

Gardening September - Sneezing Squirrels

Now is the time to buy your Aguadulce broad bean seeds – big fat chaps that Jack would recognise; even though they do not grow as tall; just as well.

Sowing them within the next two months allows them a greater chance to flourish next year without the famous disease of blackspot appearing.

Garlic, of a variety suitable for England, can go on the same shopping list as these broad beans – I find the Solent variety gives very good results.

And once you have roasted and eaten Elephant garlic, spread on some warm, crusty bread, you will know these are an important ‘must grow’, too.

Garlic needs a good month of freezing conditions to get its internal motor going.

The ‘plant garlic on the Shortest Day, harvest on the Longest Day’ it works for me; I like the poetry of it, too as I hope you do. And it gets them planted.

Just remove the papery skin around the garlic bulb, then break the bulb in to individual cloves, and place them gently, so as not to damage their roots, below the surface of your good earth, pointy end upwards, so the top of this ‘sail’ is just covered by the earth.

Bulbs for late winter and spring flowering should now be bought.

Crocuses can be planted now.

Planting crocuses in lawns is safe enough, survival wise, as the bulbs will have gained energy from their green stems before the mowing begins again next year, and so will reappear, again.

It can be very rewarding to plant a handful where some human traffic passes, although this reward may have to be imagined, not seen.

Why pigeons enjoy eating or destroying yellow crocuses is a mystery; think it must be wise to choose other colours.

How about planting some white crocuses in a favourite starry constellation as a surprise for someone?

Daffodils should also be planted now, so concentrate on buying and planting these; tulips should be planted last of all in November.

Forgive the daffodils next June and their brown, papery leaves– the colour they will give you after winter will make them so welcome.

Or, simply mow them down and replant some new ones each year. Shocking, but not illegal.

The number one enemy for most of you in regards to bulbs being disturbed or ruined seems to be the squirrel.

Cayenne pepper has been suggested as an answer, but since I have never heard (or seen) a squirrel sneeze, I can only imagine this is not the best way to stop this.

Mint Tea all Year

Bring some roots of mint inside – it will grow all winter, and give you the satisfaction of seeing fresh green leaves all the time.

Dry some mint now – dried mint makes for a much better mint tea than fresh mint.

Even if you do not like mint tea, someone will.

Looking after your Soil.

Try and organise some six month old (minimum) cow or horse manure from a friendly stable; many stables have to pay for it to be taken away, and will happily let you take it.

Do check to see what any horses have eaten in regards to thistles if this concerns you; but really, your soil will benefit so much from this manure.

Cows, having seven stomachs, destroy any weed seeds in the course of their digestion, so this is the best to use if you wish to buy some or you can find some, aged for six months minimum. There is nothing like some local manure.

And, since I mentioned a crocus constellation...

STARS.

Throw the last diamond in your poverty pocket into the gutter.

As far, far away as possible,

And further still if you can.

And you will find, one day, when you are in the dark,

That there will be and you will see,

Hundreds and hundreds of stardiamondstars,

Lighting up the dark sky, smiling at you,

And waving their starry hands in friendly greeting,

Even though they may be quite out of sight.

Happy white crocus constellation planting.