



A more digestible Guide to Jobs to do on the
Allotment in September

Composited off the Internet
By Gareth Richards

Fruit & Vegetable Growing Guide for September

September is the end of summer although we're often lucky to have an Indian summer with blue skies and sunshine, nothing is certain with the weather. The bulk of the harvest comes home now and as crops come out the plot begins to empty

Sowing & Planting in September on the Vegetable Plot

As we leave summer behind and approach autumn, the rush to get things into the ground slows to a near halt, which is not to say that work stops!

This is one of the busiest months with harvesting. It's worth sowing some winter hardy spring onions ready for spring. I stick with White Lisbon, which never fails me, but make sure you get winter hardy.

You can sow lettuce like Arctic King now they'll be ready in early spring as well. We think of lettuce as a summer crop but actually they don't like too much heat and are surprisingly hardy,

Autumn onion sets can go in now to provide an early crop and plant out spring cabbages to slowly develop for next year.

Green Manure

Early September is the time to sow green manures as land becomes vacant. They perform three jobs for you.

First, they soak up any nutrients which would otherwise be washed away in winter rain. In fact, sowing a legume such as Winter Tares or field beans will fix nitrogen from the air.

Second, they provide compost material and improve the soil structure

Third, they prevent weed growth by crowding them out and that's less work for you

If you're blessed with a light soil then just leave them in over winter. In the spring you dig them in and allow them to rot down for a few weeks. If you've a heavy clay soil, dig them in when you do your late autumn, early winter digging.

Following potatoes on with mustard can be useful for curbing eelworm but be aware that mustard is a brassica and best to avoid if you've a clubroot problem.

One of the best green manures for winter growth is Hungarian grazing rye. It continues to grow, albeit slowly, in cold weather and should be around 15" tall come the spring from an early September sowing. Not only will you have a lush mass of foliage but it also produces a mass of roots that will provide humus for bacterial breakdown.

Cultivating

Keep feeding your tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers but it's not really worthwhile feeding other plants at this time of year as they are nearly finished and the nutrients are best saved for the spring. Keep the side shoots in check on the tomatoes.

Don't give up on the hoe, it's far better to hoe weeds away when you can hardly see them than when they're established. As the saying goes "Hoe when you can't see a weed and you'll never see a weed"

Keep an eye on your brassicas for butterfly eggs and caterpillars, these will most probably be under the leaves. The greenhouse pests should be on the wane but keep an eye out if the weather is good as they can leap back so quickly

Composting

September and October are the right time to work on your compost. Usually the cool compost bins will have partially decomposed material at the top and rotted compost at the base.

Take the partially rotted off and then take out the rotted compost to spread on the ground or pile ready to add to the base of trenches when digging over to encourage the worms to deepen your top soil.

The partially rotted goes back in the bin along with fresh green materials (preferably shredded), some manure if you have it and lime in layers. Once a heap is built, cover with cardboard, plastic sheet or tarpaulin and, with luck, you'll get a hot compost going before the real winter chill hits.

Fruit

Tidy up the summer fruiting raspberries. Cut off the canes that have fruited and tie in the new shoots that will bear next year's fruit.

The summer fruiting strawberries can be attended to now as well. Cut off the foliage about 1" from the ground, clearing and weeding as you go. Any runners can be planted up to replace 3 year old plants that are best replaced now.

Harvest

The maincrop potatoes may be ready now. When you harvest your potatoes take care to remove all the tubers. Any left will not only sprout next year and become a weed but will also be a reservoir for disease and potato blight spores. It's often worth forking over a few days after harvesting potatoes because more seem to miraculously appear.

If blight has struck your potatoes the best method to preserve the crop is to remove the haulm and dispose of it then leave the potatoes in the ground for a fortnight or longer to stop the spores getting onto the tubers.

The runner beans and French beans will be continuing to produce until frost strikes. The last of the peas should be coming in as well. Compost the foliage of the peas and beans but leave the roots in the ground as the nodules on them contain nitrogen.

From the greenhouse you should be picking aubergines, chilli and sweet peppers as well as cucumbers and tomatoes.

Other Crops You Could be Harvesting Now

Beetroot
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflowers
Courgettes
Globe Artichokes
Kale
Kohlrabi
Lettuce
Leeks
Marrows
Onions
Pumpkins
Radishes
Spring Onions
Spinach
Sweetcorn
Turnips

Growing in a Polytunnel in September

What to sow, plant and harvest from your polytunnel in September

Your tunnel or greenhouse is likely to get a little bit out of hand during this month, with most crops not being at their prime any longer. Pests and diseases are also spreading much faster than before. You have to decide which plants to clear and which ones to leave a bit longer. Remember it's a good idea to clear some areas to let some light and air in for the remaining plants. A good excuse is that you need that space for your winter salads.

Many commercial growers claim that they get a much better income from winter salads than from a tomato crop in the summer.

Sowing in the Polytunnel

In September you can sow a whole range of excellent winter salads that will provide you with fresh greens throughout the winter until the following spring if they are well looked after.

Direct sowing into beds in the polytunnel

There is likely to be space available again for sowing directly into the beds. Any salad crop can be sown directly into the ground now or sown into modular trays for planting out later. The decision is yours. You can also get an excellent crop of radishes and baby turnips from a direct sowing in September.

Planting into beds in the polytunnel

All the crops that have been raised in modular trays in the previous month can now be planted out into the tunnel or greenhouse.

Calabrese, chard, Chinese cabbage, claytonia, chervil, coriander, dill, Florence fennel, lettuce, oriental brassica salads, pak choi, parsley, scallions, spinach (annual and perpetual).

Sowing into modules/pots (18–20°C)

Claytonia (or Winter Purslane) – 5 seeds per cell

Chervil, coriander, dill – 5 seeds per cell each

Lettuce (winter types) – 1 to 3 seeds per cell

Oriental brassica salads (all types) – 5 seeds per cell

Pak Choi (various) – 1 seed per cell

Scallions (Ishikura Bunching) – 10 seeds per cell

Spinach (annual) – 4 seeds per cell

Spinach (perpetual) – 1 seed per cell

Harvesting from the Polytunnel

September is still a very productive month in your tunnel or greenhouse.

You can harvest:

Aubergines, basil, calabrese, coriander, Chinese cabbage, courgette, cucumber, dill, Florence fennel, French beans, lettuce, melons, oriental brassica salads, pak choi, parsley, peppers, salads, scallions, spinach, tomatoes.

General greenhouse/polytunnel maintenance

Water less frequently and less heavily now, about once or twice per week. Avoid watering in the evening as this will encourage the spread of fungal diseases.

Ventilate as much as possible. The tunnel and greenhouse doors should be left open during the day (unless it's stormy) and closed at night.

Weekly maintenance for summer crops: side-shooting and training tomatoes, cucumbers and melons. Remove the lower leaves that are discoloured or diseased.

Check all plants regularly and remove dead and diseased plants and plant parts.

Keep a watch out for pests, especially greenhouse whitefly, tomato moth caterpillars, aphids, red spider mite, slugs and snails.

Harvest regularly when the crops are ready.

How to Contact the Editor

If you have comments or you know I have given wrong advice then please contact me by email at

info@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

If you have something to contribute or have a say on allotment life, then please use my email to send your contributions.

I am going to process the magazine issue once a month, so if there are comments you would like to make they can be answered in future editions.

I would like to add that most of the articles are taken off the web and some well known gardening and allotments magazines have been read in the making of our magazine content.

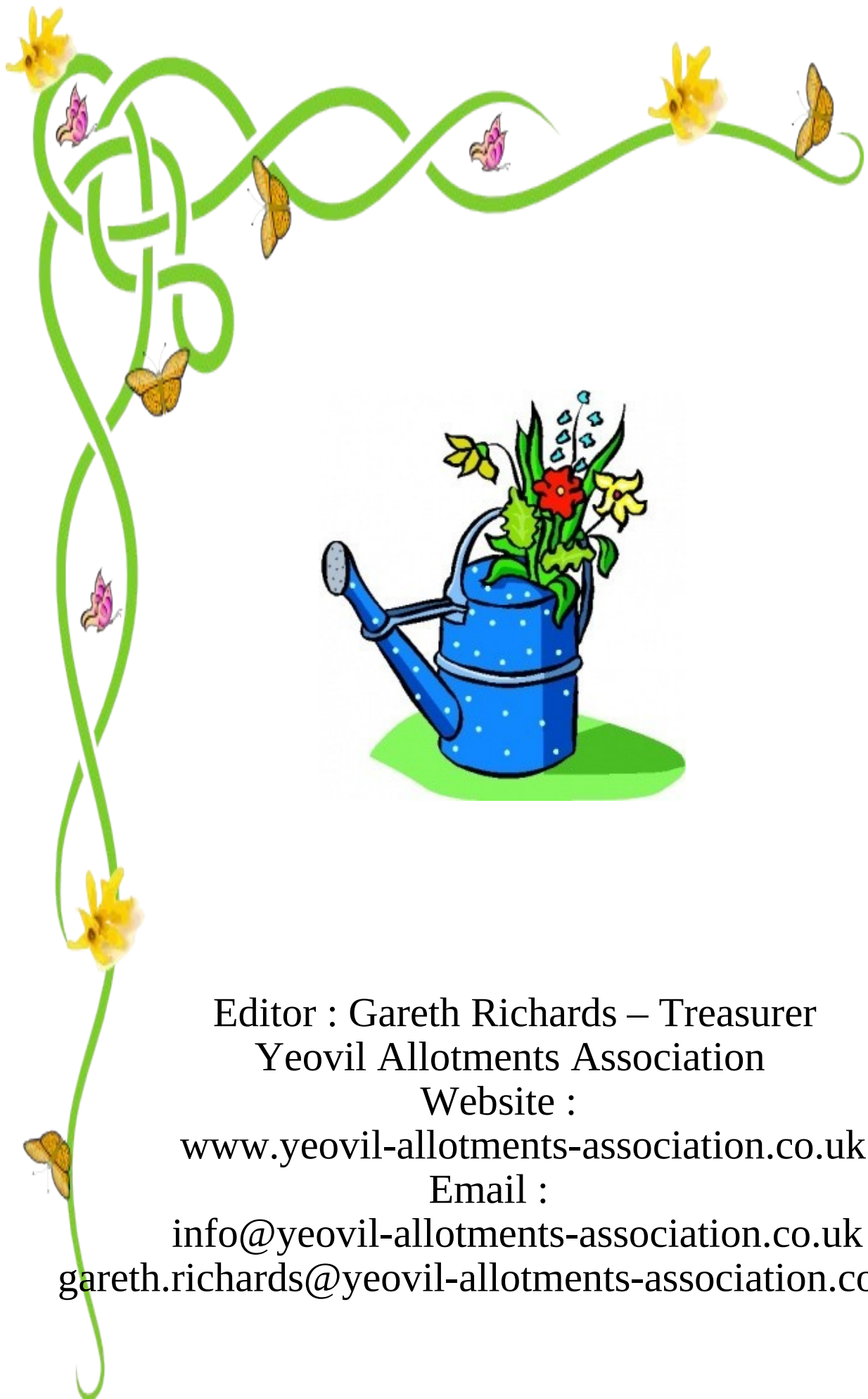
We also have our own website at :

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

where you can find this magazine as well as a catalogue

Happy Allotmenting and best wishes,

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