

End of season.....



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VEGETABLES

Sow outside

- * lettuce (sow hardy variety e.g. winter density or valor)
- * parsley
- * spinach

Plant outside

- * spring cabbage
- * onion sets (plant 'japanese' or overwintering for June)
- * garlic

FRUIT

- * Prune mature plum trees after fruiting. Remove any branches infected by silver leaf fungus. Burn prunings. Cut out broken or overcrowded branches.
- * Apple and pear trees can still be summer pruned.

Vegetable Harvest

Globe artichokes, aubergine, broad beans, french beans, runner beans, swiss chard, beetroot, calabrese broccoli, summer cabbage, red cabbage, peppers, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cucumber, endive, kohlrabi, lettuce, courgettes, squash, pumpkins, onions, shallots, peas, mangetout, potatoes (maincrop), radish, spinach, sweet corn, tomatoes, turnips.

Fruit Harvest

Apples, pears, plums, peaches, nectarines, figs, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, early melons, grapes.

Pesticide poisoning of birds continues

The body of golden eagle which had lived at a secret location next to a grouse moor near Peebles for a decade was found slumped next to the pesticide poisoned bait that claimed its life. A police investigation is under way and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) announced a £1,000 reward for information on the case.

Between 2001 and 2006, some 251 raptors, including five golden eagles, are known to have been deliberately killed in Scotland. But this may only be a fraction of the actual number. In theory, culprits face a sentence of up to six months, and a fine of up to £5,000, but, to date, no-one has been jailed in Scotland.

Mark Rafferty, wildlife crime officer for Lothian and Borders Police, said the bird had been poisoned with carbofuran, a banned pesticide lethal to other animals and humans.

"The bird made up one of a pair, the only pair in the Borders, so for golden eagle populations down here it is catastrophic," he said. "The birds are nest faithful and these birds had been at this nest site for many years and produced chicks for the last few years ... The newly fledged chick is now in danger of dying because it usually takes two birds to sustain and feed a chick."

It is thought the Borders could support about 20 pairs of golden eagles, but despite this pair's success in raising chicks, their other eight offspring have never been seen. Some, or all, may have met a similar fate. And this will effectively wipe out the golden eagle in the Borders, as this was the only pair in the area.

Bob Elliot, head of investigations at RSPB Scotland, said it was time to start sending those responsible to jail. "This bait was found on a grouse moor and the birds were definitely targeted here," he said.

Golden eagles have been persecuted for centuries. They were once found all over Europe, but became extinct over large areas of the continent by the 19th century after farmers and gamekeepers mounted sustained eradication campaigns. In the UK, the bird was exterminated in England and Wales by 1850 and gone from Ireland by 1912. However, a small population has survived in Scotland. In 2003, there were 430 breeding pairs. However, these birds continue to be persecuted.



Police wildlife crime officer Mark Rafferty with the body of the poisoned bird Photo: RSPB

The RSPB's 2006 report, in autumn last year, praised the introduction of new criminal justice and nature conservation acts which it said had "greatly improved the scope for better and more effective wildlife crime policing". In June this year, the RSPB welcomed a sentence of 220 hours of community service imposed on a Borders gamekeeper who was found to have used live pigeons and illegal pesticides in "a systematic attempt to wipe out birds of prey".

Death of this master of the skies is a national scandal, Ian Johnston, The Scotsman, 14 August 2007.

- * Prune summer-fruiting raspberries. Cut down canes which have fruited, and tie up the best unfruited canes (thin if necessary). Autumn-fruiting varieties are pruned in February.
- * Finish planting summer-fruiting strawberry plants and remove those more than 3 years old. Remove strawberry runners in inconvenient locations should - can be replanted elsewhere. Cut back strawberry plants to 1 inch from ground.
- * Support the weight of ripening melons with nets or old tights.
- * Prune away the side shoots of currants. Thin gooseberry shoots.

GENERAL TASKS

- * Lift maincrop potatoes - remove haulms (the above ground parts) several weeks before lifting if they have blight.
- * Cut down asparagus foliage and mulch the ground well.
- * Keep on top of weeding and make sure no weeds go to seed.
- * Fertilise tomatoes weekly.
- * Earth up celery to blanch the stems making them more tender.
- * Save seed from open-pollinated varieties.
- * Check the undersides of brassica leaves for the eggs or caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly.
- * As ground becomes vacant it should be dug over and either manure incorporated or a green manure crop planted.
- * Support tall plants with stakes to protect from September winds.
- * Many bulbs can be planted now for flowering next spring, e.g. crocuses, daffodils, narcissi.
- * Sow grass to repair pathways.
- * Lay tomato plants down over straw and cover with cloches to speed ripening.
- * Remove any tomato foliage affected by blight and burn.

Blossom end rot

This disease most common affects tomatoes although it may also affect peppers. A sunken patch develops on the blossom end (away from the stem) of developing fruit. This patch becomes tough and then darkens as the cells inside collapse. This condition does not necessarily affect all fruit on a truss, or all trusses on a stem.

Blossom end rot is a disease caused by physiological problems arising from a deficiency in calcium. Calcium is a macronutrient required in relatively large amounts for normal cell growth. Insufficient calcium during growth will cause cells to collapse.

Calcium deficiency can arise for different reasons. Commonly it is due to inconsistent watering. Dry conditions around the plant roots prevent the plant taking up calcium and when this is followed by excessive watering blossom end rot often follows. Another cause of blossom end rot is a lack of available calcium in the soil. This may be due to a low ratio of calcium relative to some other competing nutrients such as potassium or nitrogen. Blossom end rot is more likely to develop in acidic soil conditions.

Although blossom end rot is not caused by an infectious organism microorganisms may subsequently grow in the rotting part of the fruit.

Blossom end rot can effectively be prevented by taking a few relatively easy precautions

- ◆ Ensure tomato plants are watered consistently and regularly
- ◆ Mulch soils to prevent water loss and encourage more consistent moisture levels
- ◆ If your soil is acidic add lime to increase the pH to around 6.5 to 7.0
- ◆ Grow varieties which produce small tomatoes as these are less affected

Green manure crops

Green manure crops can help your plot in many ways. They add organic carbon to the soil increasing its fertility. Nitrogen-fixing crops e.g. clover, vetch, will also add nitrogen to the soil.

Green manure crops also provide ground cover and their roots stabilise the soil. This reduces soil erosion during winter rains, particularly on hilly sites. Green manure crops with deep roots can also draw nutrients up to the surface from deep in the soil.

Clovers, rye grasses, winter tares, and fava beans can be sown in the autumn and grown over winter.

They are then chopped down and incorporated into the soil in spring. The ground is left for 3 or 4 weeks to allow the incorporated plant material to rot before a new crop is planted. Green manure crops will rot quickly if the growth is still soft and not woody. If the crop is allowed to mature further and become woody, it can be composted in spring. Don't let any plants go to seed!

On plots with heavy ground which are difficult to dig in wet spring conditions it may be best to sow a quick-growing green manure crop such as fenugreek or buckwheat in late summer. These will be killed off by the first autumn/winter frosts and can be incorporated into soil during autumn cultivation.



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

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