autumn leaves falling.....

VEGETABLES

Sow outside

Not many crops can be sown at this time of the year. However, broad beans are hardy enough to sow now for early spring crop. Winter hardy varieties of lettuce can also be sown (e.g. winter density) and grown under cloches. Some oriental greens can be sown, such as mizuna, pak choi, giant red mustard, mibuna and green-in-snow.

Plant outside

- spring cabbage
- garlic
- kale var. hungry gap (a late cropping variety)
- onion sets (plant overwintering or 'japanese' varieties)

Vegetable Harvest

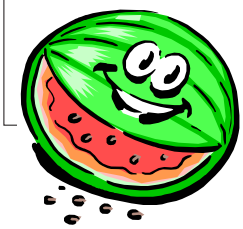
Summer crops are almost over but some tasty winter crops should be about ready to harvest. You might be harvesting jerusalem artichokes, aubergine, sweet potato, french beans, runner beans, swiss chard, beetroot, calabrese broccoli, brussels sprouts, summer cabbage, red cabbage, savoy cabbage, peppers, carrots, cauliflower, celeriac, celery, chicory (non-forcing varieties), cucumber, endive, kohl rabi, leeks (early varieties), lettuce, courgettes, squash, pumpkins, peas, potatoes (maincrop), radish, salsify, scorzonera, spinach, swede, tomatoes, turnips.

FRUIT

- Plant rhubarb crowns
- Prune summer-fruiting raspberries. Cut down any canes which have just fruited, and leave the best unfruited canes (thinning if necessary), tying them to wire supports.
- Prepare the ground for planting fruit bushes and trees. These are best planted during winter months but it is easier to prepare the ground before it rains too heavily and the ground is too heavy to dig.
- Order new fruit trees.
- Take cuttings of blackcurrants, red and white currants and gooseberries for propagation. Remove a 30 cm (12 ins) shoot just above a bud on the parent plant. Remove and discard the top 5 cm (2 ins) of this cutting. Plant the cutting to two thirds of its depth. If the soil is heavy clay add some sand.
- Fix grease bands to apple and pear trees to prevent pests such as winter moth from crawling up the trunks.

Fruit Harvest

You could be picking apples, pears, autumn-fruiting raspberries, melons, grapes.



GENERAL TASKS

- Lift maincrop potatoes a couple of weeks after the tops have died or been cut down. It is important that potatoes are dry before storage. This is easiest if you dig on a dry day and leave potatoes on the ground for a couple of hours.

To receive Gardening Tips send your email addresss to roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org. These can also be downloaded free from our website at www.pan-uk.org/gardening.htm

Pesticides in school fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables distributed free by the government to schools under the official School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme (SFVS) contain more pesticides than those bought in shops.

The Soil Association have examined 2004 results from the UK government's own pesticide residue testing scheme. This scheme takes a selection fruit and vegetables every year and tests how many contain residues of pesticides.

84% of samples of fruit and vegetables supplied to school children under SFVS contained pesticides (compared to 57% of those bought in shops). 65% contained residues of more than one pesticide (compared to 36% of those bought in shops). Pesticides were present in 100% of tested strawberries, satsumas, mandarins and clementines destined for school children.

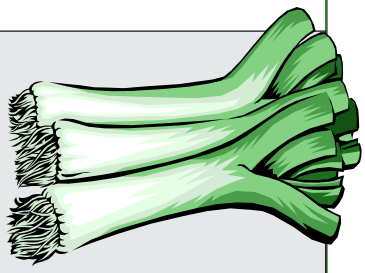
Peter Melchett of the Soil Association's said: "We strongly support the school fruit scheme but it is wrong to source lower quality fruit and vegetables apparently containing a higher proportion of pesticides and pesticide cocktails for the most vulnerable in society."

In 99% of cases the amount of pesticide found in samples was within limits allowed by the UK government. However, some experts believe the human body is particularly sensitive at certain times, such as when in the womb, during early childhood, and during puberty when development is triggered by hormonal changes.

http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Education/documents/2005/09/20/Pesticides.pdf

- Earth up celery to blanch the stems making them more tender.
- Save seed from open-pollinated varieties.
- As ground becomes vacant it should be dug over and manure incorporated. Manure incorporated now should be broken down by planting time next spring. Green manure crops planted at the end of summer can be incorporated into the soil now. In milder parts of the country there may still be time to plant an over-wintering green manure (see September 2004 tips).
- Prepare a container for making leaf mould. Trace a square on the ground (2 ft x 2 ft) and hammer four wooden posts into the ground, one in each corner of the square. Wrap chicken wire around the sides attaching the wire to the posts making a container. Fallen leaves can be collected and stored in this. After 18 months or two years they will have broken down into leaf mould, an excellent supplement for the soil.
- Cover compost bins to keep the rain out and heat in.
- Reduce ventilation in the greenhouse.
- Insulate the greenhouse and worm bin... try bubble wrap.
- Set up water butts to collect rain water from the roofs of greenhouses and sheds.
- Remove yellowing leaves from winter brassicas. These are not useful to the plant and will encourage Botrytis to develop.
- Beds you want to dig in early spring can be covered with plastic sheeting. This will keep the rain off allowing you to dig earlier.
- Finish planting spring flowering bulbs.

Leek moth



The leek moth (*Acrolepiopsis assectella*) is mainly a pest of leeks and onions, but can also affect chives, garlic and shallots. White or brown patches develop on leek and onion leaves where internal tissues have been eaten by the caterpillar stage of the moth. As the damage becomes more extensive, leaves start to turn yellow with brown patches. Badly infested plants are often killed by secondary rots.

In the UK there are two generations per year, the first in May-June and the second in August-October. Adult moths overwinter in plant debris. In April/May as temperatures rise they start to lay with each female producing up to 100 eggs on host plants. The caterpillars hatch about a week later and tunnel into leaves to feed. They consume the softer internal tissues of the leaf leaving the outer skins intact. They may also bore into the stems of leeks and bulbs of onions. The caterpillars feed for about a month before crawling back up the leaves to pupate inside net-like silk cocoons spun on the foliage. As they develop into adults they start laying eggs and a second, more abundant generation of caterpillars emerges to cause damage between August and October.

The caterpillars are pale yellowish-green with brown heads and up to 12mm (0.5in) long. The pupae are reddish brown and the adult moths are small and brown. Leek moths were previously just a problem in coastal areas of England but are now found further inland in southern and eastern England.

Damage from leek moths can be reduced or prevented by

- Growing plants under fleece to prevent the moths laying eggs.
- Digging over the soil to disturb overwintering adults and pupae.
- Removing the plant debris which protects adult moths over winter.
- Planting late (after May) to avoid the first generation of moths.
- Keeping leeks watered in summer to ensure strong growth; larger plants are more tolerant of damage and can survive to produce usable crops.

The affected growth can be cut off damaged leeks and they will regenerate.

PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK *UK*

Pesticide Action Network *UK* (PAN *UK*) is an independent non-profit organisation working nationally and globally with individuals and organisations who share our concerns. PAN *UK* projects enable us to work effectively towards specific targets to enable us to:

- Eliminate the hazards of pesticides
- Reduce dependence on pesticides
- Promote alternatives to pesticides

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