

# The DILETTANTE GARDENER<sup>©</sup>

Issue No 12..... May 2011

and incorporating

The Dilettante Cook



## SECOND TIME ROUND

Readers who have been following the Dilettante Gardener will be aware of the disaster that befell Morag and I during the last growing season, when nearly all of our vegetable crop, plus some well established rose bushes fell foul, through being fed on manure that was contaminated with the Dow Chemicals Herbicide named 'Forefront'. This matter is still ongoing but that will appear in a later edition of this publication.

The result was that two OAPs, both well into their seventies, had to replace nearly all of the 'upper crust' of compost in their raised beds to ensure that that basta-d chemical was eliminated from the growing area. The total cost of that undertaking came to £116.00 for compost. Let me say here, our experience is not an isolated case.

On the 17th of March in our Poly Tunnel, we planted four tubs of Duke of York 'Earlies', needless to say they were entirely free from contaminated dung. Last week, after the threat of frost had passed we dragged the tubs from the PT and allowed the spuds fresh air and natural sunshine. The photo shows just



how very healthy they are. Friends keep asking when are we going to sample the crop? Well not until the 21st of June is our reply.

As we had some seed potatoes over we planted the remainder of in two half whisky barrels, a month ago.

However just for the hell of it I have planted another tub with 4 spuds which will be fed

exclusively on last year's Dow Chemical Forefront contaminated dung, to see just what the end result will be. Whatever the outcome a report will appear on this site in due course. For new readers I have included an insert to show how the Dow Chemical

'Forefront' affected growing potato crops.

Due to the high cost of suitable compost, Morag and I have decided to discontinue planting main crop potatoes in our raised beds, not only that, but they take up a great deal of space, and even more, any tiny potatoes left in the soil produce shaws the following year amongst rows of seedlings. We have such a one in the RBG where we have not grown spuds the last two years!

# SEESAW? NO JUST THAT BLASTED SAWFLY!

It would be rather nice to be able to say that all in the Seacrest Raised Bed Garden is 'rosy' but that would be untrue.

Last year we purchased six young Gooseberry bushes and carefully nurtured them in pots for the whole of that growing season. They were very healthy and seemed to be destined for a 'happy future'.

Even when we planted them out, neighbours complimented us on their healthy appearance. Ah, but the best laid schemes sometimes go astray and our expectations for the attractive Gooseberry bushes was destined to be upset.

Suddenly and almost without warning the new growth was stripped bare of foliage, apart from the outer most leaves. Closer examination show quite an intense infestation of the dreaded Sawfly larvae, the 'currant worm'.

Well without compunction I squirted a quantity of washing up liquid into a watering can and topped it up with slightly warm water, then doused, unashamedly I may add, the infected bushes.

The effect was spectacular as dozens of the wee pests surrendered life and dropped onto the bare compost.

Morag and I did not anticipate a berry crop this year so the infes-

tation is no great hardship. I think it has been arrested in time for the new growth to re-establish itself and, if God willing, provide us with a taste of gooseberries next year.



The images on this page illustrates the damage that Sawfly caterpillars can inflict on growing fruit bushes, especially immature ones.



Illustration two give a close-up of the dead caterpillars in just a small area under the Gooseberry bushes after the washing up liquid mix application.



On a happier note the next pix gives a wee insight into the RBGs and the progressive germination of the various vegetables. If you note away in the far corner there is an added RBG to the established RBGs. This addition is, hopefully, growing courgettes outdoor for the very first time at Seacrest.



Will you forgive me readers if I post yet another wee image of the progress we are making on the TeaPee? Today we ordered the wood for the roof and hopefully by the end of June it will be near completion. Kind Regards. Euilleam and Morag.



# The Dilettante Cook

(With a vision towards self-sufficiency)

## WASTE NOT WANT NOT

Friend and near neighbour Betty, called Morag the other day and asked if we wanted some frozen soft fruit as she was clearing out her 'big' deep freeze and it was holding a considerable weight of various fruits.

Well we are not one, or should that be two, to refuse gifts that can be turned into food or whatever, so we gladly collected a huge weight of the said frozen fruits.

Strawberries, raspberries, black currants, red currants and brambles. First we processed a small amount of strawberries in the jam pot. The end result tasted supreme, but in each jar there was a small amount of clear jelly at the bottom when the jam set. The fault here was (we think) that we did not drain away any of the liquid before we started cooking the sugar and berry concoction in the jam pan.

Strawberries I think are the least successful for home freezing but none the less the pots of jam we distributed to friends were appreciated.

All the jars we use are recycled and many friends collect used jars so that during the jam making sea-



son at Seacrest Morag and I have enough containers 'to go round.'

The first image shows some of the frozen raspberries defrosting in a plastic bowl.

The second is of gooseberries. Much to Morag's disappointment the gooseberries are of a lesser quantity. Gooseberry jam is not one of my favourites, but Morag just



loves that fruit.

The third image is of the finished product. Both jams have a rich fruity flavour without being too sweet.

The red currants we are going to process as jelly. The last time we did that the jelly turned out well and had a wonderful colour.



The brambles and black currants will be processed together and turned into jelly. Provided it is not made too sweet that type of jelly is very palatable with various meat or game dishes.

Foot note;- this year's fruit harvest promises to be a bumper year with huge crops of plums, cherries, raspberries and strawberries coming along nicely.

# The Dilettante Cook

(With a vision towards self-sufficiency)

## PLANET SAVING!

If I may I would like to diversify a bit from the usual talk on cookery and so make a wee suggestion to all those self-righteous folk who are hell bent on putting across their own, and sometimes somewhat fanciful reasons, why we should do this and not do that if the planet is to survive.

The so called Carbon Footprint is bandied about with little reasoning as to just how a substantial reduction can be achieved. The UK Government seems to think that by ever increasing the tax on fuel motorists will drive less miles. (A fallacy!) What that approach does is to savagely increase the cost of living, especially in rural areas

The Holyrood Parliament believes that reduction can come from renewable energy, but only when the wind blows or the tide flows.

Supermarkets are asked to reduce the distribution of 'free' poly carrier bags and so on.

Members of the public are constantly reminded about re-cycling their kitchen and garden waste with the intent for reducing landfill and the impact that can have on

producing unwanted gas, and the affect that has on the increase in Global Warming.

When I was a boy grocers provided strong brown paper carrier bags with string handles at 3d. Theses bags were used time and time again. Most of their cheeses, butter and bacon were covered in greaseproof paper. All were biodegradable and the timber used in the paper manufacture possibly grown specially. Turn back the clock? Not necessarily but a degree of reduction in pre-packing could have a big impact.



Chop Top©  
Pineapple

My own wee contribution concerns the illustrated pineapples. As we all know the fruit comes to the shelves adorned with their

spiky leaves, making them very attractive. However as these treats come (mostly) from half way across the world by air, so the *imprint* is massive. My idea is that provided the partial removal of leaves does not impair the keeping qualities there could be a massive saving of space in the packaging, thus increasing the cargo per flight. Weight wise there is not a huge difference. Those illustrated stood on our worktop for 7 days without apparent differences. Ed.

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