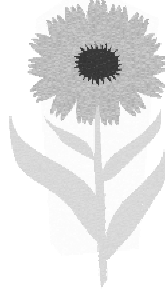


Allotment and Garden Jottings

Dilly's Diary

The diary is looking a little thin as I write at the end of February. Deep snow and icy conditions made most of January unworkable at the plot. Snowdrops had not appeared in the garden until the final days of the month but were in profusion through February with daffodils starting to push through and the delightful creamy-white crocus with pale yellow centres ('Snow bunting') in flower in pots responding to the longer daylight hours and slightly improved warmth.



Rosemary for Remembrance

A first visit of the year to the plot on **17th January**: a benign sunny morning after the first waves of snow and ice had cleared (temporarily!) to reveal the Wolds around glowing a soft green in the winter sunlight. Here to collect some rosemary for a friend who requested it for inclusion in a funeral wreath (Rosemary is for remembrance). Despite the near arctic conditions of recent months, this Mediterranean plant has come through unscathed and continues to release its wonderful energising perfume. A number of larger stems have buds that will flower mauve-blue soon.

By the **end of February** there has been little progress with work at the plot. The ground is very wet and digging plans are in abeyance. Much needs to be done - clearing couch grass and perennial weeds to bring tracts of ground which were unused last year into production. The several patches of leeks with their grey-green spear-like foliage are a cheery sight. Garlic and winter onions appear to be

doing fine although the frost has opened up the soil giving it a cracked surface which alliums allegedly are not supposed to favour. Fat buds are appearing on the lone blackcurrant bush (the two gooseberry bushes look less advanced) and the birds have stripped the brassicas again! The rosemary is in bloom and the sage with its ovate, leathery leaves has survived along with an artichoke.

An Envelope Full of Promise

By this time last year, First Early potatoes already had been bought and put to chit in egg boxes in a cool, light place. Resolve to address this omission. The local Groves' garden department is now stocking seed potatoes and I may try a different variety (Duke of York and Foremost are on offer along with several Second Early and Maincrops). I only recently opened the large envelope containing the seed order from Thompson and Morgan obtained via our allotments and garden association (MUWAGA) at a discount last November. Among the innovations being tried this year are: a white-flowered runner bean *White Lady* advertised as being "undisturbed by birds"; cucumber *Boothby's Blonde* of US provenance that is supposed to do well outdoors; watercress which is supposedly easy to grow in containers and a dwarf stringless bean *Opera*. Among the flowers, there are several kinds of sweet peas including *Night and Day* and a rose-coloured scrambler which I am getting ready to soak overnight prior to sowing. Horrified to discover that the Lavender *Munstead Dwarf* may take 1 to 5 months to germinate!

Dilly Marigold