

## Allotment and Garden Jottings

### Dilly's Diary

*The second half of August had a distinctly autumnal feel with trees already showing golden or reddish tints and the vigour of many plants diminishing. As I write, the Met Office has pronounced this to have been among the worst-ever summers. For most gardeners this has brought mixed results. But this is all part of the yearly challenge!*

#### Drama at the plot

**10 July:** At plot on a humid, sunny, late morning. Meadow grasses are swaying in unused parts of the allotment field having grown taller after the deluge of rain two days ago. Fork up winter onions. The crop is not large, but 'small is beautiful'. Dig last of the Maris Bard 1<sup>st</sup> earlies; recent rain has helped to swell the tubers and some are near baking size. Plant out small tray of early purple-sprouting, kale and a few surplus courgette plants. Also put in Savoy cabbages and embark on planting last tray of sugar-snap peas.

Concentration is suddenly broken by an increasingly loud buzzing apparently just above where I am kneeling. Gazing up, see a large cloud of black flying insects: a swarm of bees immediately overhead. The swarm dallies for a while, taking no notice of me, before suddenly flying off up the field. Continue with the pea planting (always fiddly extracting them from the individual growing cells), but a few minutes later bees return and settle once again over the plot. Clear away quickly and depart for home, soon observe swarm moving to a nearby tree.

**11 July:** After previous day's drama settle for potting up otherwise unused outdoor cucumber and tomato plants in large pots at bottom of garden.

**30 July:** Brief visit to plot to dig remaining short row of Foremost 1<sup>st</sup>

earlies for dinner. Also find a good picking of sugar-snap and mange-tout peas which have survived the often windy conditions and irregular rainfall.

Cabbages and kale have put on new growth, water some that are flagging. Snip golden oregano, thyme and a few sprigs of rosemary.

**3 August:** At bottom of garden, delighted to find two small (prickly yellow) cucumbers ready to pick from grow bag also the yellow courgettes (in pots) are beginning to fruit.

**8 August:** More cucumbers, and the pot grown runner beans and French climbing beans are starting to crop responding to regular watering and feeding. Trusses of small (outdoor) tomatoes have appeared but will they ever ripen?

#### The Fickle Charms of Borage

**10 August:** Having foolishly allowed self-seeded borage with its charming blue flowers to remain in the garlic bed at plot, finding the garlic bulbs is difficult after the foliage disappeared. Rescue some bulbs, which are usable but will not store for long. Harvest white and red onions along with shallots and a few volunteer King Edward potatoes.

**26 August:** While produce is far from abundant, able to take away a selection of beans, courgettes, cucumbers, onions, garlic and herbs for use in holiday-time cooking!

**Dilly Marigold**

