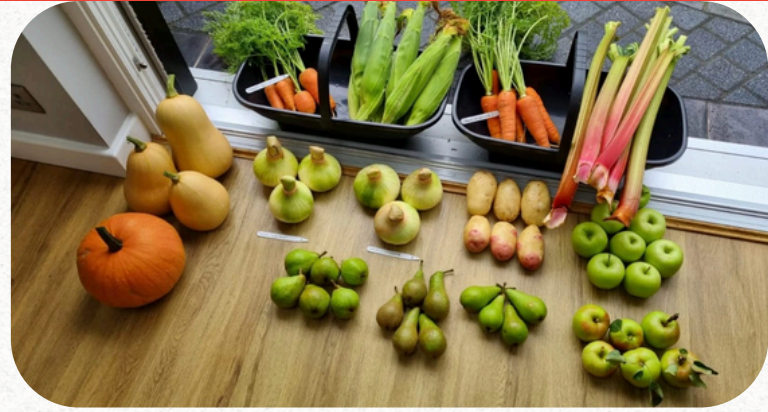


The Plot Thickens...



AUGUST ON THE PLOT

How are we in August already?!

This month, we'll be taking a look at everything you can do in August to optimise your allotment plot, and letting you know any important updates.

In this month's issue we have:

- **Jobs for August**
- **Defence Mechanism!** - this month we're focussing on tomatoes- a deep dive into some of the more common issues you can experience, and what to do about it
- **Monthly Makes-** a delicious recipe for using up some of those courgette gluts!
- **Grow the most expensive spice in the world!**- everything you wanted to know about growing Saffron, and how to get your hands on some for your plot!
- **Useful Resources-** this month we're taking a look at a website that will take all the guesswork out of the weather!

A reminder- we'd love to celebrate any good news stories or achievements within our community. Weddings, big birthdays/anniversaries or awards etc. Please get in touch and let us know if you have any moments you'd like us to mark in future issues!

SITE ANNOUNCEMENTS

We were really sorry to have to cancel the Flower Show earlier this month. We know it was a disappointment to lots of you who had been hoping to enter, but unfortunately the weather was against us that morning.

We hope to arrange something nice before the end of the growing season, so that everyone has a chance to get together (maybe more of a social than a Flower Show).

And just so that people have a chance to show off their entries- in this issue we have added a few photos of entries that "would have been"- see if you can recognise yours!



Jobs for August



HANDY REMINDERS

August. The heady month of summer, when dahlias are glorious, courgettes are plentiful, and life on the plot just seems at its best. This particular August, we've seen some real extremes of weather- who would expect 30mph winds and driving rain?!

Whilst the sunshine is infinitely welcome, for the allotment tenant it brings some challenges too, not least of all you may have your annual holiday and be worrying about leaving your plot for a week or two! So here is a quick roundup of some of the jobs you can be doing to keep that produce at its finest!

- **Harvesting-** keep on harvesting all your produce regularly. Courgettes in particular, which will have a tendency to go from manageable to marrow in the blink of an eye!
- **Sow for Autumn and Winter-** there are lots of crops you can be starting off in August, ready for harvests into autumn and beyond. Think lettuce (keep out of the glare of direct sun), rocket, spring onion, radish plus winter salads, including mibuna, mizuna, mustard leaf and lamb's lettuce.
- **Cut back summer fruiting raspberries-** be careful to **ONLY** cut back the canes that have fruited. All the non fruiting canes will carry next years fruit, so be careful to leave them alone! A word of caution- your **autumn fruiting** raspberries need different care- so don't touch them just yet, and look out for a special feature on raspberries in the September issue
- **Shout for Help!-** if you're going away on holiday in August, don't forget to arrange for someone to come and water your plot while you're away. Give your plot a thorough soaking before you leave, and this should ensure that you come back to healthy, happy crops on your return.
- **WATER-** speaking of water, keep an eye on produce to make sure you are appropriately watering all your crops. A handy rule of thumb (pardon the pun), is to literally stick your thumb into the soil. If it is dry beyond the first knuckle, it's time to water. Ensure you water the soil around the plant, and not the leaves, to avoid fungal disease or evaporation of valuable water. Make sure you are conserving those water supplies. And remember- **HOSE PIPES ARE ONLY TO BE USED FOR FILLING WATER BUTTS, NOT FOR WATERING CROPS!**
- **Prune trained fruit trees-** stepover, fan or espallier trees can be pruned now. This handy RHS page tells you all you need to know about how to carry out summer pruning. And remember- **DON'T** prune your standard/bush trees until winter!! <https://www.rhs.org.uk/fruit/apples/summer-pruning>

Defence Mechanism!



TOMATO, TOMATO....

No matter how you pronounce it (!), they're one of the best loved crops grown by allotmenters and home gardeners all across the nation. Whilst they are generally a reliable crop, there are a few issues that can happen while growing our beloved red jewels and here we take a look into some of the most common issues and what to do about them.

Blossom End Rot- seen on the right, this refers to the circular, dark patches that occur on the base of tomatoes (but also peppers and aubergines!). If we are being technically correct, it's more of a physiological problem than a disease as such. It occurs due to lack of calcium, and often happens because of the watering pattern applied to your crop. It also tends to happen more to plants in pots and grow bags than it does to plants in the ground. However...Fear not, as simply making some adjustments to your watering schedule can eradicate this problem. To help combat it, you can follow these steps:

- Keep greenhouses adequately ventilated during hot weather
- Keep soil consistently moist throughout the growing season. You may find that watering twice a day is more beneficial than watering once with large amounts, as this helps keep even moisture.
- Use as large a container as possible to help avoid quick evaporation of water
- Consider mulching to help conserve moisture in the soil



Blight

While blossom end rot tends to be more prevalent in indoor tomatoes, by contrast, blight tends to be worse on *outdoor* tomatoes (it can affect indoor tomatoes but tends to be less impactful).

Blight is caused by a fungus-like organism that spreads rapidly through the foliage and fruit of tomatoes in warm, wet weather, causing collapse and decay.

Visible signs of blight include:

- Stems rotting, shrivelling and turning brown
- Leaf edges may be a lighter shade of green
- Fine white fungal type growth on underside of leaves
- Brown lesions may also develop on the leaf stalks and stems, again with white growth sometimes visible under wet or very humid conditions.



Control of blight

It is imperative that you follow very specific measures with blight affected tomatoes. Simply picking off affected leaves will not eradicate the problem. DO NOT put these in your compost. You should:

- Burn affected material
- Clean all plant supports, equipment and greenhouse surfaces that have come into contact with blight using a disinfectant such as Jeyes Fluid, to make absolutely sure that there is no disease transfer.
- DO NOT re-use soil or compost from affected plants, as this can increase the risk of disease transfer
- Operate a crop rotation system reduce the risk of potential infection from resting spores in outdoor soil-grown tomato crops- if operating a 4year rotation, avoid growing tomatoes or potatoes in affected ground for 4 years.

Monthly Makes



COURGETTE LOAF CAKE

We could have written a novel with courgette recipes, there are a multitude of options for our most prolific allotment crop! However, we've settled on this delicious, moist loaf cake that will leave you seriously wanting more! A cake that is tasty, crowd pleasing, and suitable for freezing, what's not to love! This recipe is adapted from a BBC Good Food recipe.

This is a moist and lightly spiced loaf cake, and works perfectly any time of day as a reasonably guilt free treat with all that hidden veg!

Makes 1 x 2lb loaf cake

2 large eggs
125ml vegetable oil
85g soft brown sugar
350g coarsely grated courgette
1tsp vanilla extract
300g plain flour
2tsp cinnamon
Qtr tsp nutmeg
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
½ tsp baking powder
140g sultanas

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 180degrees, or 160 fan. Butter or line a 2lb loaf tin and set aside.
2. Add egg, oil, sugar and vanilla essence to bowl and whisk until frothy.
3. Grate courgette, and squeeze through a clean tea towel to get rid of excess water, then mix into wet ingredients.
4. Add flour, bicarb, baking powder, spices to a separate bowl, and carefully mix in sultanas to coat in flour, before stirring this all in to the wet ingredients.
5. Pour into buttered/lined loaf tin, and bake in centre of oven for 1 hr, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
6. Leave to cool, and enjoy thoroughly, or freeze for up to 1 month.

The most expensive spice in the world



FREE SAFFRON BULBS

We have had a number of these donated to MLAA, and so if you would like a free saffron bulb, please contact Adrian Shandley, or any member of the MLAA Committee, to arrange this.

I looked up the cost of Saffron per gram, and was shocked to see it ranges from £1 to £8 depending on quality. You could buy a designer handbag for less! (Although let's be honest, would you really be bothered when you could be spending money on plants and crops?!).

Crocus sativus is a variety of saffron that is ready to bloom from October to December. It boasts bundles of rich, purple flowers that sit neatly between slender leaflets. The vibrant orange stigma is the perfect addition to many culinary dishes, and adds colour to your plate! Perfect for planting on allotments, kitchen gardens, patio pots and rockeries, it needs direct sunlight in order to grow to a height of 15cm with a spread of 5cm.

The saffron crocus is hardy and flowers in autumn before it becomes dormant in April once foliage dies back. Flowering commences around 40 days from planting, although bear in mind some bulbs don't flower in their first year. Each bulb can produce up to 6 or more flowers over a period of approximately 15 days.

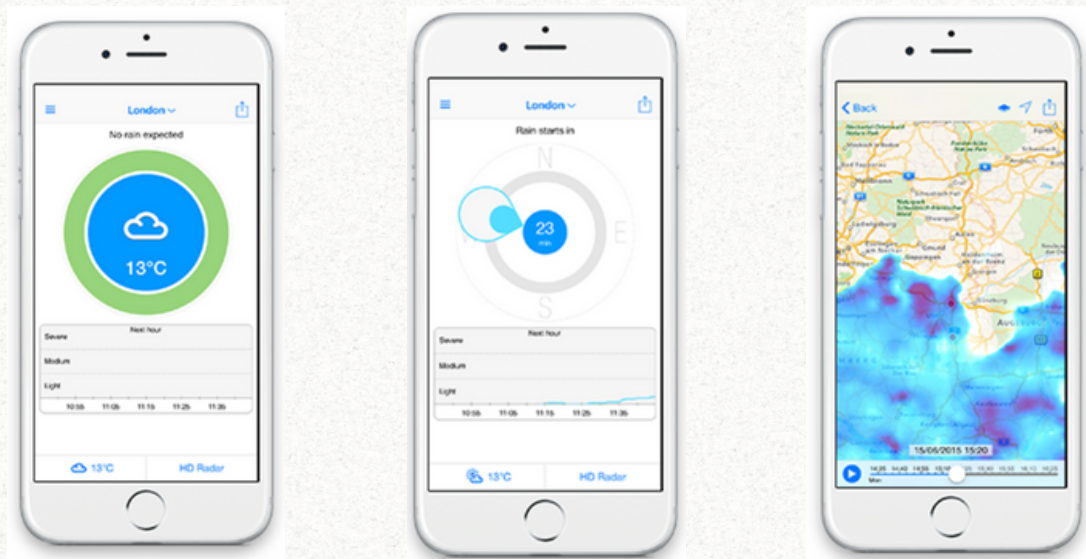
Bulbs should be planted 10-15cm deep, and 5cm apart, in a sheltered, warm, sunny position. They prefer well drained soil in a position that dries out when plants are dormant (this prevents bulbs rotting). Ideal position is a south facing wall, or in containers that can stay in a greenhouse between April and September. Any new bulbs produced grow above old ones, eventually creeping towards the surface, so you will need to lift and replant every few years, best done in August.

To obtain the saffron, the 25mm red stigmas should be removed with tweezers as soon as flowers are open, and on a sunny day. Dry the strands for around 10 mins in an oven at 50 degrees (30 fan). Keep an eye on them to avoid burning. Don't touch strands before they have fully cooled. They will become crispy when touched. Once dry, store in a sterile airtight container for at least one month before using, to allow flavour to develop.

Feed corms with **potash** after flowering and then again in Spring to improve chances of flowering next year.

Useful Resources

RAIN TODAY



This month's useful resource is a real winner! Download from the Apple App store (see below for Android Users)

Whenever there is rain expected, RainToday forewarns you in time! A must have for anyone who spends a lot of time outdoors- well that is all of us, isn't it!

RainToday automatically locates your current position to make sure you know exactly what to expect in your area.

If rain is coming and the app is running in the background (background fetch enabled) an alert will automatically be generated and the app interface will change. You will receive all necessary information in one glance, including which direction the rain is coming from, the precipitation amount and how long the rain will last. Even if it's not currently raining the graph will show whether a shower is forecast in the next 60 minutes.

The high resolution rain radar is based on radar images of radar stations, available every 5 minutes.

The app will give you:

- Rain alerts up to 60 minutes in advance
- Widget showing the latest rain alert for your current or chosen location
- Modern interface showing you when rain will start and where from
- High-quality data also presented in a graph
- Optional push notifications for current or chosen location
- High resolution, animated radar including forecast
- Deep zoom and perfect orientation thanks to Apple/Google maps

****NB Android Users will need to download "RainNOW" from the Google Play store- does the same thing!***