

Garden Diary - 21st May 2020

Keeping up with everything that is ready to plant out is a big challenge at the moment.

So many seeds have germinated, been potted on and are now ready to go into the ground. Making sure they now get the attention they need is important! Three rows of sprouts, cabbages, broccoli and cauliflower have gone in, moving them from the cold frames into the soil. Potatoes and dahlias, after suffering some rough treatment from the frosty weather are looking much healthier and growing nicely in the plots. Runner beans and sunflowers have been planted with strong supports to protect them. The list goes on and on!

Spring is always one of the busiest seasons for me and with one job leading to another, it can sometimes feel that the garden's demands never end. When I feel like this, I know it's time to get away from the garden for a while. Most days my dog Boris and I will go on a run around the grounds of Colebrooke Park. As soon as I get out of the garden and get to run amongst the trees, past the lake and alongside the river, I see nothing but nature and wildlife, with the odd exception of Lord Brookeborough encouraging me to run faster from the comfort of his ride-on lawnmower! I either get to forget about the garden for a while or work out how a certain project I'm working on might come together.

Without the time away from the place I don't think I'd see the bigger picture. Getting the balance right feels very important.



Even doing something like gardening, that has so many positive aspects, it's important to rest for a while and put attention elsewhere. It's a Bank Holiday this weekend and I'm very much looking forward to it! Come Tuesday though, I will be looking forward to get back to those demanding tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce and every thing else that needs attention and start the cycle all over again.

*Regards, Dougal Dorman, Head Gardener,
Colebrooke Walled Garden*

Around the Garden

We also wanted to share with you the results from the hardwork the garden volunteers put into their plots!



USING HAZEL RODS

19TH MAY 2020

Using Hazel Rods to Support Runner Beans

USING NATIVE HAZEL RODS

Bamboo canes always come to mind when thinking about supporting vegetables in the garden. However this isn't always the case in Colebrooke as we use our native Hazel trees to make bean poles instead of shipping bamboo from China.

Every winter we go around the estate and harvest Hazel rods from around the banks of the Colebrooke river. They make such good supports! Traditionally the trees would be coppiced which means cutting the tree right down, around seven years later many new branches will have regrown to give you another harvest.

HOW TO CREATE A VEGETABLE SUPPORT

We cut our Hazel to make 8ft rods and use them to support our runner beans which will be growing right up to the start of winter.

Runner beans should be planted 8 inches apart so each rod should be 16 inches apart to allow the plants space.

The supports are built like a long tent with a supporting rod used as a brace on top. Then a generous amount of baling twine is used to tie them all together. I tie supporting ropes into the ground at each end to add extra support.

Runner beans will completely cover the supports over the summer so it's important to support them from all the weather will throw at them.



Around the Estate

26th May 2020

Sheep Shearing

During lockdown, trips to the hairdressers and the barbers are no longer an option, and more and more “homestyle haircuts” are emerging. However, shearing the 120 strong flock of sheep at Colebrooke cannot be avoided!

Most sheep cannot shed their coats and therefore it is sheared off to stop them from overheating and for better hygiene. During spring, shearing occurs to remove the thick winter fleece.



As with all things in nature, it is a balancing act to ensure the weather has warmed up enough, so the sheep will not miss their woolly coats if a late cold spell comes.

Shearing is skill in itself, the trick being to remove the woolly coat in one piece as efficiently as possible. This involves maneuvering the sheep effectively to ensure the pelt remains in one piece and the sheep does not get accidentally cut by the clippers. The wool is gathered up, with any badly soiled pieces removed, and sent to the Ulster Wool Company.

According to Guinness World Records, the fastest sheep shearer in the world sheared a sheep in 37.9 seconds, and the record for shearing the most sheep stands at 731 ewes in just nine hours. The Colebrooke shearing operation was very slick and the flock was sheared and returned to their field after just a couple of hours.

Robyn Livingstone, Brooke House



SOMETHING DELICIOUS

24TH MAY 2020

Overnight Oats with Rhubarb



This is a great way to use rhubarb, which is healthier than the traditional rhubarb and custard, but just as tasty! It can feel like a long wait until fruits like strawberries, raspberries and currants are ready, so this is when rhubarb comes into its own.

STEWED RHUBARB

5 sticks of rhubarb
4 tablespoons of sugar
2 oranges, juiced
1 tsp cinnamon
Pinch of nutmeg

Chop the rhubarb into 1-inch chunks and stew in a pan on a medium heat with the orange juice along with the sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg for about 10 minutes. Taste to make sure it's sweet enough, put into the fridge to cool. Stewed Rhubarb can also be frozen.

OVERNIGHT OATS

6 tablespoons of yogurt
100ml milk
100g oats
2 tablespoons of chia seeds
1 tablespoon of mixed seeds
1 tablespoon of honey

The night before mix the yogurt, milk and oats in a bowl, cover and place in the fridge to soak overnight.

In the morning, layer the yogurt mixture with the rhubarb, then top with seeds and honey.



With all the seeds in the yogurt it makes for a filling breakfast, setting you up for the day. The rhubarb can be replaced with different seasonal fruits as the year moves on.