

## Things to do on the plot in September

Contributed by Behemoth

More useful information from our Northern correspondent...

Just because the summer is officially over doesn't mean there's not a lot to do. There's lots to be getting on with. You can start thinking of your crop rotation, what's going to over winter on your bare bits and what's going to go where the following spring.

### What to Sow

Carrots - In southern parts you may get a late sowing of carrots in to produce baby carrots for Christmas. In more exposed and northerly areas you could try this in a cloche or cold frame or even the polytunnel.

Lettuce &ndash; if you sow winter hardy varieties now and protect with fleece or cloches you should have pickings well into winter. Try Marvel of Four Seasons (good at any time of the year), Winter Density or cut and come again varieties.

Salad Greens and Oriental Brassicas &ndash; a varied bunch that can be grown as salad leaves or left to mature. Chicory, endive, land cress, corn salad (tough as boots good for Christmas day salad), rocket, mizuna, texsel greens, pak choi and various Chinese mustards. The oriental brassicas can be used as young salad leaves or left to mature to provide a bit of spicy poke to stir fries. Remember they are brassicas and should fit them into your rotation accordingly.

Spinach &ndash; try a mildew resistant variety and they shouldn't need protection in all but the extreme north until after Christmas.

Spring onions &ndash; for an early spring crop sow White Lisbon.

Winter Radishes &ndash; a sowing in early September will be ready by late November.

Herbs &ndash; Sweet Cicely, borage and chervil can be broadcast to the site where they will germinate in early spring.

Over wintering onions &ndash; to provide a crop in June next year.

Those of you living in southerly climes could also sow Winter and Spring cabbages.

### Other jobs

Planting out spring cabbages that you sowed in pots last month. Protect them from pigeons. You can plant them at their final spacing or plant them closer and thin them in spring for very early greens allowing every other cabbage to grow on.

Pot up some tender herbs and bring them inside or undercover.

Take herb cuttings of bay, rosemary, lavender and sage and plant out a new herb garden. If you plant through fabric you can control the weeds easier.

Cut back spreading herbs like mint and lovage if they need a bit of control.

Ripen outdoor tomatoes by cutting them off near the ground and take the plant under cover, ideally a green house.

Strip any drying beans that are ready from the plants, dry indoors and store in a jar.

Pumpkins and squash &ndash; some summer varieties will be ripe for harvesting. If not being used immediately they will need to 'cure', the hardening of their skins, by ensuring they are stood in the sun. Most turn orange at this point, though not all. Summer squash and pumpkins don't keep as long as the winter varieties so use them first.

Stake winter crops like Brussels sprouts, kales, broccoli to help protect them against the wind rocking them and damaging their roots. If you've got a row you can put stout canes at either end and train lines around the plants for support. This is particularly worth doing if you are living with club root.

Clear any spuds that are left. Harvest sweet corn the instant it's ready, keep enjoying the beans, beetroot, carrots, kohlrabi, courgettes, fennel squashes etc.

Clear any courgettes that have gone to marrow and stopped fruiting.

Find some time to do some preserving.

Order your garlic and shallots.

Bare ground &ndash; if ground is going to remain bare over winter consider a good mulch with manure or compost and then cover with cardboard or weed control fabric if you can. The worms will work on incorporating the organic material making it easier to dig in the spring. If you don't have any manure or compost consider a green manure to over winter and dig in. Some of these are beans or brassicas so should be taken into account in your crop rotation.

Or if it is going to be used dig in compost or manure anyway for spring greens, garlic, onions and borad beans.

#### Under Cover

Things will start to wind down but you can keep going through to November with some crops. As soon as crops become unproductive remove them. This will give those that are carrying on, albeit slowly, more light and air. If a plant in a grow bag is looking very tired remove it. Even with feeds the nutrients in the bag are exhausted and it will not flourish again.

#### Sowing

Winter lettuce &ndash; to back up your outdoor sowings. You can't miss this sowing if you want salad leaves in the winter.

Other salad crops and oriental brassicas as outside. These will provide pickings right through to may so don't miss them.

#### Winter turnips

#### General

Tomatoes &ndash; trim tomatoes and remove plants that look knackered or diseased. Trim tatty leaves off healthy plants.

Keep picking peppers, aubergines courgettes french beans, tomatoes, melons.

Plant out or thin &ndash; spinach, pak choi, chard.

When clearing plants take the opportunity to feed the soil with some manure or compost. The ground in a polytunnel or greenhouse is worked hard and needs to be fed regularly.

#### Fruit

##### Harvest time

Particularly for apples and pears but the actual timing will depend on the variety. Ideally fruits should be left to ripen on the tree and picked individually or by the whole tree and stored, this applies mainly to fruits ready before mid October at the latest. Varieties that ripen later are best picked by the tree by mid October at the latest, to prevent wind and pest damage, and ripened in store.

Pears &ndash; pick them while they are hard and unripe. Many if left to ripen on the tree will do so at the same time giving you a glut of pear perfection that's over in a day.

##### Other jobs

Prune and tie in blackberries, raspberries and other cane fruit.

Harvest what's there &ndash; eat, process or store.

Prune black currants., plums, summer shoots of apples.

If weather is harsh protect your autumn raspberries.

Practice pest control if necessary.

Finish planting summer strawberries.