

Allotment and Garden Jottings

Dilly's Diary

Each year presents a different gardening challenge! The prolonged winter and cool, dry spring has delayed work on the plot, with planting and sowing running behind schedule in March. The lengthening, and brighter days through April encourage action...

12 March: Finally set Foremost 1st early and Kind Edward maincrop potatoes to chit in egg boxes in light/cool kitchen window area; shoots have already begun to appear while they are in the bag!

21 March: Clearance of dried grasses and perennial weeds from plot. Fork through a bed which had brassicas last time: lovely soil now; then unravel covering of black plastic warming a patch and keeping weeds at bay in readiness for planting shortly. Potatoes, shallots and onion sets are waiting to go in. Some of the winter-planted onions haven't come through the snow and ice but most of the garlic has tallish green shoots. Fork around gooseberry and blackcurrant bushes and add chicken-manure pellets, hoping this will boost fruiting.

27/28 March: A friend brings leftover Rocket 1st earlys and Picasso maincrop potatoes: a reminder that more digging needs to be done! The next day take some of 1st earlys to plot and plant out. The rhubarb has not yet appeared. I fear it may have succumbed to the icy winter. Dig several leeks.

April Brings Bees and Butterflies

8 April: Decide to buy a couple of young rhubarb plants to replace ones thought lost. But surprised to find both original plants have sprung up with abundant pink stems! Plant out red onion sets which have been waiting for several weeks. Then fork through last year's garlic bed ready for potato planting.

10 April: Plant new rhubarb in unused corner of potato bed, then prepare patch for shallots and put these in. Weed and feed garlic and surviving winter onions.

Bees and butterflies hover around now that the weather is warmer.

15 April: Deliver several small bags of good compost, main crop potatoes and new raspberry canes (which came a week ago). Put compost around fruit bushes then turn attention to herb bed which needs weeding and forking through. Extract teasel plants (saving one or two) and pot some up for 'wildlife gardeners'. Also transplant a few other wild things such as speedwell and purslane. Put in some large daisies I've been given.

Busy Week

19-25 April: Busy week, weather warmer again and dandelions are rife: I remove as many as possible but like to leave some as notice bees and other insects are attracted. Dig out more beds for potatoes, raspberries and onions. Harvest leeks and purple sprouting (one plant survived the winter and has produced lovely spears). Plant 10 raspberry canes, the early variety, Glen Cova (though will not have fruit this year), six in a bed with a gooseberry bush and four with the blackcurrant, using spare space in the middle to sow radish and spinach. Put in rest of 1st early potatoes and notice the earliest plantings are already showing through so draw up some soil around these in case of frost.

Dilly Marigold

