

## Allotment and Garden Jottings

### Dilly's Diary

*Conditions move quickly on from the residual warmth of September. Frosts arrive soon after mid-October, bringing both the demise of tender plants and glorious autumn colour. The changing of the clocks at the end of the month ushers in the short winter days...*

**12 Sept:** Late morning visit to the plot. It is sunny with high clouds and subtropical air keeps the warmth going. There are still some runner beans for picking and a few yellow courgettes from the late planting. Also fork up a few King Edward potatoes: these seem to be the variety happiest on this soil, with their pink blushes and creamy texture (though a little floury when cooked). Am amazed at the differences in tuber size in the short rows some large enough for baking, others rather small (I use these up quickly, skins on, after scrubbing, as new potatoes).

Brassicas are mostly intact and look as if they will make it through the coming winter though a number of plants have been decimated by "wildlife". Weed out leek beds, plants still fairly small. Strawberry patch is becoming severely overgrown and needs more drastic surgery (no time this visit!). In afternoon at home pick ripe golden tomatoes from pots in a sunny sheltered site at bottom of garden.

#### **Cleaning Mother-in-Law's Tongue**

**25 Sept:** Northerly airstream, nights are getting colder, plant growth slowing. Pick last few outdoor tomatoes, courgettes, and small prickly yellow cucumbers from a grow bag.

**1 Oct:** Unusually, it rains *all* day, but it is warm. Take the opportunity to put all houseplants outdoors, including a large, 29 year old 'Mother-in-Law's Tongue', to clean and refresh before winter sets in

(and allow removal of spider webs and dust indoors!).

**10 Oct:** Cloudy late morning at plot but sun emerges and it turns glorious, the surrounding landscape looks softly golden in the autumn light. Weeds have exploded after recent wet weather; leek patch has to be cleaned up again. Discover a few sweet peas (purple, white) still flowering with delicious perfume (pick for small vase in kitchen), and notice broad bean plants (from May/June) in flower too.



#### **Tender is the Night or Not?**

**21 Oct:** Frosts have shrivelled the remaining tender plants (courgettes and beans) and given notice that winter is fast approaching. Arrive at plot on a bright afternoon, having brought along pink-skin garlic and winter onion sets (bought loose some weeks ago) for planting: the race is on to get these in as will be away for ten days from end of October. After transplanting some large borage plants, still in full bloom with their tiny blue star shaped flowers attracting late season bees, I prepare a square patch for garlic where KE potatoes were before, and put in about 30 garlic cloves about 1 inch deep and 4 inches apart. Garlic apparently likes a frosty period in its early stages. With late afternoon shadows lengthening, fork through another patch for the onion sets and mark out three shallow (1 inch deep) channels with trowel and put bulbs in. A few pot marigolds are still in bloom!

#### **Dilly Marigold**