

The Kitchen Garden in Summer

While the intense sowing of seeds of the first part of the season is behind us now, there are still plenty of things to sow, and of course harvesting your first crops may free up some space for the next planting.

Successional sowing

Successional sowing is the practice of sowing a small amount of the same vegetable in succession during the growing season. This should provide a continuous supply while avoiding gluts. You use succession sowing for things that you don't want to eat all at once or for veg that you cannot store long term - e.g lettuce. You wouldn't want to eat a couple of dozen lettuce within a couple of weeks – so if you spread the sowing, you spread the harvesting. This works best for crops that don't require a long growing time. You can also make use of different varieties, to extend your harvest. This is commonly done with potatoes - so first earlies, second earlies, and maincrop varieties would be planted a few weeks apart to give you a continuing harvest during the season.

Here is a list of suitable crops for successional sowing:

- **BEETS** (beetroot, chard and perpetual spinach)
Make monthly sowings beginning in early to mid spring and continue until mid summer.
- **LETTUCE**
Sow every two weeks or so, starting in spring.
- **CALABRESE BROCCOLI**
Make monthly sowings from mid spring to early summer.
- **SPINACH**
Sow every three weeks or so, starting in early spring and continuing until mid SUMMER.
- **PEAS**
Sow throughout the spring.
- **SMALL RADISHES**
Sow every two weeks from early spring to early autumn.

Garden Organic have a very useful factsheet entitled “Banishing gaps and gluts in the vegetable garden” which is available online if you wish to read further about successional sowing and planning the timing of your harvests
<http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/factsheets/g6.php>

Gluts from the Garden

If you do find yourself facing gluts from the garden, then there are many great resources with suggestions of recipes and ways and means of preserving, a few examples are listed below.

Web:

http://www.overthegardengate.net/garden/herbs/glut_recipes.asp

Books:

- The Boxing Clever Cookbook by [Jacqueline Anne Jones & Joan Kathleen Wilmot](#)
- What Will I Do with All Those Courgettes? By Elaine Borish
- What Will I Do with All Those Root Vegetables? By Elaine Borish
- Too Many Tomatoes, Squash, Beans, and Other Good Things: A Cookbook for When Your Garden Explodes by Lois Landay & Laura G. Myers
- How to Store Your Garden Produce: The Key to Self-sufficiency by Piers Warren
- Home Preservation of Fruit and Vegetables by Fish & Food Ministry of Agriculture

There are many other books on the topic, and there are now several "Allotment Cookbook" style books so it would be a good idea to check your local library before splashing out on new books.

Sowing and planting for Summer

Looking ahead to the rest of the growing year, there are a wide range of vegetables that you can be sowing and planting now. Don't be put off summer / autumn sowings if you don't have a polytunnel or greenhouse, most of these veggies will grow outdoors quite happily outside, especially if you can provide some protection such as mini plastic and fleece tunnels or traditional cloches. Often just keeping cold winds off your plants is all that is needed to give you a really successful crop.

- **ORIENTAL GREENS** - milder greens for salads, or tasty mustard greens
There are a whole range of remarkably cold hardy oriental greens. They are ideal to keep your plot going through the depths of winter, particularly if you don't have the space or time for traditional winter veg like brussels.

Many are good both in salads and cooked - try Pak Choi, Mizuna, 'Pe Tsai' Chinese Cabbage, Mibuna, Tatsoi and Mispoona, all of which can be sown from the end of June through to end September (you can keep on sowing through into the winter if you have a polytunnel or greenhouse).

Mustard greens are even more hardy than the milder greens - which means that they will keep on growing new leaves even in the worst of weather. Raw they are spicy - so although its nice to put small quantities raw in salads, they're mostly used cooked. When you cook them the heat disappears, leaving a rich, full flavour, with just a little spicy zing. They are especially useful because they grow so well in cooler weather.

- **BUNCHING ONIONS**

Bunching Onions are MUCH easier to grow from seed than normal onions. They're really quick and useful, providing lots of greenstuff early in the Spring Gap when there's not much else available. Sow them after midsummer for a winter/spring crop

- **BULBING OR 'FLORENCE' FENNEL**

Not everyone realises that Fennel is best sown after midsummer as its much less likely to bolt than if its sown in spring. Sow up to the middle of August. The plants will stand up to Christmas or beyond in milder areas.

- [KALE](#)

Kales are great for baby leaves (salads & cooked) in autumn, and then left to overwinter for delicious greens through to the following April.

You can sow kale 2 ways:

- 1) in autumn in a tunnel - for tender baby leaves.
- 2) outdoors before early August - for hardy overwintering plants.

- **LETTUCE**

Winter lettuce varieties are particularly cold-hardy, selected for sowing after mid-summer, for harvest in autumn - and with a bit of protection, on into winter. Ideal if you have a polytunnel and want winter salads - or outdoors under a cloche or mini-tunnel.

Also keep on successional sowing summer lettuce varieties in July - August to give you a wide range of salads in Autumn.

- **OTHER SALADS**

Land Cress is great in salads but can also be eaten cooked for example as a substitute for watercress in soup. It is sown in autumn & grown over winter.

Also try Salad Endive, which is hardier than lettuce, and has pretty pale green leaves with a good non-bitter flavour, it can be sown spring, summer or autumn.

And don't forget plenty of mizuna, chinese cabbage and mispoona, which will give you endless delicious salads through the worst of the winter

- **COOKING RADISHES**

These are a fantastic root vegetable that everyone should try. They bear no resemblance to a breakfast radish, this is a large root - tennis ball sized and upwards - which you use in soups, stews and stir-fries. They are also great eaten raw grated or sliced finely into salads, with a mild zing to them. Sow them from July to Sept, for pulling all winter.

- **BEETROOT**

Beetroot are ideal for sowing outdoors or in a tunnel in July and August for pulling as tender baby beet in autumn.

- **BROCCOLI/CALABRESE**

Sow broccoli undercover for an autumn harvest.

- **CABBAGES**

Sow Spring Cabbage in late August or September, and you'll get nice fresh cabbage very early the following spring.

- **CARROTS**

Carry on sowing carrots in July and August to pull as tender carrots in autumn.

- **CHARDS & GREENS**

Sow leaf beet and chard up until end July for a seemingly endless supply of greens in autumn and into next spring.

- **SUMMER HERBS**

Successional sow Coriander until the end of July for a continual supply of fresh leaves. Parsley can also be sown up to midsummer and will stand through into the winter with a bit of protection.

- **PEAS**

Use an early variety to have them ready before the season ends. In the autumn you may wish to try sowing some to overwinter – perhaps best in a polytunnel or other protected area.

- **TURNIPS**
Sow turnips from mid June through to end July for harvesting through the autumn and into the winter.
- **SWEDES**
Sow swedes from early June until mid July for harvest in November/December - they will also store well in a cool place until well after Christmas.

Crop Care in Summer

As the summer progresses, you will want to ensure that your plants are all gearing up to provide you with a great harvest. Already this year we have experienced a long dry spell, and strong winds, both of which can do harm to your harvest, if countermeasures aren't taken. During the summer, you will need to think about weeding, providing support for taller plants, protection from birds, other animals and pests, feeding and watering, and also managing the quantity and quality of your crops by taking steps such as thinning out root crops and fruit from trees, pinching out side shoots on cordon tomatoes and strawberry runners. Bringing in your harvest is also an important task, as many plants (e.g. tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes and beans) will stop producing if allowed to develop mature fruit or pods. Regular picking extends their useful life. If you are going away on holiday, and have asked for help with watering, consider asking if your helper could also pick peas, beans and courgettes too.

- **POTATOES**

When you harvest your early potatoes take care to remove all the tubers. Any left will not only sprout next year and become a weed (or "volunteer") but will also be a reservoir for disease and potato blight spores. It's often worth forking over a few days after harvesting potatoes because more seem to miraculously appear.

You may also need to earth up your main crop potatoes if you have not already done so. Earthing up means to move soil around the base of the plants to protect them, this is done when the plants are about 22cm (9 Inches) tall. Break up the soil between the rows with a fork and remove all the weeds, then bring it up around the plant in a tent like shape up to about 15cm (6 Inches).

Keep an eye on the potatoes and if you spot characteristic brown blotched leaves remove that foliage immediately and incinerate. There is no cure for blight available to us and once started a spray may delay the inevitable but that is the best we can hope for.

- **TOMATOES**

Tomatoes need some attention this month because the fast-growing plants will run out of steam if not fed often. A Comfrey feed is as good as commercial tomato feed and free to produce. Regular training and trimming will be required as plants develop this month and next. This involves removing any sideshoots from cordon-trained plants (those growing on a single, upright stem). You do not need to do this with bush varieties of tomato.

Sideshoots should be removed while still small so as not to damage the main stem. Some plants will also grow a second main shoot in the growing point and the strongest and best placed of these should be selected for keeping while the other is removed. At the same time twist the main shoot around its string support or tie to the cane. As the trusses ripen you may wish to start deleafing. Only remove the leaves below the lowest truss and if necessary one or two above that if they are shading the fruit and preventing it from ripening.

Potato blight will also strike tomatoes, which seem to suffer more than potatoes. To minimise risk of contamination, try to avoid visiting your greenhouse or polytunnel plants

after handling blighted foliage. More often than not, the greenhouse crops will miss the blight.

- **PEAS & BEANS**

Keep harvesting your peas and beans to keep the producing more. Ensure that climbing varieties are supported with canes, or sticks.

- **BRASSICAS**

Now is a good time to plant out brassicas for the winter time such as winter cabbages, kale, winter cauliflower and Brussels sprouts. You may find that in order to make space for these you have to harvest some of your earlier crops. These slow-growing crops can then be interplanted with fast-growers such as lettuce, radish and salad leaves. If you did not sow any winter brassicas in April/May it is not too late to find ready-grown plants in the garden centres or from online or mail order catalogues. Once planted out, keep covered with fine netting at all times to prevent the birds and caterpillars from taking their toll and be sure to take precautions against slugs and snails which may cause damage during wet weather.

- **FRUIT**

Apples and pears are often attacked by codling moths during June and July and the larvae of this pest causes a great deal of damage by burrowing into the fruit as it develops. Plum fruit moth is also active this month and causes similar damage as its pinkish caterpillars eat into the fruit. Both pests can be controlled using pheromone traps which are hung in the branches and baited with the pheromone of the female moth. This lures the males to the trap where they are caught on a sticky card, so reducing the number of eggs laid. Several online, or mail order companies and good garden centres sell both types of trap.

Plum trees can be severely damaged if the weight of the ripening crop becomes too much for heavily laden branches. Prop them up with poles to prevent breakage and consider thinning the fruit if setting has been very good. This will also improve the quality of the remaining plums.

Apples and pears may also have set lots of fruit and although the tree is likely to lose some of this during the natural June drop. More could be removed after a heavy set in order to improve the quality of the remainder. In the case of apples and pears, thin to leave two healthy, well-shaped fruit per cluster with about 10-15cm (4-6in) between the clusters for dessert apples and pears and 15-23cm (6-9in) for cookers.

Once blackcurrants have been harvested the plants can be pruned, removing up to a third of the oldest branches to encourage new growth from the base.

Continue to tie in the new shoots of cane fruit such as blackberries and summer-fruiting raspberries. Autumn-fruiting varieties of raspberry may need some support.

You may wish to protect your fruit from birds by netting or covering with fleece, or hanging bird scarers (such as old cds).