



Gardening News for Hopeman BALL Group

Introduction

This morning I met a man on the beach, as one does, and he was collecting buckets of seaweed. I had seen him on another occasion but this time I thought I would ask a few questions about the seaweed. He was a wealth of information and is going to talk to us at the BALL Group once we are back.

I don't have many more plants to give away and people are now returning pots which I much appreciate. I will have a few lettuce plants ready for new homes in about a week's time.

I have collected and put seaweed on the garden in the autumn and winter but I never thought to use it in the spring and summer. Seaweed is a very good source of minerals and seaweed feed which you can get in gardening centres is very expensive to buy. However, I learned this morning that the best seaweed is that which has been broken up. If not, then you can chop it up with shears. It can then be placed as a mulch around your vegetables.

My geraniums have certainly benefited from feeding this year. The Balmoral geraniums have given me a fine display already and many of the others are either blooming or in bud. I have been feeding them about every two to three weeks. The Balmoral ones are vigorous plants and have very wooden stems which are not very attractive but once they have flowered I intend to cut them back to encourage shoots so that I can take new cuttings for the next generation.



Do you remember my potatoes which I planted in bags? I have continued to fill up the bags with fresh compost and now the bags are full. As you can see, the potatoes are continuing to grow and I will leave them now until after they flower although I might just find room for some seaweed to see if that makes any difference. I don't usually get a lot of potatoes but even a few meals from them is worth the effort. In the blue bag I have planted one purple sprouting broccoli and you can just see that it is growing. Another experiment which hopefully works.

It is good to see everything growing at this time of year, which in some cases does mean that staking plants and tying them up is essential. The netting, which I erected for my sweet peas and mange touts, is a good support and the tendrils from the plants are attaching themselves to the supports. I do tie some of the plants in where necessary, especially to prevent wind and rain damage. The broad bean plants however, do need staking and tying up. This year I have double planted my broadbeans with main crop potatoes and it may mean that neither are as productive as usual but space was a premium and I decided to give it a try.



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You may remember that one of my M&S pots contained carrots. I eventually managed to grow 7 plants from the one little pot. I have never been successful with carrots, especially because the carrot fly usually gets there before me and completely ruins them.



I have now put 5 plants into this quite tall pot and I have two more in a smaller pot. Carrot fly apparently does not attack carrots if the plants are raised about one foot (30cms) off the ground. I have measured my pots and both are above this height so here's hoping I have beaten them this time around. We have now eaten the radishes and continue to eat the lettuce which I have now cut a few times. The second

of pots I was given have now produced more cress for a sandwich and more carrots have germinated.



lot

pots

get

My tomato plants have now graduated to their final big and are clearly enjoying the space. They will not need feeding until the first tomatoes appear but it is important not to let them dry out otherwise they can blossom rot and this doesn't appear until they are maturing.

The snails and slugs can take their toll on most plants and I like to try a number of natural remedies before resorting to chemicals. This year I have placed grit around some of my broccoli and coffee grounds around others. Then just yesterday I noticed cabbage white butterflies. I like butterflies and I don't mind sharing with them but their offspring have eaten whole plants in the past. I am in the process of thinking what I will do to limit their damage.

Margaret sent me a lovely photo of her Clematis on her wall and Carol sent me a photo of her successful M&S pots.



It is always good to see what is happening in other people's gardens.

I have continued to plant more seeds in the greenhouse even though it is a bit late. The Livingstone Daisies have germinated well although only 4 Pansies are showing through. The few Zinnia plants I have remaining are still not doing well



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and I am reluctant to put them outside at the moment. My Basil is growing but very slowly and the Parsley from the M&S pots, which I have pricked out, still has only two seed leaves. The Geranium cuttings I took earlier in the year are starting to grow and one even has buds on.

Please let me know how your gardens are growing and send me photos if you can. I would appreciate any ideas to stop the butterflies eating my crops!