

Hope allotments blog – January 2022



December's weather was pretty normal with the start being cold and frosty and then getting milder towards Christmas. This is why we rarely have a 'White' Christmas although I do seem to remember one back in the 1960's. The rest of the month was pretty wet with New Year's Eve being the warmest on record. After that January became wet and cold with a number of frosty days which is fine as garlic needs a period of below freezing temperatures to germinate and it kills off some of the pests and diseases which bedevil any allotments but can be a bit miserable to work in.

Contrary to popular belief there are still plenty of plants which can be cropped at this time of year. It is actually in early spring when food becomes scarce in the 'hungry gap' between the end of the last year's crops and the maturing of this year's.



Our kale, particularly the cavolo nero, is doing very well and the spinach plants, both undercover and outdoor, are supplying gratifying quantities of leaves.



To cook 'wilted spinach' all you have to do is wash and coarsely chop the leaves, then fry them with a little olive oil for a couple of minutes and finally add some butter and black pepper and serve.

I can't believe that we had invent 'Popeye' to try to persuade children to eat spinach instead of cooking it properly but that was the same for most vegetables. They were boiled to death and were soggy and horrible and put children off them for life.

Winter is a time for doing landscaping and maintenance, weather permitting, and Hope has been donated a lovely old greenhouse with double doors that will be perfect for our wheel chair access growing area on the new Eco-therapy plot.

There was an interesting article in the papers recently about home worm composting.

Check out the following website if you're interested.

<https://theurbanworm.co.uk/wormup/>

Hope's own worm compost bin is doing very well and we will be using it to feed our tomatoes, cucumbers, chillies etc later on in the year. Worm compost is very concentrated and shouldn't generally be used neat in large quantities so either use it as a feed on pot plants or raised beds or mix it with other ingredients like sand, sieved soil and peat substitutes to enrich them.

Looking forward to February.

February is another of those months where it can be nice one minute and really wintery the next. We quite often get strong winds and depending upon which way the wind blows determines the type of weather system. An east wind, which is where the wind blows from the east rather than blowing towards the east, generally causes cold and sometimes snowy weather. This is because the UK is actually fairly far north as things go (Edinburgh is on the same latitude as Moscow). Also there are no mountain ranges to stop the wind blowing from Siberia across the plains of northern Europe and across the North Sea and anyone living on the east coast will confirm this.

Finally,

Continuing with our explanations of plant names.

The name **alba** in a plant name generally refers to the colour white and indicates that some part of the plant, be it the flowers, leaves or possibly the bark of a tree, will have a white or whitish colour somewhere. An example of this is albiflora – which means the plant has white flowers.

Have a happy gardening month and see you in February.

Joe - the Hope gardener