



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

Composited off the Internet
By Gareth Richards

Fruit & Vegetable Growing Guide for July

July is usually one of the hottest and driest months so a lot of time may be spent watering. You can reduce water loss and so save yourself some time. Mulching with a layer of organic matter will help preserve moisture but may encourage slugs so you will need to take action against them.

Another good method of preventing water loss is to hoe. This not only kills the weeds but breaks up the top of the soil stopping water from being drawn to the surface by capillary action and evaporating.

Although the hectic sowing of the first part of the year is past, there are still things to sow, plant out and happily harvest.

Those early potatoes should be coming out of the ground now and although they do not store as well as the maincrop varieties they will store until finished.

Sowing & Planting in July on the Vegetable Plot

Direct Sowing

In dry weather draw your drill and water it well prior to sowing and then just water with a fine rose after to settle the seeds in.

In really hot spells you might need to water young seedlings early morning and late evening to keep them going.

Although the sowing season is coming to a close there are still things to sow in July

Spring Cabbage

Chicory

Chinese cabbage

Kohl rabi

Lettuce

Peas

French Beans
Beetroot
Carrots
Radishes
Turnips

Planting Out

If they've not gone out yet, it's time to plant out your leeks. Just dib a hole about 150mm 6" deep and drop the leek into the hole. Water it in and the job's done. Don't follow old advice about trimming the tops and roots, it has no beneficial effect and is probably harmful. You don't need to fill the holes with soil, enough will wash in with watering and rain. The reason you plant in a hole is to blanch the stem.

Brassicas from pots can go out as well: broccoli, calabrese, Brussel sprouts and cabbage

Green Manures

I like to follow on the first early potatoes with leeks but otherwise a green manure can avoid bare ground which is just going to grow weeds. Mustard is fast growing and is supposed to confuse the potato eel worm into breeding at the wrong time, hence a follow on to potatoes. It is a brassica so don't use it if you suffer from club root.

Another fast growing green manure crop you can use is French beans. Even if you have enough beans for the kitchen, the plant produces a fair amount of leaf and stem plus the roots, as with all legumes, have nodules containing bacteria that fix nitrogen from the atmosphere. .

Most likely (hopefully!!) you'll need to water if the weather is dry and bright. Don't just lightly sprinkle each day, it helps pests like slugs and encourages shallow rooting. Water when the soil is dry a few inches below the surface (stick your finger in to see) thoroughly – about 10 litres per square metre. This should last at least a week of hot, dry weather.

Watch out for slugs & snails. Whether you use pellets, traps, biological controls or just pick them off doesn't matter as long as you keep on top of the problem

The butterflies are about now as well. Beautiful as they are, check the undersides of your brassica leaves for the yellow or white eggs that will hatch into caterpillars and devastate the plant. You can squash them, wipe or wash them off easily at this stage.

Fruit

If we do get a prolonged dry spell, don't forget that that fruit bushes and trees need watering. Swelling apples and currants need water as much as leafy vegetables. Once again, give a good soaking rather than little sprinkles that encourage surface rooting.

In June apples have the "June Drop" where the tree drops excess fruit. After this it is worth thinning out if the branches are still overcrowded. Tie in blackberry canes as they grow and check netting, fruit cages etc have no access for the birds.

When you've had the last rhubarb, give them a good feed by mulching with well-rotted manure mixed with compost or an artificial like growmore to enable them to build strength for next year.

In the Greenhouse / Polytunnel

Keep pinching off the side shoots with your tomatoes and keep an eye out for pests such as aphids, whitefly, red spider mite.

Cultivation, Pests & Problems

The same advice as for June applies to watering, slugs & snails and butterflies. If you've not netted your brassicas against butterflies (and probably if you have!) then I guarantee you'll have missed some butterfly eggs.

It really is worth double checking, look close to the stem, and getting any caterpillars that may have hatched out. There's little left in the gardener's kit bag in the way of sprays nowadays so pick them off into a bucket and drown them.

A major cause of poor crops with potatoes is poor nutrition. They are a very greedy plant and a boost now will pay a dividend in tubers. A feed balanced as for tomatoes is ideal. If you make your own feed from comfrey, this is ideal.

Keep on top of the weeds, it really is far easier to hoe them as small seedlings than as grown plants. Even if you can not see any weeds, hoeing will actually be killing tiny seedlings you have not noticed and will be helping reduce moisture loss

With broad beans you can pinch out the tops which are most attractive to blackfly. Another 'trick' is to plant some nasturtiums which attract blackfly. You can then pull the nasturtiums and their blackfly.

Keep your onions well weeded and don't forget to feed them as well to get the best possible crop. As they mature they need to dry out, so don't over water if at all. Keeping the weeds off allows air to circulate, the last thing you want is a muggy atmosphere around the onions developing moulds.

Fruit

If we do get a prolonged dry spell, don't forget that that fruit bushes and trees need watering. Swelling apples and currants need water as much as leafy vegetables. Give a good soaking rather than little sprinkles that encourage surface rooting.

Finish thinning apples, pears and plums etc. if needed. It's the right time for summer pruning as well. Keep the base of trees weed and grass free, mulch to keep in moisture and add fertility with garden compost.

Pick soft fruits now assuming you've kept the birds away with netting or a cage and they've left you some. Don't forget to use strawberry runners to grow new plants and remove unwanted runners so the plants retain strength. Grub up and replace in another spot strawberries after 3 or 4 years cropping.

In the Greenhouse / Polytunnel

Ensure good ventilation. It can get incredibly hot in a greenhouse with strong sun and scorch your plants. You should also consider shading the house either with blinds or films or with a shading wash

Keep pinching off the side shoots with your tomatoes and keep an eye out for pests such as aphids, whitefly, red spider mite. If you are subject to attack by these pests it is worth checking out biological controls as these are perfectly safe to use and, used correctly, more effective than traditional chemical controls.

Many of the chemical controls of the past are no longer available anyway so the organic alternatives are now the mainstream choice.

Growing in a Polytunnel in July

Your tunnel or greenhouse is absolutely packed and you'll be can harvesting fruits from your summer crops – the first tomato of the year is always the most anticipated and delicious. Soon you'll have more food than you can cope with. All the other summer crops (cucumbers, peppers, aubergines etc) are also starting to produce.

Sowing in the polytunnel

Direct sowing into beds in the polytunnel

There shouldn't be any empty space in your tunnel or greenhouse for direct sowing!

Planting into beds in the polytunnel

You can plant all the crops you have sown a month earlier in modular trays into your tunnel or greenhouse:

Basil, Chinese cabbage, coriander, dill and chervil, courgette, cucumber, French beans, Florence fennel, lettuce, pak choi, parsley, scallions.

Sowing into modules/pots (18–20°C)

It's surprising how many crops you can sow in July for planting into the tunnel or greenhouse about four to six weeks later.

Basil (Sweet Genovese) – 4 seeds per cell

Calabrese (Green Magic F1) – 1 seed per cell

Chinese cabbage (Yuki F1) – 1 seed per cell

Claytonia (or Winter Purslane) – 5 seeds per cell

Chervil, Coriander, Dill – 5 seeds per cell each

French beans (climbing and dwarf) – 5 seeds per 9cm pot

Florence fennel (Rondo F1) – 1 seed per cell

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

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

Pak Choi (various) – 1 seed per cell

Parsley (curly and flat leaf) – 4 seeds per cell

Scallions (Ishikura Bunching) – 10 seeds per cell

Harvesting from the polytunnel

In July you'll be assured how worthwhile it is to have a tunnel or greenhouse. Hopefully you are not away on holiday otherwise your neighbours or friends will enjoy your bounty in exchange for a little bit of watering.

It is very important to harvest your crops regularly. You should harvest your courgettes and cucumbers at least twice per week and your tomatoes, peppers and aubergines at least once per week. If you don't, the plants often get exhausted and diseased.

You can harvest:

Aubergines, basil, chillies, coriander, courgette, cucumber, dill, Florence fennel, French beans, lettuce, melons, pak choi, parsley, peppers, salads, scallions, spinach, tomatoes.

General greenhouse/polytunnel maintenance

Water more frequently and more heavily now, probably about three times per week, especially during hot spells.

Ventilate as much as possible. The tunnel and greenhouse doors should be left open until late in the evening or even throughout the night. Ensure that they are secure.

Weekly maintenance for summer crops: side-shooting and training tomatoes, cucumbers and melons. You should also remove the lower discoloured or diseased leaves.

Harvest regularly when the crops are ready and not necessarily when you would like them.

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

Keep weeds down. They compete with your plants and create a damp atmosphere. This reduces the air-flow between plants and fungal diseases thrive in these conditions.

Spray aphid susceptible plants with a garlic or seaweed spray every seven days.

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.

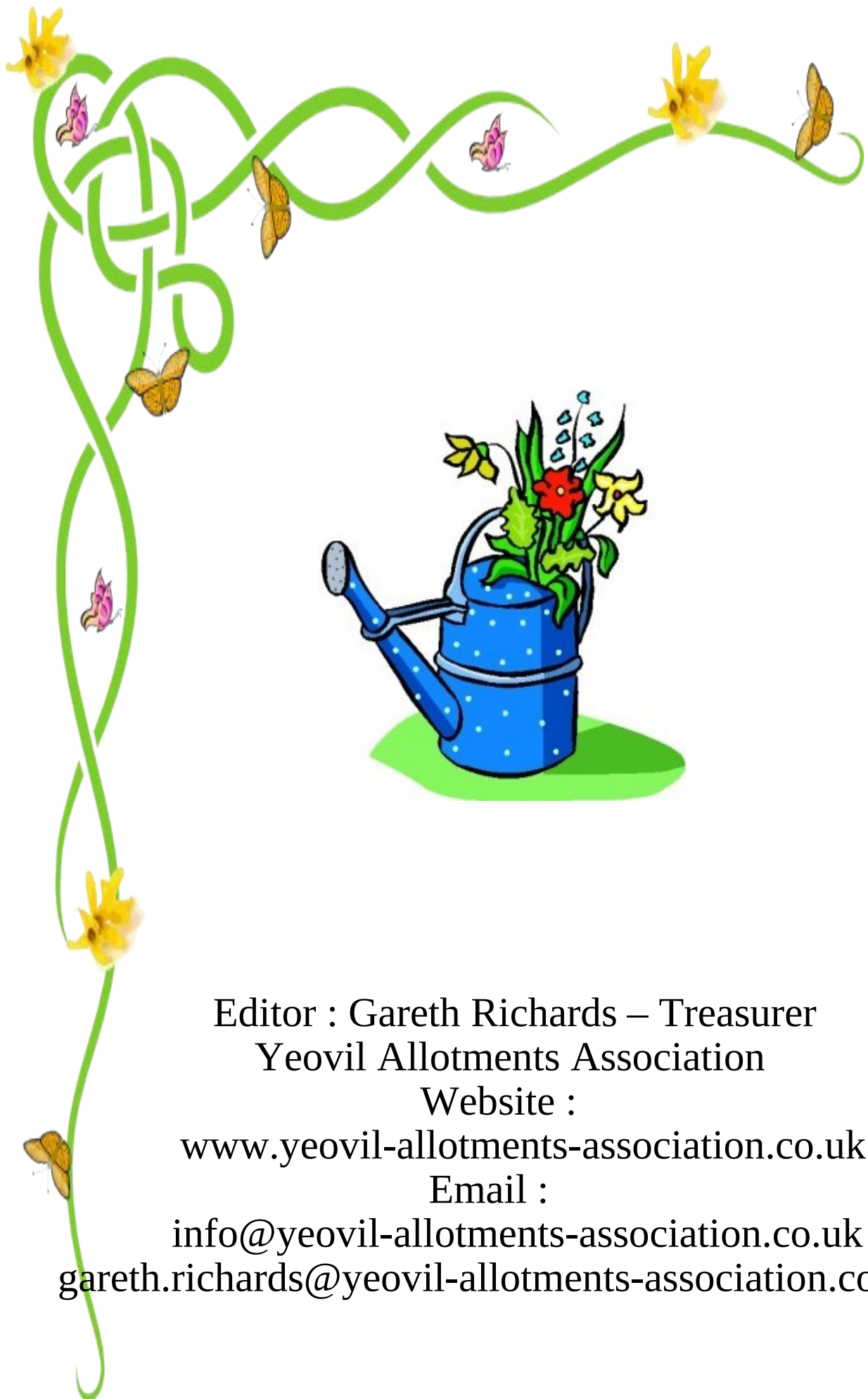
We also have our own website at :

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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