

## Garden Diary 23rd April 2020

What a week in the garden, sun just kept shining and lots got done. Our main jobs were preparing the vegetable beds, sowing seeds and keeping everything watered.

Most days involve going from one of these jobs to the other until it's time to go home. Having good weather and nothing else to do but garden, the days are going so quickly. It's amazing when you are absorbed in something like preparing vegetable beds you stop worrying about things and just get lost in what you are doing. I have found this particularly helpful right now.

There is definitely a contrast with the slower pace the lock down has brought to many of our lives compared to the business a garden demands.

Things growing don't listen to the restriction of the lockdown. Once the seeds have been planted they still need lots of attention before they are ready to be harvested but when you start growing vegetables it's addictive and hard to stop.

They call April the 'hungry month' as produce we have planted this year is not ready to be eaten and our stored vegetables from last year are running out. We have dug out all our winter salads and our spring lettuce is not quite ready but there have been some highlights to this week's harvest. We had a great harvest of rhubarb and the plan for this weekend is to make rhubarb and custard, a tradition this time of year. In our 10 week gardening programme last year it was all hands on deck with veterans sharing the jobs of chopping rhubarb, stirring homemade custard and finishing the syrup to serve up after a good day gardening. I'm always so impressed how willing our members are to get stuck in to all the different things we do here and are open to learning something new.



Most of our vegetable beds are now ready to be planted and the garden is in really good shape. I'd like to say a big **THANKYOU** to everyone who has helped keep this garden going in a challenging time. I was worried the weeds could take over this year but as a community who work so well together, we are on top of it. Our gardener, Colin, has done amazing work keeping on top of all the jobs, and helping prepare some of the members plots for when they can return. This garden is such a big team effort and I cannot wait to welcome people back in soon.



**Regards,**  
**Dougal Dorman**

*Head Gardener, Colebrooke Walled Garden*

## **The beginning of our new market garden...**



For a while a few of our volunteers have been keen to plough the lower section of the walled garden and plant a larger crop of potatoes. So this year we decided to give it a go! The field has been cleared, ploughed and rotavated, and the fence that separated off the bottom part of the garden relocated.

# PREPARING YOUR PLOT

23RD APRIL 2020

A simple guide to preparing your vegetable plot for the growing season



## TOOLS REQUIRED

I used the following tools to prepare the bed for growing season (from left to right in the adjacent photograph):

- Rake with small teeth to give a fine finish to soil.
- Three-pronged cultivator for de-compacting paths.
- Shovel for earthing up beds.
- Long handled fork to break up soil.



## STEP 1: CLEAR & WEED BED

After clearing and weeding your plot from the previous year, it is time to add compost. If your soil feels heavy and compacted use a fork to break it up. If not just leave the worms to do the work.

## STEP 2: ADD COMPOST

One bucket of compost will cover one meter squared of your vegetable bed. Keep adding compost every year. Remember homemade compost is best.



## STEP 3: PREP YOUR PATH AND BED

Now earth up soil from your path onto your bed. Use a cultivator or a fork to break up the soil then shovel on top of your compost.



## STEP 4: RAKE

Rake in the compost and soil to produce a fine tilth on top.

## STEP 5: ADD FERTILISER

Add a top dressing of seaweed dust and chicken manure pellets to feed your plants as they grow.



Seaweed Dust



Chicken Manure Pellets

## STEP 6: PLANT

Your bed is now ready to plant up. Here I've planted courgettes and added some drainage tubs so I can get water deep to the roots. Courgettes in polytunnels need a lot of water so this is a good way to get them the water they need.



# Around the Estate

## 21st April 2020

## Fruity Blossoms...



As well as sharing information and updates from the Walled Garden, each week we will also share a snippet of life from the wider estate. Colebrooke Estate stretches over 1000 acres and encompasses a variety of different environments including ancient woodland, grasslands, pine forests and the winding Colebrooke river.

Buds are appearing on the trees and blossoms are flourishing, including the blossoming fruit trees found in the orchard. These delicate flowers appear as a precursor to fruit on the likes of apple, crab apple, plum and pear trees, as well as other non-fruit bearing trees such as cherry blossoms. They are very pretty but they will only last for three to five weeks, before shedding their delicate petals. The blossoms key purpose is to attract insects to ensure pollination, as once pollinated, fruits will hopefully appear in their place!

According to RHS a cold snap in the winter can help fruit trees to produce more fruit in the spring months, as the trees have a chance to become dormant and gather energy for producing fruit. We had a mild winter this year, so it will be interesting to see what fruit is produced. The small orchard in the Walled Garden boasts sixteen fruit bearing trees, and traditionally the fruit from these tree's has been turned into edible products such as cider vinegar.

*Robyn Livingstone, Brooke House*

