

09/01/04 - Jobs for the month (September 2004)

1. Well, who said sweet corn was a trouble free crop? Spoken much too soon! Our own site version of 'Big Bird' namely pigeons, magpies and crows have stripped whole blocks of sweet corn cobs right down to the core. It's very neatly done. They peel back the wrapping leaves and work down the cob. Chairman Paul thought a small deer had eaten his entire crop, but the real culprits had been seen in action, flying in five or six at a time to dine with company. What is the answer? Well, we could pick earlier before some kernels peep over the top of the wrapping and give the clue to our feathered friends. The biggest block of corn on site (about one sixth of an allotment) was largely untouched. Was this because a cat or fox had good cover to lie in ambush? So, is it plant more? Net? Better scarecrows? You have all winter to contemplate!
2. The overwintering onion sets are now in the shops. Definitely worth a go!
3. Spring onions can be planted now and will overwinter too.
4. Swiss chard ditto, and winter varieties of lettuce such as 'Artic King' or 'Winter Density'.
5. Lots of ploholders are planting the overwintering broad bean 'Aquadulce' which gives an early crop next spring.
6. Most onion crops have already been lifted and stored. Do it as soon as possible if yours are still in the ground. They need to be dried off before storing. A good method of storage is 'stringing'. Have a central string (baler twine is ideal), plait the dry onion tops into this and hang them up in a frost free, dry place. Then when you need one you can cut it off without the whole lot unravelling.
7. Maincrop potatoes need lifting now. They come under renewed slug attack now when left in the ground. If you are storing them they need to be dry and perfect so inspect carefully. Store in hessian or strong paper bags which will keep out light but let them breathe. Small potatoes can be a nuisance. You must pick them all up otherwise they grow next spring. They could be carrying disease and they will interfere with your rows of seedlings. Don't put them in the compost. They grow there too! On the farm they would be thrown to the hens or pigs. After seeing a friend paying good money for what the supermarket had euphemistically labelled 'baby potatoes', I realised there was an easy disposal solution. You too could have friends who value these rejects! Most potato haulms (stalks) are affected by blight

so don't compost them. They should be burnt! Our best cropping potato ? heavy yield, good blight resistance, almost slug free - SPEY.

8. Those of us who are ahead of the game could be cutting out old canes from the summer fruiting raspberries, loganberries etc. The rest of us think we've got all winter to do it! If you are planning on planting any of the 'vine' soft fruit such as loganberries, don't buy them. Walk round the site and find a plot with them growing. When the plothead has a big tidy up, lots of stray canes are found to be rooted and need to be pulled out. I'm sure most would happily give you some to pot up and bring on ready for planting out in the spring. Just ask!

9. Jostaberries, which are a blackcurrant/gooseberry cross, root easily. If you cut a stem and poke it in the ground it will grow. There are several on site. Just ask!

10. It's a good time to take strawberry runners and plant up a new bed. Don't buy any. Find a plothead with strawberries. It's a good bet their strawberry bed is overrun with unwanted runners. Just ask!