

# autumn leaves falling.....



## VEGETABLES

### Sow outside

Sow broad beans now for an early spring crop. Sow winter hardy varieties of lettuce, e.g. winter density, and some oriental greens, e.g. mizuna, pak choi, green-in-snow, giant red mustard, mibuna.

### Plant outside

Plant spring cabbage, garlic, onion sets (overwintering or 'japanese' varieties), kale var. hungry gap.

## FRUIT

- \* Plant rhubarb crowns
- \* Prune summer-fruiting raspberries. Cut down canes which have just fruited, and tie the best unfruited canes to supports.
- \* Prepare the ground for fruit bushes and trees before it becomes too wet to dig. Plant later during winter months.
- \* Order new fruit trees.
- \* Propagate black, red and white currants and gooseberries. Remove a 30 cm shoot just above a bud on the parent plant. Discard the top 5 cm. Plant the cutting to two thirds its depth.
- \* Fix grease bands to apple and pear trees to prevent pests such as winter moth from crawling up the trunks.

### Vegetable Harvest

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), cucumber, endive, kohlrabi, leeks (early), lettuce, squash, courgettes, pumpkins, peas, potatoes (main), radish, salsify, scorzonera, spinach, swede, tomatoes, turnips.

### Fruit Harvest

Apples, pears, autumn-fruiting raspberries, melons, grapes.

To receive Gardening Tips send your email address to [roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org](mailto:roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org) They can also be downloaded free from our website at [www.pan-uk.org/gardening.htm](http://www.pan-uk.org/gardening.htm)

## Legal challenge to weakened EU pesticide safety limits

On 11 August, PAN Europe mounted a legal challenge to demand a review of Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs; the maximum amount of pesticide legally allowed in food) across the European Union. The development follows a new Regulation from the European Commission intended to standardise food safety regulations across the EU. A pilot study conducted in Austria found that under the new legislation, two thirds of these safety limits (MRLs) will be weakened, some of them substantially.

'For each pesticide the European Commission identified the country with the worst safety limit and then sought to adopt this level as the new EU-wide standard', explained Hans Muilerman, International Agriculture Coordinator for Dutch NGO Natuur en Milieu, and PAN Europe board member. 'Consumers throughout the EU will now receive the lowest levels of protection from dietary exposure to over 200 different pesticides.'

The new safety limits provide only paper thin safety margins for consumers. The legal limit for propamocarb in pears, for example, will rise by a factor of 100, to stand at 10 mg/kg. According to EU risk assessment models, at just 11 mg/kg propamocarb could pose a health threat to children.

Concerned at the likely growth in dietary exposure to pesticides, PAN Europe is demanding an official review of the new Regulation. 'The Commission has failed to deliver on the promise of setting legal limits at the lowest achievable level', said Elliott Cannell, Coordinator of PAN Europe. 'The new Regulation is a big step backwards for European consumer protection. It is now vital that PAN Europe try to force the Commission to think again.'

Food items sold in Europe contain 349 different pesticides. Approximately half of all food items tested are contaminated. While over 5% of fruits, cereals and vegetables contain 5 or more pesticides.

## GENERAL TASKS

- \* Lift maincrop potatoes two weeks after the tops have died or been cut down. Make sure the potatoes are dry before storage.
- \* Earth up celery to blanch the stems making them more tender.
- \* Save seed from open-pollinated varieties.
- \* Vacant ground should be dug over and covered with a mulch. Green manure crops planted at the end of summer can be dug into the soil. In milder parts of the country it may still be possible to plant an over-wintering green manure.
- \* Prepare a container for making leaf mould. Trace a square on the ground (2 ft x 2 ft) and hammer a wooden post into each corner. Wrap chicken wire around the sides attaching it to the posts. Fallen leaves can be stored in this container. 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.
- \* Place water butts to collect rain water from roofs of 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 Rust

This is a common disease of leeks occurring during most seasons. Mild infections are common and do little damage but severe infections may kill plants. Infections are clearly visible on leaves as orange or brown pustules which may be round or elongated. They are caused by the fungus *Puccinia allii* (also known as *Puccinia porri*). The pustules contain millions of spores which spread easily by wind to neighbouring plants. Warm and humid conditions encourage the fungus to spread.

*Puccinia allii* can also infect other plants in the same family (the allium family) such as garlic or onions.

The incidence and spread of rust on leeks can be reduced by a number of straightforward measures

- ◆ Good hygiene on your plot - make sure that any infected plant material is removed from your site rather than composted.
- ◆ Early action - remove infected plants (or infected areas of leaf) immediately from your plot (wash your hands and anything else that has been in contact with the infected plant tissue).
- ◆ Spacing - increasing spacing between leeks will allow better air flow and keep humidity from building up.
- ◆ Improve drainage on your site - this will help keep humidity down.
- ◆ Variety selection - although all leeks can be infected with *Puccinia allii* some varieties have partial resistance, such as Ardea, Porvite, Splendid, Walton Mammoth.
- ◆ Avoid excessive nitrogen inputs - lush growth caused by excessive nitrogen is more susceptible to rust infection. Complex organic material, such as compost, releases nitrogen slowly over a long period and so using compost rather than a synthetic fertilizer should avoid this problem.
- ◆ Make sure you have enough potassium - for soil low in potassium add a high potassium supplement such as seaweed dressing or an organic tomato fertilizer.
- ◆ Crop rotation - plant leeks as far away from last years growing site as possible.

Rusts also affect other plants such as beans, plums and some ornamentals (e.g. hollyhocks, iris). However, these are caused by different types of fungus and will not spread to leeks, onions or garlic.



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

To receive monthly gardening tips send email address to:

Roslyn McKendry  
 Pesticide Action Network UK  
 Development House  
 56-64 Leonard Street  
 London EC2A 4JX  
 Tel: 020 7065 0905 Direct 020 7065 0912  
 Fax: 020 7065 0907  
 roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org  
 http://www.pan-uk.org