

Allotment and Garden Jottings

Dilly's Diary

After the somewhat lacklustre period of high summer, September and October proved to be primarily warm, dry and sunny, lifting spirits and keeping things growing. As November beckons, thoughts turn to the prospect of colder weather.

The show's the thing!

Surprisingly, all five entries to the local flower, vegetable and craft show on **5th September** achieved 2nd or 3rd prize certificates: garlic, shallots, 'sungold' cherry tomatoes, culinary herbs (sage, rosemary, peppermint) and yes, pot marigolds (!) All except the peppermint and tomatoes were grown at the plot, though none with the intention of being exhibited. Other possible entries were abandoned for various reasons: the Pink Fir Apple potatoes were rather small while the King Edwards had patches of scab (later diggings were mainly scab-free, however); onions were also set aside owing to their necks being too thick. Selecting the required two heads of garlic proved difficult, despite a good crop, because the outer skins of many were not entire, and finding six tomatoes (pot-grown at home) of the same size with calices intact was no easy matter. Freshness is key for herbs and marigolds so these were picked on show morning.

Azores High

9th Sept: Azores High brings a spell of lovely weather. Visit plot in mid-afternoon forking out a patch of shallots overlooked previously, and set to dry. Then dig a few more potatoes and cut one of the bright orange winter squash (what to do with it? For now it looks good near the kitchen window). Pick handful of late climbing beans. Three small patches of leeks are the main crop

coming on. After digging a few more potatoes on another warm afternoon, one of the beds is used to put in winter onion sets, first adding chicken-manure pellets to soil. **27th Sept:** to plot on a warm, bright morning. Clear small bed of

asparagus peas and prepare it for red winter onions. Ground is dry, around 27 days without significant rainfall, so line each planting row with a little moist peat-free compost. Water leeks. Despite lack of rain, some cabbages stripped by caterpillars seem to be growing leaves.



Perfect October Days

10th Oct: The dark purple sweet peas have revived with a few to pick. Cut two more winter squash (perhaps time for soup?) Spend most of the time forking through a bed where broad beans were, ready for more winter onions, but decide it would be better for the garlic. Extract a few potatoes and first leek.

18th Oct: Cooler now but bright, calm morning, ideal to plant garlic. Put in five of the six bulbs, a bit laborious splitting into cloves, but satisfying. Feed brassicas, now all in revival mode, dig last potatoes. Recent frost has stopped tender subjects (make mental note to protect globe artichokes soon).

26th Oct: Glorious colours on a perfect autumn morning. Winter onions put in a while ago have small shoots, plant remaining sets and garlic, harvest last winter squash.

Dilly Marigold