



Bishop's Waltham Gardening Club

AUGUST 2026

Let's talk about Christmas..."oh no", I hear you say... yes, I am even earlier than the Garden Centres!!!!



But there is a reason.... With our -supposed- warmer climate, growing potatoes for Christmas now seems a reasonable idea. O.K., we do stand the risk of a heavy frost clobbering them but surely it's worth a go. It seems that 'Charlotte' is an excellent variety.

Happy Christmas!!!!!! Pssst... what do you think of our new logo???

The RHS says....

"The taste of tiny, tender new potatoes need not be restricted to summer. With a little bit of skill and good timing, they can also be grown for autumn and winter harvests, meaning you could enjoy them at Christmas", so who am I to argue? They continue....

Use cold-stored potato tubers, available from specialist seed merchants in July and August. These are seed potatoes from late winter that have been held back ready for summer planting. First and second early varieties such as 'Charlotte', 'Nicola' and 'Maris Peer' are recommended. As these will go straight into warm soil, they do not need to be chitted prior to planting. N.B. **Potatoes harvested in summer** and then replanted will not produce tubers for winter as they go through a long period of dormancy after harvest. Most early potatoes take about 12 weeks from planting to cropping.

Potatoes planted outside in the ground in **midsummer** should grow and form tubers before the first frosts in autumn, especially in sheltered gardens in the south.

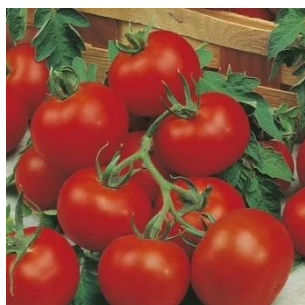
Where there is a frost-free greenhouse, cool conservatory or bright porch, potatoes **can be planted in late August/early September** for harvesting at Christmas.

How to grow potatoes outdoors for Christmas harvests

1. Follow instructions for [growing potatoes](#), including planting them in a trench and earthing them up as they begin to grow.
2. Take measures to protect against [potato blight](#) and [slugs](#).
3. Once foliage dies down in September or October, remove and compost it.
4. On light soils in a sheltered garden, piling some earth up over the row where you know the potatoes are and covering it with straw to insulate tubers may be sufficient protection to store them in the ground until Christmas.
5. In cold areas, or where soils are wet and heavy, it is better to lift tubers by the end of October and re-bury them in coarse sand or soil in a frost-free place (such as a garden shed) until you need them.

6. Lifting and storing potatoes in the fridge, or in bags in a cool shed, is possible but will cause the skins to harden and the desirable, delicate 'new-potato' flavour and texture will be lost.

Of course, you can grow them indoors but that's beyond my remit, I feel.



It's a fact!! You may know that storing tomatoes in the fridge is not a good idea. Now science has proved the point! At temps lower than 12c (54f) there is a molecular reaction which causes them to lose their flavour. That's why those shop-bought ones are tasteless as they are usually kept in cold conditions. Sorry, Mr Tesco at al...!! That's why your own home-grown ones, picked and eaten straight away taste so good.

You beauties! Mr Fothergill's crop (www.mr-fothergills.co.uk) how can we resist?

Fennel Facts



Sow some Fennel this month. The bulbs swell slowly and don't look too great, but it's always worth growing as a winter crop. Plants are delicious when small but leave them to grow on and they will swell through the coming weeks and make good sized bulbs. The leaves are a tasty addition to winter salads, too.

Best for Bees. It is reported that allotments are ideal places for Bees. I guess the variety of crops that need pollination is the reason. So, enjoy your crops and help Nature. Sadly, our parks and roadsides need much more effort to attract out vital Bee population. Let 'improvement' Bee the Buzzword???



As Gardeners World states.....Although the weather can be hot and dry in August, there are still crops and flowers you can plant. On the vegetable patch, sowing and planting out now will keep your cropping season going. The best things to plant in August include veg that will give you short-term harvests, such as salad leaves and spinach, as well as those that can overwinter and provide early crops in late winter and spring, such as winter cabbages, broad beans and garlic.

When I write in advance, it is impossible to forecast the weather – the Met Office has banned me from using my dried seaweed (it's the same variety as theirs!!!) but with warm weather, the water table is probably lower which will mean you must keep up the watering regime, especially those hanging baskets and water-hungry plants such as tomatoes, cucumbers and other members of the cucurbit family. It's so easy to forget one vital item, and that's to FEED the plants. However, never feed on dry soil it can actually damage the plants. Water on moist soil and see the benefits.

Dead-heading is another important item for flower growers and this will keep your plants blooming until late summer or even autumn. It is suggested that you leave a few seed heads for the birds.

ON WITH THE (annual) SHOW!!!

After surely another very successful day, it's time to look back and reflect on all the efforts made to produce such an excellent show. Our grateful thanks go to all on the Show Committee and the helpers on the day. Our website www.bwgc.org.uk will show the winners of the many categories and thanks to all those who entered produce and exhibits. Thanks, also to the 'Soberton Strummers' who, once again, added congeniality to the proceedings and to 'Cupcake Culture' for showing the skills of decorating those delicious cakes! You will have seen from the brochure that, once again, our local Estate Agents, **PEARSONS** have kindly supported and promoted our show and we really do appreciate their continued support including the trophy for the 'Most Fragrant Rose' which they kindly donate each year.

Plans are already underway for next year, with new ideas and thoughts from this year.

Confused.com ???? I certainly am! Consider these two statements against the article on Page 2....**With the hot (and often hotter) weather with us, it's a puzzle regarding where to store those goodies from your plot. As usual, the Internet provides the answer. Or does it?? Compare these two statements....**



Fully ripe tomatoes are best stored in the refrigerator if you can't eat them immediately. Refrigeration slows down degradation and preserves flavour and texture better than leaving tomatoes at room temperature in warm conditions. **Why do they say not to refrigerate tomatoes?** Standard wisdom dictates that ripe tomatoes shouldn't be refrigerated. In theory, this is

because cold kills their flavor-producing enzymes and ruins their texture by causing cells to rupture. **How long can tomatoes be**

unrefrigerated?

Fresh, ripe tomatoes will last from two to five days on the counter at room temperature. A refrigerated ripe tomato can last up to two weeks. Cut tomatoes only last in a cool fridge for a day or two. Well, what to make of those? One says the fridge improves the flavour and the other says the enzymes are killed. So, is it back, to trial and error? Maybe cold tomatoes don't taste so good, but will leaving them in a warm room for a short while take away that cold feeling and improve the taste that way.

Leafy green vegetables — Greens such as lettuce, collards, chard, kale and spinach should be stored loosely in the refrigerator. Onion family — Store garlic and onions in a

cool, dark and dry space but separate from ethylene producers such as potatoes.

Mushrooms — Keep unwashed in the refrigerator.

Perhaps the definitive advice should come from www.heart.org ?

FRUIT

- **Apples** — Apples produce ethylene gas, so store them away from other produce. They can be stored on the counter for up to a week or in the fridge for more than a week.
- **Berries** — Blueberries, blackberries, strawberries and raspberries are delicate and should not be washed until ready to eat. Keep in the refrigerator in dry, covered containers.
- **Melons** — Store cantaloupe and honeydew loose in the refrigerator, even before they're cut. Watermelon can be kept in a dark, dry place away from other produce. Keep cut melon in the fridge.
- **Stone fruit** — Keep nectarines, peaches and plums in a paper bag on the counter until they are ripe, then move them to the refrigerator where they'll last a few more days.
- **Tomatoes** — Store at room temperature and they can last for one to two weeks. Keep loose in a bowl away from the sun.

VEGETABLES



- **Broccoli and cauliflower** — Broccoli and cauliflower are ethylene-sensitive and are best kept in separate refrigerator drawers or a sealed container away from other ethylene-producing produce.
- **Cucumbers** — Store in the refrigerator and do not wash until ready to eat. When stored away from ethylene producers, they can last one to two weeks.
- **Eggplant** — Store at room temperature for up to two days or in the refrigerator for up to seven days.
- **Green beans** — Store in the refrigerator, unwashed in a breathable bag.
- **Leafy green vegetables** — Greens such as lettuce, collards, chard, kale and spinach should be stored loosely in the refrigerator.
- **Onion family** — Store garlic and onions in a cool, dark and dry space but separate from ethylene producers such as potatoes.
- **Mushrooms** — Keep unwashed in the refrigerator. Moisture makes them slimy.
- **Peppers** — Store whole peppers in low humidity drawer for up to seven days. Cut peppers should be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for three days.
- **Root vegetables** — Store carrots, beets and radishes in the refrigerator. Store potatoes, sweet potatoes and winter squashes in a cool, dark and dry place such as a pantry or cellar.



HAPPY SUMMER GARDENING EVERYONE

This month we welcome our good friend Jos Creese.

Jos has kindly offered to provide a “Vegetable of the Month” or a similar article for the Newsletter on a regular basis. If you would like to provide a regular -or irregular- piece on any gardening subject, just let me know rbreach1946@gmail.com THANKS.

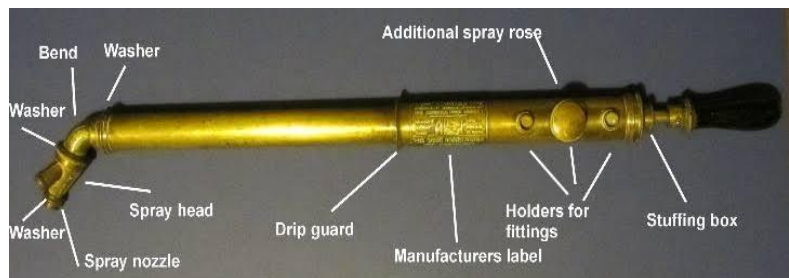
Working With Nature on the Allotment

One of the great pleasures of growing our own fruit and vegetables is deciding how to grow them. We are not trying to produce supermarket-perfect carrots, blemish-free apples, or rows of identical lettuces (unless you are entering the annual show!). We don't have to maximise yield or shelf life.

That gives us a wonderful opportunity to grow food differently. For example, using fewer chemicals than would be used commercially – artificial fertilisers, fungicides, weedkillers,

insecticides, and, of course, slug pellets. It's not necessarily because we want to be organic or enjoy extra work, but because an allotment is a living system and the soil, the plants, and even some pests are part of it.

I know only too well that it's easy to say in winter with a seed catalogue and a cup of tea. It feels rather different when blackfly arrive on the broad beans, mildew creeps across the courgettes, and a row of young lettuces disappears overnight into the stomachs of a slug army. Most of us have stood at our allotment at some point and thought, “Right, that's it! Something must be done.” But it does not always have to come from a bottle, packet, or spray gun to “subdue the enemy”.



A good starting point is to accept that a healthy plot is not pest-free. The aim is not to eliminate every creature that nibbles our crops, but to achieve a balance.

Encouraging natural predators is one of the most satisfying ways to grow. A small wildlife pond, even a modest one in a washing-up bowl or half-barrel, can attract frogs and other beneficial creatures. A damp, shady corner with logs, stones and leaf litter can provide shelter for toads. Thrushes are excellent snail hunters if we give them the chance and avoid slug pellets. Ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies voraciously

consume aphids and are encouraged by flowers such as fennel and marigolds.

The soil is another important part of the story. Artificial fertilisers can give plants a quick boost, but they do not feed the soil as effectively as compost and mulches.

A soil rich in organic matter retains moisture better, supports worms and microbes, and helps plants grow strongly. Strong, healthy plants are often better able to cope with pests and disease.

If you have the space, making compost is a good start (and the clubhouse offers a variety of compost and manure). Mulching with compost or well-rotted organic matter helps suppress weeds, improve soil structure, and reduce the need for watering.

‘No dig’ can also help, as Larry has pointed out in a previous article – there is good evidence that deep digging brings weed seeds to the surface and can disturb soil structure, worms and microbes. Simply covering beds with compost or mulch and letting the worms do the work is a gentle approach.

I have to admit that no one wants bindweed or couch grass rampaging through the raspberries, but not every weed is a disaster. Some can be tolerated in corners. Some provide flowers for pollinators, such as the pretty wild viola and borage, which seem to have established themselves on our plot.

Fine mesh can keep carrot fly, cabbage white butterflies and flea beetles at bay. Copper tape, wool pellets, sharp grit, beer traps, or simply going out with a torch on damp evenings can reduce slug damage. Planting a few extra seedlings means we can afford to lose some.

Companion planting can help, too, attracting pollinators and predators, and looks pretty as well. Nasturtiums and calendulas draw aphids away from other plants. Strong-smelling herbs can confuse some pests.

Where weeds are a real problem, hoeing when it’s hot, mulching to retain moisture, hand-weeding, and covering bare ground can help avoid the need for weedkillers. It’s not as instant or as easy – but if you have an allotment, ‘instant’ and ‘easy’ are rarely

feasible. Giving up chemicals is not always straightforward. There may be times when we feel we have no choice but to protect a precious crop at risk. But perhaps we could leave a corner a bit wilder? Could we tolerate a few aphids long enough for the ladybirds to find them? Could we net the brassicas instead of spraying them? Could we plant companion flowers among the vegetables? Could we accept the odd hole in a cabbage leaf as the price of a living, healthy plot?

When we grow our own, we are already doing something special. We are not competing with supermarket fruit and vegetables – that is a losing battle. We are eating food that has not been transported halfway across the world, wrapped in unnecessary plastic, or contaminated with chemical residues. We are tasting varieties chosen for flavour rather than supermarket uniformity. Own-grown fruit and vegetables may have the odd blemish or a chewed edge, but that is exactly the point. It is ours, and sometimes, if we are prepared to share a little, we gain much more in return. **Many thanks, Jos and we very much look forward to future articles.**

