



Garden Diary 7th May 2020

On Wednesday I was preparing to plant out our dahlias, which make a wonderful cut flower, when Colin reminded me there was a forecast for a hard frost this weekend - bad news for dahlias outside!



They now will stay safe in the polytunnels until next week. Before the lockdown all the Colebrooke staff would have lunch together in the court yard and it would always be a chance for a catch up. Weather predictions and forecasts are a regular talking point, extremely useful for farmers and gardeners. Now, being separated because of social distancing we miss out on sharing all the everyday chit chat which can be so helpful!



This is a reminder how important the community we have in the garden is. It is not just about growing vegetables but sharing knowledge, stories and supporting each other. The community within Colebrooke and Brooke House is so strong. We have had such great events, workshops and BBQ's in the garden involving so many people. All these events seem to strengthen what we do in the garden on a day to day basis with that sense of community and togetherness being at the heart of the garden.

Being a part of a garden that is involved with the veteran and ex-service community, which has such a strong bond, is a great privilege. Working together, planning events and the gardens progress is all about the people involved. Doing this garden diary has been a great way to still feel connected with everyone. There is so much more potential for this place but even now during this strange time our community feels strong and connected.

Now, it's time to protect the potatoes and salads from this weekend's frost. Take the time to enjoy all the simple gardening jobs when you get the chance and appreciate what we have in this moment. Can't wait to fire up the pizza oven again though!

Regards, Dougal Dorman, Head Gardener, Colebrooke Walled Garden

USING COLD FRAMES

5TH MAY 2020

How to 'harden off' plants to acclimatise them, ready for life outside!



We use the cold frames to harden off our plants. This is the process of acclimatising plants from being in the warm greenhouse, where they have grown from seed, to being outside. A clear cover gets put on at night, either half open or completely closed, depending how cold the night will be. Our plants usually spend two weeks in the cold frame before we plant them out in the vegetable beds.



Around the Estate

5th May 2020

The tale of an escapee...



Photo R Huddleston

I am truly fortunate to live right on the shores of Upper Lough Erne, and with the lake on my back doorstep I am an avid watersports fan. However, I have always had a fear of swans. I don't bother them, and they don't bother me, but I always paddle past a little bit faster when they fluff their feathers and let out a hiss. The bay to the back of my home house, is very shallow and full of weed which is perfect for swans. Each year we count about 80 or so swans in the small bay, and we have two resident nesting pairs, whose progress we track throughout the season.

It was just another regular Sunday evening in lockdown, enjoying the 356th day in the month of April, when it was commented "there is a Black Swan outside". After a neighbour posted a wonderful photo of him on Facebook, the story of this escapee swan emerged. He has escaped from a local farm, leaving his mate behind, to cruise the pristine waters of Upper Lough Erne. With a little bit of research, I soon learned that this tear away swan's flight feathers (which had previously been cut) had grown back enough, and on the breeze last Sunday, he had managed to regain flight.

Wednesday evening of the same week came, and our black swan's location had been given away, as a very suspicious boat, with an even more suspicious net appeared in the bay. We thought he was a goner... but as it turns out, he really does fly rather well, and the boat couldn't get up to speed in the shallow bay. As an Australian Black Swan (the last one seen in Northern Ireland we think was over 10 years ago on Newry Canal), he must be worth a pound or two, but here's hoping they don't come back, and he decides to stay!

