

January 2018

January is a month of clearing up leaves twigs and branches that have come down with the winds and storms, this will be an ongoing job for the next few months. If you haven't cut back the dead tops of your perennials like me that is fine unless you have bulbs coming through in these beds then I suggest you cut them back to about 6 -8 inches high this will provide a little bit of support to your bulbs and the new shoots of the perennials themselves. Raking in a dressing of bone meal at this stage would be beneficial to all plants helping the root system develop. It is still not quite too late to plant bulbs they will come up later but will come through at the usual times thereafter. In my garden the winter aconites have been flowering since New Year's Day as have the Muscari and Hellebores over at the hall.



What I found as surprise this year how early the bluebell shoots have come through, I also noticed when I was walking around the estate that the pussy willow heads are starting to open in places. Don't forget to weed with this mild weather the weeds just keep on coming. If you have your own made compost them mulch around the all your shrubs and roses as these are the heaviest feeders throughout the growing season and the first to show signs of stress from drought conditions if we have a dry summer.

If you are lucky enough to have a greenhouse and or a coldframe then you could start to sow some early vegetables. Pick varieties that suit forcing like the round rooted carrot and winter lettuce and spring onion it will say on the packet. In the greenhouse if you have no bare earth use large pots for the carrots do not use potting compost instead get some soil from the garden making sure no weeds or stones and rubbish are in it, place these on your bench as it will warm up quicker if you have it wrap the pots with bubble plastic saving a piece for the top of the pot sow the carrots thinly about 2" apart lightly cover the seed if soil is dry water but if damp don't water the same goes for the lettuce and spring onions. If in your coldframe you have bare earth create a shallow drill [use the side of a hoe or the back corner of a standard garden rake to make a shallow trench 1 cm deep this is called a drill] when you have done this if your soil is dry lightly water down the drill dampening the soil not water logging it the sow your seed thinly down the drill. You can sow the onions and lettuce a little thicker as they can push out side ways, the lettuce when it grows and gets to about 5 inches high you can cut it with a pair of scissors or knife leaving the core of the plant to continue growing new leaves. On cold dry nights remember to cover the coldframe with an old towel or curtain would be ideal but remember to take it off in the morning and let it dry. In the green house on warm days remove the bubble plastic from the top of the pots to stop mould forming and replacing it on an evening. A little bit of effort but worth it and look out for slugs and other pests. Enjoy your garden.

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