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CORONA-YOUR-OWN

Helping you to get organic growing despite the disruption
e-Newsletter 3 10 April 2020

Welcome

It looks like lockdown is going to continue for a while yet – fortunately the weather is perfect for getting outside to prepare for a bumper crop of veg and fruit (hopefully!).

What do now

If, like me, you missed Monty Don presenting Gardeners' World last week (he is due back on 17 April) then you might like to take a look at his tips for what to do in April on his website <https://www.montydon.com/tips-and-advice/april>. I think we can safely say it is April now – the weather has caught up with the calendar.

Some tips from Ann, who is cleaning her greenhouse – she says its a good time to clean the glass, sweep the debris, relocate the undesirables and have a general tidy before the seedling take over.

Seeds

It was inevitable, after the unbelievably wet winter, that there is no rain on the horizon. Water seeds, whether in the ground or in seed trays, enough to keep them moist but not saturated.

Charles Dowding is a commercial grower who has been using “no dig” organic methods to grow vegetables for decades. There is a lot of useful info on his website and, if you are bored, videos to watch! This might be of particular interest to new growers <https://charlesdowding.co.uk/sowing-timeline-for-vegetables/>

No, its not a Foreign Secretary!

I've just unearthed a packet of raab seeds (a bit like a green sprouting broccoli). I grew some late last year and it's overwintered like purple sprouting - I've been picking it for weeks now. It says on the packet it will produce useable greens in 60 days, so I'm going to sow some now and see what I get in 60 days' time.

Babington leeks

I've become interested in perennial veg over the past couple of years (you might have noticed I'm in favour of 'minimal effort' gardening). Many moons ago, a fellow HEOG member (I think it was Barry) gave me some Babington leek seedlings. These are a British native plant and perennial, and taste like a garlicky leek, so all good. I grew them on my allotment off Northumberland Road for some years. Before I left the allotment, I dug up some globe artichoke offsets (only took the use of a pick axe, bush saw and spade, and several hours of effort to do that) and found an abandoned Babington leek plant.



From that plant I now have several established plants, in the garden and on the new allotment, as well as many bulbils harvested last summer. Some of these I Freecycled earlier in the year – the rest I planted in seed tray cells and they are all coming through now. When we are out of lockdown, I will let you know so that anyone interested can come and pick up a few.

Containers

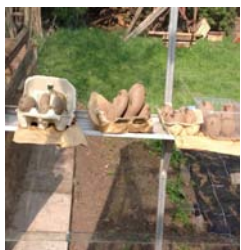
It is a good idea to check containers for vine weevils, particularly if any plants have unexpectedly died or are looking unhealthy. These are nasty little critters – small, cream coloured, look like a small caterpillar - which live in the soil/compost and eat plant roots. I found them in a tub of strawberry plants which were looking very sorry for themselves. Destroy any you find and remove as much soil as possible before immersing roots in water (not sure if they drown, but it will help wash off more potentially bug-harboured compost). Repot in fresh compost and keep your fingers crossed! I've read that diatomaceous earth can be used to control them, but I'm not quite sure how that would work.

Greenhouse time line

HEOG member, Julia is going to do regular updates on work in her greenhouse over the growing season.

The plan is for a crop of tomatoes, various varieties and a few strawberries. The young strawberry plants were grown bio-dynamically last summer at the rooftop micro-farm in Birmingham, The Hive, so we must look after these, and we have high hopes. In the meantime the seed potatoes from Potato Day are chitting in the egg boxes on the little shelf. The eagle-eyed amongst you may have spotted the 5-tine restored garden fork. The best fork ever! Today we have undersown radish, spring onion and lettuce to see if we can snatch an early salad crop before the tomatoes take over. However, the other side of the greenhouse . . . needs some work.

Equally exciting, after 20 years of gradual collapse the compost bin has been replaced and is raring to go. In the background is the 30 yr-old des. res. hen-house, restored this winter in anticipation of new residents. Watch this space . . .



COOK-YOUR-OWN

We have added seasonal recipes for:

[Roast rhubarb with honey \(and variations\)](#), [Wild garlic and nettle tip soup](#) and [Hot cross buns](#) (courtesy of Julia) to the Resources page on our website for you all to use <https://rps.qn.apc.org/organic/resources.htm>. Continue to send in your seasonal/store cupboard recipes and we will add them.

POSTSCRIPT

Feedback from our readers is important, so if you have ideas, news or tips you would like to share, please let us know.

If you have any questions related to organic growing which you think our members might be able to answer, let us know and we will try to include the questions and replies in our next newsletter.

One final question – are there any new growers reading this?

You can contact us at enews@heog.org.uk .

Gillian McGivern