

Things to do on the plot in July

Contributed by Behemoth

Once again the mighty Behemoth leads us gently up the garden path....

Sowing Beetroot Carrots – to harvest from December, try an Early Nantes variety. Witloof chicory for forcing over winter to give blanched chicons. This is what the French and Belgians call endive, not to be confused with….

Endive – hardy, bitter leafed salad for greens in autumn and winter. Florence Fennel – ready from September to first hard frosts. French Beans – sow early in the month and you should get a crop out of them.

Herbs – Basil, chervil, coriander and parsley. Kohl Rabi – until Mid July. Lettuce, salad leaves, radishes and salad onions. Spring Cabbages in pots to fill the hungry gap in spring. Perpetual Spinach – will provide winter and spring pickings – keep picking an don’t allow seeds to set. Swiss Chard – excellent and versatile, will give you greens from the autumn and through to spring. Oriental greens – all sorts of cabbages and greens. Most are new to me this year. I hear they’re slug magnets but there’s a big gap where the potatoes and broad beans were. Winter Radishes – many varieties that are larger than your usual. Easy to grow. Mooli - the oriental radish, can produce huge roots, similar in taste and texture to normal radishes, good peppery greens too. Plant out Cardoons and Artichokes on the site you manured last month. You did do it didn’t you? Late cauliflowers and any other winter brassicas that haven’t gone in yet – protect against pigeons and if it’s a problem against root fly. Leeks can be planted out now, although mine resolutely refuse to bulk up in the pots they’re in. Swedes.

General tasks Thin June sown crops – if you want your crops to get growing quickly thinning is very important. Check for pests. Water thirsty crops such as celery, celeriac and Florence fennel. Help sweet corn pollinate by tapping the plants so the pollen falls on the tassels. Train tomatoes and remove side shoots on cordon varieties. Give them a feed. Herb management: Cut flowers of lemon balm to prevent seed setting. Harvest some herbs for drying. Take cuttings of tarragon, oregano and rosemary.

Under Cover Sowing Florence Fennel: Undercover these will keep going until Christmas. Spring Cabbage and PSB – Needless to say produces earlier heads when grown undercover. French beans – will extend your harvest beyond the first frosts. Chard, Kohl Rabi, spinach and herbs as mentioned above. Watering Water wisely and mulch if you can. One of the simplest techniques is to make a depression around each plant for the water to soak into rather than run off across the ground. Misting some plants such as cucumbers and melons reduces their water needs. Also raising the humidity in a poly tunnel or greenhouse, by soaking paths or even just a few buckets of water standing around can help to reduce the need to water plants. Aubergine, melon and pumpkin may need help in getting pollinated. Use some soft lighting a bit of mood music and a soft paint brush to get things going. If your aubergines aren’t pollinated now you won't get any fruits. Pumpkins have male and female flowers and you can introduce one to another as it were. Pumpkin pollen needs to be dry so if things are a bit wet outside you can use an undercover flower to go outside and do the deed. Manage the plants by trimming leaves and don’t be worried to let them trail out of the door. Tomatoes and cucumbers: If they are in grow bags sitting on soil. Slit the bottom of the grow bag to allow the roots out and down. Pick tomatoes and remove any larger lower leaves that are shading the trusses. Nip out the side shoots on tomatoes and the male flowers on cucumbers. Give both a feed. Peppers: Keep picking to encourage more flowers to set fruit but don’t be afraid to let the peppers ripen on the plant. Stake and support the plants. Give them a feed. Fruit If you have strawberries they’ll need maintenance now to get a good crop for next year, basically removing the old fruit stalks, the straw and other litter. You need to cut back the tops to a couple of inches long but avoid damaging the crown. Rake up the chopped material straw and litter and compost. Remove mats or polythene. Hoe the ground and then feed with Growmore or similar. If you’ve had three crops from your strawbs don’t bother with the above. Dig them up and give the ground a good forking with compost or manure. Pick your site for the next three years supply and plant to plant your new plants in late July/August. On trained fruit trees it is now time to thin out the remaining fruit. Over cropping will quickly lead to small fruits. Reduce clusters of fruitlets to one or two. The ideal should be one fruit per 6 to 9 inches of branch. That doesn’t mean 6 to 9 inches apart but that would be the ideal. Wait until the tree’s natural ‘June’ drop has occurred before doing this. Time to prune any plums or cherries, which should ALWAYS be pruned in summer to avoid risk of silverleaf infection. Other tasks Pick fruit as soon as it is ripe. Check the ties on trees are secure as the load increases and support heavily laden branches if necessary. Tie in new shoots on trained trees Cut down early raspberries after fruiting and tie in new canes. Protect fruit from birds and keep a watch out for other pests.