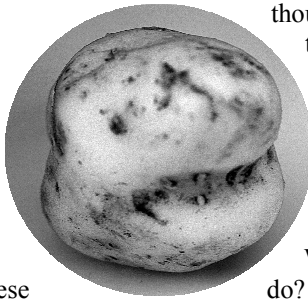


## Special Feature

# Potato Wilt and Other Disasters

It was my first year as sole gardener and I was doing everything by the book. If the book said plant your vegetable seeds during the hardest frost; do not water your plants in a drought; on no account take into account soil type or actual weather conditions - then I followed these instructions to the letter. Plant potatoes on Good Friday, said the books, so I planted them on Good Friday which fell in March. It was a warm spring, so to begin with they did well, pushing hopeful green leaves busily through, and growing sturdily when I'd earthed them up.



thought, "I think you have to tell the Ministry of Agriculture." (You can tell it was a while ago, because we still had a Min of Ag)

### Harbouring a Killer

What would the Ministry do? Would they come round and fumigate my whole precious garden? Would I be charged with harbouring lethal crop killers? Would I be responsible for world famine?

With shaky fingers I got as far as looking up the Ministry telephone number (we still had proper telephone directories and people on the other end of telephones then) but not as far as ringing them. Finally about 6.15p.m., still feeling shaky and sick, I drove home. I didn't go down the garden immediately. Why would I, when I already knew how terrible it looked. I listened to the 7p.m. news on the radio, then the brief weather forecast, "There might be another frost but not as severe as the one last night."

For several moments I paused in my carrot grating and tomato slicing - my hand suspended in mid-air, my mouth half open. *Not* Potato Wilt then? *Not* a notifiable problem about which the Ministry of Agriculture would bring the full force of the law swooping down on me? All that near panic for a June frost.

**Catherine Hitchens**

### Potato Heads from Space?

Then came the lovely June morning, when before setting off for work I went to look at my vegetables and found my cherished potatoes a blackened and slimy mess. Horror gripped me. What could have happened? Had enemy aliens landed in the night and blitzed my potato patch prior to taking over the earth? Had my garden suddenly become the target of huge slugs and snails? I worried all the way in to the office and was distracted through the morning and bitterly upset. My beautiful potatoes, which I'd been so looking forward to eating, were all gone. About 11a.m. I made myself a cup of coffee and a further panic struck me. "I believe it is 'Potato Wilt,' I suddenly

## A Good Night Out

**Friday 17th February 2012** at the New Beaconsfield Hall Shipton ***A Good Night Out*** presents *Cate Cody sings The Great American Song Book*. Put a note in your diary for what promises to be a wonderful

evening of classic 30's Jazz. Tickets will be £12 to include Supper. More details will be in the December edition of *The Wychwood*.

**Gordon Halliday: 01993 831134**