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Juliotter Garden Club Newsletter

For everyone in North Cornwall who loves gardens and gardening

Herb Superb

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Growing your own herbs saves money, gives you full quality control, and adds to the culinary delights of your day. Whether you're adding a sprig of fragrant rosemary to your roast potatoes, or putting basil leaves on home-grown tomatoes, growing herbs brings a new level of flavour and satisfaction to your cooking and your life. They are easy to grow and can fit into compact spaces, making them suitable for gardens, containers, or even windowsills. Furthermore, basil, oregano, chives, and rosemary are not just basic ingredients; they have a long history of medicinal use. For example, basil can support digestion; oregano is often used to help fight off infection, chives have anti-inflammatory effects, rosemary is known for its antiseptic properties; and sage is a well-known remedy for colds and sore throats. Herbs are easily grown from seed, some from cuttings, and some will root easily in water. The herbs I find most useful include both leaves and flowers of **chives**, which are easily grown from seed, and easily divided when the clump gets too big. Consider mixing chopped chives into butter to take bread to the next level, or add to scrambled eggs, or mince it to sprinkle over mashed potatoes. **Basil** is probably my favourite herb. There are a stunning selection of basil varieties available, each with its own flavour, but I always come back to the large-leaved Genovese basil. With the lengthening days of early spring basil is easy to germinate but my preferred propagation method is to buy a nice healthy bunch from the supermarket, cut the ends of the stalks clean and put the bunch in a tumbler of water on the windowsill. Just like mint, small roots soon form and then the new plant can be potted on. Within a month you'll have enough basil to interplant with ripening tomatoes. Basil with its intense aroma and peppery flavour can be used as a garnish, but with a plentiful supply seize the chance to make your own pesto with pine nuts, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, sea salt, and of course, as much basil as possible. Although some people dislike the taste of fresh **coriander**, it is, of course, a vital ingredient in the cooking of Asia, and I always sow a succession of rows in my raised beds. It runs to seed for a pastime, but that's OK as the seeds, both ground and whole, are another essential ingredient of my curries. I adore **mint** and over the years I have grown spearmint, peppermint, pineapple mint and apple mint. Like basil, it roots readily in water – almost too readily in fact – and needs to be constrained in its own container to prevent its tendency for world domination. Beautiful and lively, **parsley** is frequently used as a garnish, but while its flavour is undoubtedly gorgeous, it has so much more to offer the world than looks alone. Both flat and curly parsley are fresh, citrusy, and grassy in flavour, and can be finely chopped and added to pasta sauce, mixed fresh into a salad, and used in a variety of cuisines from all over the world. In addition, it has some incredible health benefits including immunity-boosting and antioxidant properties. On the downside I have always found it very obstinate to germinate. When it comes to strong, fragrant, and intense herbs, look no further than **rosemary**. It's bitter when consumed raw, but once heated it attains a piney, citrusy flavour. Sprigs go in the bottom of the pan when I'm cooking lamb, or roasted vegetables. Medicinally Rosemary is a strong antiseptic. As for propagating, soft cuttings root easily in a good compost. **Sage** is soft in texture, almost like felt or velvet. It's quite fragrant and can be eaten cooked, dried, or raw. Fresh sage leaves become crispy when fried in butter and are often paired with pasta. Its strong, musky flavour marries well with onion and is often used to flavour poultry and sausages. Again, this perennial herb roots easily from cuttings and is a vital ingredient with honey and lemon in the treatment of a sore throat. So there you are: medicine chest, cookery lesson and gardening tips all in one newsletter!

- Juliotter Garden Club meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month
- Otterham Village Hall at 7.30 p.m.
- New members and guests of members are made very welcome
- We have a full programme of events and talks throughout the year

Julie Otter

Pick Your Own

Trevathan Farm: For the first time in over 40 years, they say they're sad to share that they will NOT be offering Pick Your Own strawberries this season. Due to the ongoing climate challenges and particularly the wet weather, the outdoor-grown strawberries haven't been able to thrive as they usually would. As much as they love welcoming everyone into the fields, this year it simply isn't possible. The good news is that they do have some of their own delicious, ready-picked strawberries available! Grown in a polytunnels and picked fresh every morning to buy in the farm shop when available. St Endellion, Port Isaac, Cornwall PL29 3TT



Mitchell Fruit Farm: ready now raspberries, red and green gooseberries, rhubarb, red, white and blackcurrants, with strawberries coming soon (have a look at their Face Book page for details). Last year I picked pounds of their delicious, sweet strawberries, all under cover. Opening times Thursday to Sunday 10.00 am to 16.00 pm. 07375 808053. Clearly signed Mitchell Fruit Farm, just off the A30 south of the Truro turnoff at Mitchell. They've also got a café selling home-made cakes and teas.

Strawberry Fields: to help with crop management, tickets for upcoming weekends will be released just a few days in advance. Please check the website and social channels regularly for the latest updates. Only the tickets currently displayed on the website will be available for booking at that time. The Pick Your Own strawberry tunnels are now open weekends throughout summer at Strawberry Fields, Lifton. Advance booking is essential. All tickets must be purchased online before your visit, as entry is limited and demand is high. To ensure the very best picking experience, tickets will be released weekly and are subject to crop availability and growing conditions. If tickets are not yet available for your preferred date, please check back regularly for new releases. 01566 784605

Trevaskis Farm: whilst it's a bit of a trek, Trevaskis Farm does offer the best selection including gooseberries, strawberries, cherries, broad beans, redcurrants, blackcurrants, red gooseberries, tayberries, loganberries and raspberries. Picking soon: runner beans, whitecurrants, blackberries and plums. Unlike Lifton, Trevaskis sounds pretty welcoming as well—"even if the rain sets in, welly boots and puddles are great, not to mention our all weather polytunnels and plenty of shelter from our trees to protect you from the coastal breeze. There's no need to book, Pick Your Own is open 10am - 5pm every day, just turn up! " And they've got a café! Trevaskis Farm, Connor Downs, Hayle, TR27 5JQ tel. 01209 714009

Club Notices

Our May Garden Club meeting took the form of a visit to Garden Bridge Mill on a lovely, sunny evening. We enjoyed a wonderful garden where the owner's sympathetic approach to plants has created a natural environment. It's taken twenty years of hard work to achieve this sense of ease, and to make a cottage garden on a sloping and watery site. The buildings and water courses have been lovingly restored, and the mill to working order. In the vegetable garden, order and a systematic rotation have resulted in thriving plants, and in the wilder areas around the lake beavers have arrived. Although these have proved difficult guests in some respects, (witness the gnawed trees and a dam built across the mill-race), it's exciting to see them and a tribute to the balanced and nature friendly management of the whole site. As we approached the lake the grass was full of tiny little frogs. On Tuesday 23rd June Ian Clemens is coming to talk to us about growing colourful vegetables in containers. We've been advised to eat a rainbow, so this talk should be full of good nutritional advice. This coming Tuesday, Otterham & St Juliot Village Hall at 7.30.

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