

JOBS FOR JULY IN THE VEG GARDEN



The picture is of the pretty green manure *Phacelia tanacetifolia*. The bees adore the flowers so it makes a great companion plant and looks pretty in a jar on the kitchen table too! See Tips at the end for more information on using green manures.

1. Start preparing strawberry beds ready for planting out in late summer. They prefer a sunny position with a mildly acidic pH of 6.5 to neutral. Mix in lots of bulky organic matter when digging such as well-rotted garden compost or similar at about half a wheelbarrow full per square metre. Remove all weeds, particularly the pernicious ones, then level the soil out and rake.
2. Continue to give fruit and flowering plants a regular liquid feed.
3. If you're growing cucumbers, courgettes or squashes pinch out the ends of any sideshoots to divert the energy into fruit production.
4. Keep a check on tomato stakes, as the plants will be getting heavy. Towards the end of the month some people pinch out the growing point at the second leaf above the fourth flower truss as although new fruit may set, it won't have time to ripen.
5. Tie Brussels sprouts to strong stakes as they grow to prevent them blowing over in summer gales.
6. Remove all but the strongest couple of runners from strawberry plants as they will get tangled as they search out new soil. Plant the strong runners into pots of compost buried in the soil next to the parent plant. Once rooted they can be cut from the parent. (see www.greensidupveg.blogspot.com) for more information on Strawberries.
7. If you're growing cucumbers or peppers, (depending upon variety) remove the male flowers if they are flowering heavily. When vine flowers have set, remove all except about ten to twelve on each plant, evenly spaced. Their fruit can become bitter if they're left on.
8. Runner beans are a hungry, deep rooting plant. If you live in a drought-prone area ensure they are kept watered and consider mulching to retain moisture.
9. Continue to thin crops such as carrots, borage, swedes and turnips.
10. Check your compost heap and water if it's looking dry.

What you can sow outside now...

French beans (kidney beans)
Beetroot
Spring cabbage
Carrots
Kale
Lettuce
Radish
Summer spinach
Turnips



Continue to sow successionaly Beetroot, Carrots, Lettuce, Pea, Radish, Swede, and Turnip and summer spinach.

Tip for July

Green Manures

Green manuring is an effective way of adding organic matter to the soil. It is usually sown when one crop has finished and before the next crop is planted. Some green manures can be planted in between rows too. Green manures are usually dug in or composted before they flower. However, some can be left such as Phacelia as they act as great companion plants, encouraging beneficial insects such as bees.

There are many benefits of green manuring, including:

- The foliage helps to suppress weeds and gives cover to beneficial insects.
- The roots improve soil structure and prevent damage to the soil from the effects of weathering.
- The roots of green manures can increase the water holding capacity of soil to make it more drought resistant.
- Earthworm populations will increase, as they will have more organic matter to sustain them.
- Some green manures 'fix' Nitrogen (N) into the soil. If there's a shortage of nitrogen, plant growth can be inhibited. Most vegetables have to convert nitrogen from the soil to obtain it but nitrogen fixers, such as peas or beans (legume crops) are able to absorb it from the air. Nodules form on their roots that are then used by the plant.

Green manures can be planned in the crop rotation and planted anywhere in soil that would otherwise be left empty for six weeks or more. Spare ground can also be sown with green manures for up to a year or more to improve and maintain fertility.

If the crop is too tough to dig in, such as Rye, chop off the top growth using shears or a hoe and leave the foliage to die down on the soil surface. The roots will rot down naturally.

Beware that some green manures such as *Secale* cereal and *Vicia sativa* will release germination inhibitors into the soil which means that small seeded crops should not be sown by up to a month after digging in.