

Sedlescombe and District Garden Society

Newsletter No. 56 – April 2020



Lachenalia

Chris's
entry for
Section B4



And a beautiful
Cymbidium
Orchid

Entry for
Section B1

The President writes:

I was asked by your secretary to give my thought and tips on the garden.

The 21st of March is a significant date in my gardening calendar. It is the equinox when we have equal Day and Night. At last the soil is warming up. Another sign that I look for are the weed seedlings. When one sees these, it is the time to start planting out the majority of seeds. Broad beans and parsnips come to mind, but it is perhaps prudent to wait a couple of weeks, say mid to late April before one really gets going with peas, carrots and other vegetables and such like. I have also formed the opinion that sometimes it is better to buy the vegetables than try to grow them!

However, it is still too early for runner beans and traditionally, one quote is: the 5th of May as runner bean day. They will start in the open ground, but most of us tend to grow them in pots to plant out. Sweet peas are another plant that comes to mind. It seems to me that everything catches up, and the idea of sowing seeds incrementally is not as productive as one imagines it to be. It is often said that shallots should be planted on the shortest day, and harvested on the longest day. I have tried this several times and really can say that it doesn't seem to make any difference. Remember, that we are talking of conditions in Sedlescombe and perhaps not the rest of the country.

Sweet corn is an interesting plant. Like all maize's it grows at night and also needs a minimum temperature to grow. This is why it is successful near the equator, but the in UK it is almost at its northern limit. I plant mine about the 9th of May where they are intended to grow. Always plant in a group as it is wind pollinated. I often only plant half the packet and always seal up the foil package with sellotape as soon as possible. It is surprising how long some seeds keep their vitality. I always write the date I planted them on the seed packet for future reference.

I think that tomatoes share some traits with sweet corn. I have tried growing them by cuttings and over wintering them in the house. No success but cuttings will take when the plants have put on some growth in the spring. I find there is little advantage in growing them too early either, as they all seem to catch up in the end. I grow a lot of unknown different varieties. I collect the seed from wherever and whenever I have an interesting tomato for lunch. I scrape a few seeds from of the plate onto a tissue not forgetting to name them if possible. The tissue dries out leaving the seeds stuck on to it. Come late April, I just plant the tissue with an appropriate number of seeds and let them grow. It is great fun to see how they come up. Consequently, I have yellow pear, miniature plum; in fact, a whole spectrum of varieties. The seed will last several years as they are fresh seed when collected.

Over the years one tends to grow things that would look good on the show bench. Beans, peas, sweet corn, beetroot come to mind, but the list is endless. I always look at the schedule to give an idea what to grow. Our seasons are bit erratic, so what is good for one year fails in subsequent years. There is a technique in showing; the first one is to read the schedule several times. I am very happy to discuss the show bench with anybody.

Finally, an appeal about bees. This has been a bad winter and I have lost two colonies and the ever-reliable colony in the cottage chimney has failed to survive. My beekeeping colleagues in Battle have lost a further 6. Consequently, there is a dearth of honeybees. One has only to look at the flowering trees to notice this, but the bumble bee and the bee flies which have a completely different life cycle are in abundance. Although swarms are not expected for at least a couple of weeks, if you come across one, feel free to telephone 01424 772682 and let me know where it is.

Finally, horse manure is available for free in a self-isolating site. Give me a ring on 01424 772682 . Chris Hone



Appropriately for this week, these lovely Pasque flowers were snapped by Colin and Pauline Raymond in their Sedlescombe garden



Notices

Rotherview Nursery, although not open, will deliver. Also Eds Nursery at Staplecross was still open for business last week and hopefully still is. Plants from Kent Street Nursery are available at the Harrow Stores and from the back of the New Inn, Westfield.

This edition is pretty much vegetable based but the information sent in won't be relevant if I leave it for future Newsletters. Rod has given us some valuable tips and ideas to improve our vegetable growing

On the Vegetable Plot.

Now is the time to be getting on with planting all your seeds, which will produce the fruits of your labour in the coming months. The weather has been perfect for bringing on tender plants indoors, or in a heated greenhouse. Although there is always a chance of frost, I think we should be safe to plant out seeds during April. When I draw a trench for seeds I always water before planting, but always read instructions on the seed packet prior to sowing. Please do not sow on a windy day.

If you have not already done so it would be a good idea to make sure all your gardening tools are in good order. Your tools will serve you well, if you maintain them well.

This year I have started my peas off in plastic guttering, left over by a neighbour after some building work. I have cut the gutter into 1 metre lengths with duck tape over the ends to stop the water dripping out. The peas have come on well ready to push out into prepared trenches when weather permits.

If you are planting potatoes now is the time to plant second early, followed by main crop. I purchased 3 potato grow bags last year from the Pound Shop and they proved a great success, if you have not got much room, try it and you will not be disappointed at the rewards.

I have planted my onion sets out now along with my garlic and shallot sets all in a sunny position. They appear to be responding well, but may need protection later. When you come to thin out your carrots try and think about the timing, and do it in the evening. Try not to crush the foliage or you could attract carrot fly.

We may still get late frosts this month, so please protect your plants with fleece or plastic. If you are able to, get out in the garden enjoy the sense of freedom your garden offers and think of others not so fortunate.

Good Gardening and Stay Well. Rod.

John Tunstall has very kindly given the Society a number of Cotton and Lemon drop chilli plants to give away to members. The cotton seedlings were initially grown for the young gardeners and we included them in the schedule for the Autumn Show. It would be nice if young people could be encouraged to grow some in the hope the Autumn show will go ahead but there are enough for adults to have a go as well. If the show does go ahead we will add a category into the schedule for these pretty and unusual plants. Growing instructions and information will be included with the cotton plants.



If you would like any of these plants please ring or e-mail me and I will make arrangements with you to leave them safely outside my house for you to collect.

Brenda Page 01424 870455 and e-mail

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NEXT ISSUE look out for a gardening crossword.