The tubes give a good root run and can be planted directly into soil. Sow a tray of carrots after last year's sowings into the ground failed miserably. Shoulder injury curtails digging activity over coming weeks but I do what I can!

21st Mar: The lovely warmer weather has brought on the purple sprouting, ready for picking: The birds have been kind! (I don't net the plants). Also harvest a few leeks. On 22nd I prepare two small beds, raised a little to give good drainage, for onions/shallots. Allow small cushions of purslane, with its delicate white lacy flowers and spiky foliage, to thrive in several spots. Omitted winter sowing of *Aquadulce* broad beans and buy some loose *Sutton's* seed, about two dozen of which I soak overnight prior to sowing in trays. Also sow some chard in a bid to get an earlier start than direct sowing at the plot.



4-5th Apr: First broad beans and chard shoots appear and the rhubarb has enough small red stems to pull. Raspberry foliage has emerged. Plant a dozen first early (*Maris Bard*) potatoes on patch used for garlic last year. Put in a few savoy cabbage plants, bought locally, unaware of a coming overnight frost. Why didn't I put fleece over?

8-11th Apr: Dandelion time! Not as profuse as last year but they do spring up quickly. More MB to plant (I bought too many!) and main crop potatoes are waiting. Sow a few radishes on borders of beds. Prepare small beds for carrot seedlings and broad beans. At home, sow asparagus peas unused from last year and leave in warm place to germinate. The peas are already sprouting. Dig new bed at top end of plot from under plastic, soil quite heavy/clayey: amazed at variation of soil over small area. Put in *King Edward* potatoes. Sow leaf lettuce and radishes. Another dandelion blitz but on return from a few days away find plot smothered again. Put in broad beans. MB potatoes show. Plant out chard plantlets which have probably spent too long languishing in seed house. Put in small tray of broad beans bought at market stall. Last picking of purple sprouting, dig several of remaining leeks, pull rhubarb. Encouraged to find the swallows have returned, bees, ladybirds and earthworms abound.

Dilly Marigold