

Gardening Articles for week ending December 19th 2015

Written by Wally Richards.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

A Very Merry Christmas to all our readers and a happy gardening year ahead.

This will be my last weekly article for the year and will resume writing again in the new year.

Hopefully the new year will be a fruitful one in the gardens and in the world in general.

There is ample time to plant more vegetables and flower plants and reap the rewards of both healthy food and beauty.

Weather conditions over the last few months have not been great for gardening but should improve in the new year as it has done for the past few years.

Which means if your gardening efforts have not achieved what they should have achieved, its not too late to plant some more and see how they fare.

My plantings of tomatoes, cucumbers, egg plants, chilies, corn etc are only this month starting to show good growth.

If you like to grow leeks now is the time to prepare a little nursery bed in your garden and sow some seeds.

Before covering them spray with Magic Botanic Liquid to speed up the germination, once they are up and established you can start lifting a few to plant out into a row. A month later lift some more and plant out. Do this again a month later and you should have leeks to harvest through winter and into spring.

Leeks are heavy feeders so lots of chook manure into the soil or any other manure you have available.

Bio Boost can be used also to advantage, available from a few garden shops, Farmlands and PGG Wrightson outlets.

I had a reader contact me recently and tell about the success he has using Bio Boost in the planting hole of garlic in winter. Since he read an article of mine about the product he has used it and has had excellent big garlic cloves for the last couple of years.

Your garlic planted in June will be reaching maturity soon and it is in this period that the bulbs will fill out giving you good size cloves. Water in a little nitrogen about now such as a liquid manure.

When you plant out your Leeks later on use the Bio Boost in the planting hole also.

A lady recently phoned and gave a home made recipe to control white fly.

Take a cup (237 mls) of Soya Oil (likely best is certified organic as so much soya grown these days is Genetically Engineered and it pays to avoid all un-certified soya products) add to this a tablespoon of dish washing liquid.

This is your concentrate which you take one and a half teaspoons to a cup of water, stir and add to the sprayer. Only spray late in the day just before sunset as oil and sun light can damage.

Spray for complete coverage under and over the foliage, the main action will be the smothering aspect.

If used at 3 teaspoons (or stronger per 237 mls of water) and sprayed during a sunny day it will help kill weeds.

Another gardener recently gave me some info on how he grows tomatoes and combats the Psyllids.

Using the Neem Tree Granules in the planting hole and on the soil surface along with a 2 weekly spray of Wallys Neem Tree oil under and over the plants.

He also progressively removes the bottom leaves at any sign of going off or not.

This makes sense as a lot of nymph psyllids would be on these leaves feeding and damaging the plant. By removing and destroying completely these leaves is a handy way to prevent the populations from growing rapidly. He told me that doing this meant that he was still able to grow and eat ripe tomatoes.

My own experience this season with the cell strengthening sprays seems to be working well and time will tell. Two more tips if you are planting tomato plants, plant them deep into the soil up to at least the bottom leaves as they will root right up the trunk making for a greater root system.

If you are removing laterals only do so on a nice sunny day when the humidity is low, then as soon as a small lateral is remove spray the wound with Wallys Liquid Copper to prevent any disease entering.

More gardeners lose plants though collar rots because they did not do the above.

Keep the growing medium moist to prevent blossom end rot (the black patch under the tomato when ripe)

If the plants are drooping during the day and the soil is moist; it means that the moisture lost through transpiration in the upper foliage is greater than what water the the plant can transport up to that area because of the higher temperatures.

Solve the problem by spraying the plant all over with Vaporgard late in the day. This reduces the moisture loss by about 30% and makes for better fruit. One spray lasts for about 3 months.

Over the next month or two is the time to start planting out vegetables and flowers for autumn and winter. The problem with vegetables such as brassicas is the pest insects and white butterflies are at their worst during this period. For vegetables its a simple solution, place Wallys Neem Tree Granules

in the planting hole and on the soil surface and then over the crop place hoops of alkathene pipe with crop cover to keep the pests out.

Between these two products your brassicas should grow well and be free of pests and caterpillars.

With your flower plants you dont want to cover them so the Neem Tree Granules should help look after them nicely.

During the Christmas, New Year period if you have any gardening problems or questions I will be available either by email or phone. If sending me an email please include your phone number so I can call you as it makes life easier than wearing out my fingers typing.

To conclude this year here are a couple of snippets I recently came across on the net.

The first is from the days when hippies roamed the planet proclaiming peace and love and Woodstock was one of the greatest event the world had ever seen at that time....

Got to get to the land, set my soul free.

We are star dust, we are golden, we are billion year old carbon,

And we got to get ourselves back to the garden.

Joni Mitchell

In sharp contrast a recent news item:

A new British missile, the Brimstone, has been lauded by the press and politicians with Defense Secretary Michael Fallon going so far as to suggest that it "eliminates civilian casualties."

Obviously a great saving in hospital time and money if they are all killed.

The latest good news is the Climate Talks advocating the sequestering of carbon back into the soil.

Have a great Christmas and New Year, cherish your family and friends and garden to your heart's content.

Wally Richards