

Things to do on the plot in October

Contributed by Behemoth

Ah, autumn, season of mists and mellow fruitfulness (possibly).

First frost or late warmth – who knows? Outside What to sow Broad beans – a winter hardy variety such as Aquadulce Claudia or Dwarf Sutton for an early spring harvest. They’ll need some support later on so put some canes at either end of the rows. As for September you might get some sowings of winter hardy lettuces in, particularly if you can give them some protection. Rocket, Chinese mustard and pak choi - quick easy pickings into the winter. Carrots and cauliflowers – sow in early October for an early crop next spring. Choose an early variety, sow in pots in a cold frame. Over wintering onions can still be planted. Garlic! Now is the time to plant for big bulbs next July. Different varieties keep better than others so try some different types to give you a supply through next summer and winter. Shallots – plant out sets now for culinary delights next summer. General If storage space is limited you can leave carrot and beetroot in the ground but they will benefit from some protection such as fleece or straw. However if you can they are best lifted and stored in boxes of dry sand. Force chicory – lift witloof chicory and cut off the leaves. Put the roots back into large pots of compost and cover with another upturned pot (make sure the holes are covered to allow in no light. If you’ve got a lot use a half filled dustbin with a lid instead. Ready early January. Undercover Things are easing up. Keep harvesting what you can and be ruthless with diseased and old plants. Sowing As for September, a selection of winter greens, mizuna, mibuna, lambs lettuce, land cress, rocket, mustard greens, and winter varieties of lettuce. They’ll germinate quickly but then will slowly grow to be useful pickings by January. Lettuce however will need to be sown in trays and covered with bubble wrap to get them growing. For early carrots sow in tubs now and give them a bit of extra protection such as fleece or bubble wrap. You can also sow Kohl rabi which will grow steadily through the winter under cover. Fruit Order new fruit canes, bushes and trees Prepare planting positions for the above. Protect perpetual strawberries against the cold. Protection will also keep autumn fruiting raspberries going. Gather diseased fruit from the ground and destroy or remove it – good hygiene will reduce the spread of infection and disease. Prune and tie in blackberries. Bundle up and tie in canes of hybrid fruit canes in cold areas. Prune bush fruits when the leaves are off Finish picking and storing late apples and pears by mid October.