



Gardening News for Hopeman BALL Group

Introduction

At this time of year it is very much maintenance in the garden and the greenhouse although I am still pricking out some seedlings of Livingston Daisies which I planted for my neighbour and lettuces which I will continue to sow all year. I also have some kale seedlings which will continue to grow over next winter into a spring crop. Again I will be placing plants on to my garden wall for people to take away. Of course, the weeds continue to grow but I haven't left much space for them and I try to remove them before they get time to put on much root.

Last month, my geraniums were all looking very good with their covering of flowers but of course, they don't last forever. In order to keep the flowers coming it is important to deadhead them and to remove any leaves that are looking yellow or ragged. I take the odd dead flower off while the plant is in situ but there comes a point where a bigger job needs doing. For this I take the plant down to my potting bench and go over it very carefully removing dying flowers and snipping off leaves and stems where necessary. This often leaves the plant looking quite bare but it will come again and will also provide new shoots for taking cuttings. I took a day this week to go over each of my geraniums separately and gave them all a feed after I had given them their haircuts.



I have various tools that I use to maintain my pots, some of which are hand made, some I have bought and some which have come free with other gardening items. The top green implement here came with my dibber and a sieve and I think cost £1 in Poundland. As you can see, it is broken but I find it useful to extract small plants, using the broad end, together with their roots from multiple section trays. The pointed end I use to loosen the compost around the plants in their pots because it becomes compacted with watering and needs to be loosened to allow air in. The other tool is my 'snipper' which is very useful for snipping flower heads, leaves and even thin stems. The ring fits over the little finger for leverage.

The flowers in the garden also need deadheading and although this is most often done with roses, it should be done to all of your other flowering plants too. I have recently found myself spending most of my time deadheading or watering especially since we have had so little rain.

The Chelsea Cut is also very useful to keep your plants looking good and continuing to flower. This idea came from the Chelsea Flower Show many years ago and originally was intended for shrubs. However, I have also used it with annuals such as Pansies and biennials such as Antirrhinums. I use my secateurs to cut off all the dead flowers and seed heads so that the plant is just left with its green leaves. It may well take a while for the new flower buds to show but you will normally get a second crop of flowers at least. At the end of last season, I did the Chelsea Cut on all of my Sweet Williams and Antirrhinums and I have been well rewarded with early blossoms from both this year.



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My tomato plants have finally started flowering and now I am beginning to look for the first signs of a tomato.



And here is my first cucumber! The flower above is also a female flower and will hopefully produce another one. The male flowers have to be removed because if they pollinate the female flower, the cucumber will become bitter. It is however not always easy for me to decide which is which. The male flower grows on a narrow stalk while the female flower has what looks like a tiny cucumber for a stalk and is wider. I still think I may have removed some by mistake. There are seeds you can buy which do not produce male flowers and make life much simpler.

All of my other vegetables are flowering including the broad beans, the mange tout and the main crop potatoes. My early crop potatoes are not flowering and perhaps they are not supposed to. I need to do a bit of research.

The beetroot are beginning to beginning to show their red rounded roots and one of my seven carrots is also showing signs of a carrot. My blackcurrant bush is full of currants and a few are even beginning to change colour. It is exciting to see everything growing but it is a waiting game and I am impatient to start harvesting. Remember to keep up the watering because the ground is very dry and root vegetables need a lot of water. The beetroot will shoot if they lack water and will become very fibrous. Peas and beans also need a lot of water to enable the pods to fill out.

When did you last check your rose bushes for any rogue growth? All roses are grown on root stocks which have a wild rose element. Some times the root stock will start to grow and then the very rapidly taking energy from check for this by counting the compound leaves. In this case and they are very green unlike stems are also have a lot of which often is bred to have few



wild rose shoots will grow the rest of the plant. You can leaflets on each of the you will see that there are 7 the rest of the plant. The spines unlike the main plant spines or none at all.

Finally a word about companion planting. At one time gardens either contained vegetables or flowers and some still do but there is a case for mixing the two. Carrot fly which can decimate carrot plants and parsnips is confused by planting Tagetes or Marigolds along side the root crop. Allium plants such as Onions Leeks and Chives will also ward off unwanted pests. It seems that aromas from the flowers confuse the pests and they stay away. I am still working on my snail attack however and this week I have added copper tape to my pots. A snail has even managed to get on to my cucumber plant. I am on its case!



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Keep gardening and let me know how things are growing.