

Allotment and Garden Jottings

Dilly's Diary

After a lacklustre summer the autumn has been glorious (mainly) with a minor heat-wave for a few days in early October. As the month drew to a close the last of the outdoor tomatoes were harvested (no significant frost yet!) and petunias still in bloom

4 Sept: Return from brief holiday to find (thanks to the watering endeavours of a friend) welcome further small crop of climbing and runner beans, a few more cucumbers and courgettes and tomatoes in ripening mode, all in pots or grow bags at bottom of garden.

9 Sept: At the plot, cabbages, kale and sprouting seems to be surviving despite the rather dry conditions lately, and so far these have largely escaped the attentions of cabbage white butterflies and pigeons. The leeks are not doing well though but not tempted to water, hoping rain will come soon.

Experimenting with Florence

22 Sept: Having read an article back in June which advocated sowing Florence fennel after midsummer (as it prefers warmer conditions to have settled in) had begun an 'experiment' during July, sowing seeds in sectioned trays. By now, the resulting plantlets with their bright green fronds had languished for some time. With the autumn Equinox nigh and the recent warmer weather holding on, decide to put the young plants into several large pots to see how they develop so late in the season. Harvest rest of the beans and am pleased that the tomatoes are ripening well in the balmy conditions.

25 Sept: To plot to dig the last of the potatoes: King Eddies and Pink Firs. Tubers are not large, but delicious. Fork over beds ready for future plantings. Brassicas coming on, borage still sporting their deep blue flowers and attracting late

season bees. Resolve that strawberry patch needs drastic measures, preferably starting afresh with new stock and relocating any viable young runners.

30 Sept: Spell of gloriously warm (mid-20s) sunny weather - the summer days we hardly encountered in the season proper.

This is good for ripening the last tomatoes: have taken precaution of putting fleece over them in case of frosty nights soon.

A Blooming October

5 Oct: Buy a few Paperwhite narcissi for Christmas flowering; and some winter onion sets... Make mental note to secure garlic bulbs soon for planting out late October/early November.

23 Oct: Recent health glitch has delayed horticultural activities (and may do so for a while yet). But able to perform some tasks in the late autumn sun. Extract trial small fennel plant: lots of feather foliage for garnish and use in salads, while the tender stems and small bulb with delicate aniseed taste can be used when cooking fish and stews.

As October draws to a close, thanks to the warm autumn many subjects are still blooming in the garden especially the climbing roses (Zephrine Drouhin, Madame Alfred Carriere), while in patio pots there are petunias, pelargoniums and fuschias, not to mention the bright pot marigolds by the kitchen door.

Dilly Marigold

