

End of season.....

VEGETABLES

Sow outside

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

Plant outside

- * spring cabbage
- * onion sets (plant 'japanese' or overwintering onions for a June harvest)
- * 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.
- * Prune summer-fruiting raspberries. Cut down canes which have fruited, and tie up the best unfruited canes. 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 ripening melons with nets or old tights.
- * Prune away the side shoots of currants. Thin gooseberry shoots.

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.



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

Pesticides make you fat

Scientists in Spain have studied the link between pre-natal exposure to hexachlorobenzene (HCB) and obesity. Starting from mid-1997, all mothers presenting for antenatal exposure in Menorca were recruited. Doctors subsequently examined blood from the umbilical cords of over 400 children born on the island. All showed high levels of HCB and other organochlorine pesticides. Although it is banned globally under the Stockholm Convention, HCB continues to persist in the environment.

The children's weight and height were measured both at birth and at age 6.5 years to determine their body mass index (BMI). The study found that children with the highest HCB levels (1.03 ng/ml in cord blood) were 2.5 to 3 times more likely to be overweight, or obese, at age 6.5 years than those with low levels (0.46 ng/ml). Other environmental pollutants, such as bisphenol A (used in baby bottles), and phthalates (found in plastic food wrappers) have also been linked to obesity. These 'obesogens' may be able to influence genes in the womb, turning stem cells into fat cells. Obesity is one of the biggest health challenges currently facing many developed countries. The current drive to fight obesity focuses on changing diet and lifestyle. It may also be necessary to reduce our 'body burden' of 'obesogens' for such lifestyle changes to be effective.

Exposure to hexachlorobenzene during pregnancy increases the risk of overweight in children aged 6 years. Smink A, Ribas-Fito N, Garcia R, Torrent M, Mendez MA, Grimalt JO, Sunyer J. Acta Paediatrica, 2008, 97(10):1465-1469.

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 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.



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
56-64 Leonard Street,
London EC2A 4LT, UK.
tel: +44 (0)20 7065 0905
fax: +44 (0)20 7065 0907
roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org
<http://www.pan-uk.org>