



## Garden Diary 30th April 2020

Finally, some rain! I know it sounds bad, but the soil really needed it. The ground was getting so dry it was dusty, which is very unlike Fermanagh!

Potatoes are just beginning to pop up, but some of them got a shock when they were nipped by a light frost one morning.

A real lesson not to put them in too early and wait until the start of April, rather than the tradition of putting them in on St Patrick's Day. They tend to recover after this and earthing them up will protect them from any frosts in the near future.

We are right at the start of the growing season, and we are potting on our Brussels sprouts, which won't be ready until just before Christmas. It's funny to be thinking about your Christmas dinner at the end of April! The end of April is also an exciting time in a forager's diary as it sees the arrival of the year's first edible wild mushroom, the St George's mushroom, and the rain that we had was just at the right time to bring them out. Boris (my dog) and I will now be out hunting the fields and hedgerows of Colebrooke looking for these. We had a great day with our garden group last year, hunting the fields for mushrooms.

It started to get pretty competitive hunting for them once we found the first few, and we ended up with a full basket. Mushroom soup and sourdough bread was to follow.

On Wednesday Colin and I were enjoying a cup of tea in the garden when right under our noses a peregrine falcon dived into the rhubarb patch with its talons outstretched, on the hunt. We were like a couple of kids smiling ear to ear! The wildlife here is incredible. Seeing wildlife up close makes me appreciate having a job outside. There is a resident woodpecker whose drumming can be heard most mornings. Woodpeckers are very easy to hear but very hard to spot! Many swallows are now circling the garden and according to Lady Brookeborough, who keeps a diary of this each year, they arrived on the 6th of April. There are so many natural highlights in spring and I've not even mentioned the bluebells along the veterans walk! Have a good week everyone and hope you get some good time outside.

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



# WEEDING YOUR PLOT

30TH APRIL 2020

How to keep persistent weeds at bay throughout the growing season



## TOOLS REQUIRED

I used the following tools to keep the beds weed free.

- Two different sizes of Oscillating Hoe.
  - The smaller one for getting between plants which are closer together such as lettuce and onions.
- Traditional Dutch Hoe.
- Wheel Hoe.



Hours of weeding by hand is the number one turn off to gardening but this doesn't have to be the case. Using a hoe on your vegetable patch once a week will knock the weed back enough to let your vegetables thrive! The best time to hoe is when it's sunny or windy as this will dry out the roots of the weeds. Best not to do it when it's raining as the weeds may just re-establish.



The oscillating hoe is our absolute favourite as its really quick and you can keep your back straight whilst using it. Important to have your thumb pointing up so you can keep an upright posture.

To keep the weeds down on the paths we using a wheel hoe. Similar idea to the oscillating hoe but larger and with a wheel.

# Around the Estate

## 30th April 2020

## Eight things you didn't know about Bluebells

Since 1998, when the Bluebell became a protected species, it is illegal to pick, uproot or remove Bluebells in the wild.

Bluebells appear throughout April and May. The Bluebells found in the woodland in Colebrooke are only starting to appear now (beginning of May.) Their bloom will last for approximately three weeks.

Not all Bluebells are blue, they can also come in white and even pink varieties.

Bluebells are poisonous to humans and animals, including dogs, horses and cattle.



Bluebells, also referred to as Cuckoo's Boots, Wood Hyacinth, Lady's Nightcap and Witches' Thimbles, were classified by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus in 1753, he called them *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.



Bluebells grow in colonies which take between 5 and 7 years to become established. They can then spread rapidly across the forest floor. However, they are prone to damage, as if their leaves are crushed i.e. by someone walking on them, the entire plant will die back.

Bluebells, whilst common in Great Britain, are relatively rare in the rest of the world. It is thought over half of all the Bluebells in the world are found in the UK and Ireland.

In 2019 a spring poll by the botanical charity Plantlife, found Bluebells to be England's favourite wildflower. Here in Northern Ireland the Primrose, beats the Bluebell to the number one spot.