

Garden Diary

15th May 2020

Despite all our efforts last week our potatoes still got hit by the frost. Frustrating, but they should live to fight another day, although there is colder weather on the forecast.

I checked the tomatoes this week and the roots have filled their pots which is the sign they are ready to plant but with the cold weather on the way it could be bad news.

They are on heat mats in the warm greenhouse so might get a shock when moved to a cooler polytunnel. There are three options; plant them in the polytunnels and hope it doesn't get too cold, pot them into bigger pots and keep them in the heated greenhouse or simply leave them in their pots and plant them out next week. I was very tempted to just leave them as the thought of potting on forty tomatoes to then plant out again a few days later seemed like a lot of work.

Tomatoes are one of my favourite things in the garden. They take a little more attention than most other plants, needing weekly tomato feed, trained up their support and their side shoots regularly cut off. They taste so good and are a highlight to the summer which makes this all seem worth it. After reflecting about how much I enjoy tomatoes, I spent the next hour and a half potting on forty tomato plants!

It is amazing the attention we will give to the things we value. From that attention it has the chance to get better and better. Gardening is such a good example of this. The more time you spend in your garden the better it becomes. The better it becomes the more time you want to spend in it- the perfect combination! Spending a little more time on the things we value is an important thing to remember. It is also important to remember how important we are, giving ourselves a bit more attention like the tomato, especially when the conditions are tough.

Regards, Dougal Dorman, Head Gardener, Colebrooke Walled Garden



THINNING OUT CARROTS

12TH MAY 2020

Tips on how to help carrots grow to be the best they can be!

DO NOT DISTURB

Carrots don't do so well if they are planted in trays, instead they prefer to be planted directly in the ground. This is because a carrot is a tap root and if it gets disturbed it will not grow very deep.



HELP TO GROW BIGGER

This may feel brutal, pulling out what look like healthy carrot seedlings, but in the end it's much better having big tasty carrots rather than a cluster of small, spindly ones.



THIN YOUR CARROTS

Once they have grown a couple of inches, it's time to thin, giving them space to develop into big, long carrots. This is the process of pulling out any that are clustered together, allowing 3 inches between each plant.



PROTECT FROM PEST'S

Remember to protect your carrots with a net to prevent carrot root fly. These pests can cause your carrots to rot!

Around the Estate

12th May 2020

Oh Deer!

In 1860 Japanese Sika Deer were brought to Colebrooke Park by Sir Victor Brooke. Now, approximately three hundred deer can be found across the estate. They are regularly seen and heard across the Park and local countryside. Sika deer vary in colour depending on the time of year. In April they shed their heavy winter coats, which tend to be dark grey/black in colour, to reveal pale brown/red coats with noticeable white spots. There is often a distinct dark coloured dorsal stripe running the length of the back and they have a short tail and a distinctive white rump.



Photo Cr Viscount Brookeborough

Whilst the deer are a menace to the garden (especially the fruit trees) they are commonly seen grazing around the park and looking longingly over the gate into the Walled Garden. The hinds (females) are getting ready to calf in May, having carried a calf for 7 ½ months. Calves when born, have no smell, to help avoid getting eaten by predators such as foxes. Mothers will leave the calf unattended during the day and then return to it in the evening. The stags (males) have shed their antlers, and are now re-growing them, to be ready for the rutting season in Autumn.



Photo Cr Viscount Brookeborough



Throughout spring and summer, stags will be rare to see as they let their velvety antlers develop. Sika deer are renowned for their repertoire of calls including clacking noises, whistles, and screams, they have a huge variety of vocalisations to communicate with one another.

Robyn Livingstone, Brooke House