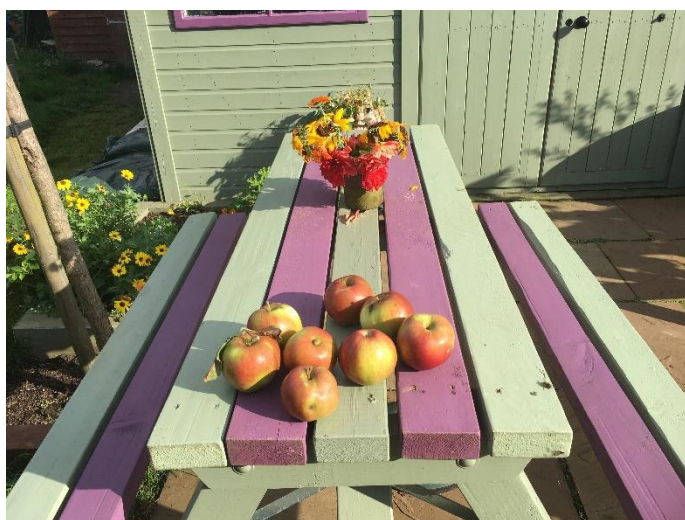


Hope allotments blog – October 2021

September was pretty dry initially and then towards the end of the month we got the rain that we had been expecting. This carried on into October which has been uncharacteristically warm so far. This means that tender plants, such as nasturtiums, outdoor tomatoes and courgettes, which could have been killed by an early frost, are still alive and well and, in the case of the nasturtiums, still producing heaps of flowers.



'Idared' apples – late season

One of our espalier apple trees is 'Idared', a desert apple that you pick in mid to late October and although they are pretty big for eating apples they should make excellent juice.

Apples can be picked from early August to the end of October depending upon the variety chosen. These are known as early, mid-season and late apples and you could even have one of each type grafted onto a single rootstock which would (theoretically) give you apples all the way from August to October and would only take up the space of a normal apple tree.

If you have limited space and don't want huge quantities of apples then growing trees as cordons, fans or espaliers is a way of utilising a smallish space whilst still getting a reasonable amount of fruit. The problem is that all three types require quite a lot of time and effort to train them into the right shape or a considerable expense to buy the part-trained tree in the first place. There are always positives and negatives to any scheme. It all depends on what you want and how much time and effort you are willing to spend.

There is a shocking article in one of the daily newspapers saying that Britain has lost nearly half of its biodiversity since the industrial revolution. If we carry on this way we will soon be living in a desert. There is more biodiversity in a modern new build housing estate than there is in the average farmers field. Mono culture and the overuse of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and fungicides has reduced what were once thriving wildlife communities to nearly lifeless praries. We are not talking hundreds of years ago here! Since the 1960's modern farming has seen the use of bigger and bigger machinery requiring bigger and bigger fields with the subsequent loss of hedgerows and wildlife habitat. That combined with excessive use of chemicals has destroyed or

poisoned our farmland to the extent that withing 30 years the soil could be so degraded that we will be unable to grow anything.

There is a movement called 'regenerative farming' which is hoped will counter some of this destruction but unless large scale industrial farming is stopped then we have as much chance of saving our soil as we have of stopping global heating. You have been warned.

Back to a happier subject. October is the pumpkin season and we have a couple of nice ones that could be carved for Halloween. Hopefully people who buy pumpkins for their children will realise that you pumpkins are edible and stop wasting so much. Last year it was estimated that up to 60% of pumpkins were used solely for carving.



Looking forward to November.

November is the month when the last of the summer crops are harvested if they haven't been already and you can start planting for the next year.

Broad bean 'Aquadulce', 'Aquadulce Claudia' or the dwarf variety 'The Sutton' are perfect for planting out in late October or November ready to overwinter and give you an early crop which should, hopefully, be able to withstand attacks from blackfly.

Garlic and autumn sown onion sets can be sown indeed garlic needs a period of quite intense cold to help it germinate.

A short rooted variety of carrots (we are using 'Adelaide' this year) can be sown in your glass house or poly tunnel if you have one or covered with fleece or cloches if you don't.

You can plant various salad crops like lettuce 'Winter density' or 'Arctic king' which will tolerate the cold and of course Claytonia 'lamb's lettuce' which the French call 'Mache' which is very hardy and is one of the earliest cropping greens hence the name.

November is also the month when you should start planning for next year's crops if you haven't already. If you need to make any major changes on your plot or in your garden then you will have the whole winter to carry them out ready for the spring.

Finally,

Did you know that the carrots we ate were originally white and only became orange after the Dutch bred them that way to commemorate William of Orange?

Have a happy gardening month and see you in November.

Joe - the Hope gardener