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## **Good Life ~ Brian Crumblehulme September Garden Calendar**

**Praise large estates but cultivate a small one—Virgil, 29 BC**

**A**s I write, it is still very dry, but for those with a can or two of water there is still much that can be done to provide food and colour for winter and spring.

In the flower garden, or in pots, scatter seeds of Nigella, Alyssum and Pansies. These plants are very hardy and the seedlings will overwinter to flower in March and April. Alternatively, pansies and violets bought now will provide colour through fall and winter if it is not too cold.

Sweet peas sown 3-4 in one gallon pots will also grow into sturdy plants by the end of October, when they can be placed in a greenhouse or shed window and over-wintered for an early start. Failing that, sow them in the ground in October when you plant your garlic.

September is also the time to transplant or take cuttings of your favourite geraniums and fuchsias in pots to bring indoors in October before the weather turns cold and they too will reward your effort with both late and early flowers. Finally, don't leave it too late to buy or trade spring flowering bulbs. Waiting for the sales means taking what's left and the roots need time to grow through fall and winter if you want strong plants for next year. Dig a hole big enough for 5 or 6 bulbs, break up the subsoil with a garden fork, add some compost and a dusting of bone meal and arrange the bulbs as you will.

In the kitchen garden, sow carrots and onions in well-composted and well-drained ground for next spring. And, anywhere there is space, sow winter lettuce and other greens for salads. Be sure to choose winter-hardy varieties that you can gather from under the snow if necessary to fill your colander through next April, while everyone else is paying a premium price for three-week-old stuff imported from California. Good local varieties can still be obtained from Island Seeds, Saltspring Seeds and West Coast Seeds.

At this time too, plant out July-and-August-sown broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and cabbage across the garden where there is a chance of winter sun. It is not necessary to plant them all together, in fact, brassicas spread around the garden stand a better chance of survival in bad weather and will mature at different times to provide a continuous supply of vegetables through spring. This may be the season of plenty but do not neglect next year.

After harvest, grapes, raspberries, apples, plums and pears are better off for pruning now, instead of waiting for winter. Good pruning at this time will coax the trees into producing those short fruiting spurs that will assist them to mature during the winter and produce flowers in spring.

Apples and pears must be fully ripened before picking for maximum flavour and better storage. Cut a sample fruit in half and examine the seeds (pips) which should be black or dark brown when mature. Fruit with seeds that are still green or white are liable to rot.

Conversely, green potatoes are not good to eat but will keep much better for 'seed' potatoes next year. Store them in a cool dark room in single layers in flats with the 'eyes' facing up and check them once a month for mice.

### **The Humble Potato**

Escoffier lists 42 classic recipes for the potato—none of which include potato soup, salad or cakes. The Murphy, as the Irish refer to it, is a primary comfort food and nearly a meal in itself if you eat the skin. Of the 7,000+ varieties you can, with effort, find over 300 of them in Canada and maybe 4 or 5 on the supermarket shelves. If you really want to find local varieties, talk to Roger at the Galiano Farmer's market. One of the finest cuisines comes from the Indian sub-continent where the tuber is referred to as Aloo.

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**Aloo Achar** (Refried potatoes as a snack or side dish)

Prep time 15 minutes, cooking time 30 minutes, serves 4.

- 3-4 potatoes
- 1/4 cup whole roasted sesame seed
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1-3 crushed fresh chilies
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 2-3 cloves chopped garlic
- about 1/2 cup of Canola
- juice of 1 lemon
- A few sprigs of fresh cilantro, chopped
- salt to taste

Cut the potatoes in quarters and boil for 15 minutes, drain well. Heat the oil to medium in a large skillet and add all the ingredients except the lemon juice, the oil should be hot but not smoke. Stir well. Add the potatoes and fry until crisp, stirring occasionally. Add the lemon juice and sprinkle with fresh chopped cilantro and serve hot as a side dish with your favourite curry or eat cold as a snack or with lunch. This dish can be quite spicy. For leftovers: mash the potato, add an egg and a can of tuna or left over-salmon, and make into pancakes with a dusting of flour. Fry or BBQ like patties when the wasps are not around. Serve on a bun with corn on the cob.

**Patate al forno** (potatoes the Tuscan way)

Prep time 10 minutes, cooking time 35 minutes, serves 4.

- 4 large fresh potatoes cut into quarters
- 3-4 cloves crushed garlic
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2-3 sprigs chopped rosemary
- salt & pepper

Put the potatoes in cold water, boil and cook for 15 minutes. Drain well and toss with the remaining ingredients. Spread onto a baking sheet. Sprinkle with more oil and bake 20 minutes in a hot oven until golden. Serve immediately with fresh tomatoes, green beans and a glass of Chianti.

**Pommes dauphine** (when you really want to impress)

Prep time 1-2 hours, cooking time 30 minutes, serves 4

- Approx 4 potatoes, peeled, boiled and mashed
- 1/2 cup butter
- salt, pepper & nutmeg
- 1 egg and a little flour

Beat the potatoes and butter until creamy. Add the remaining ingredients and beat again. Place in the refrigerator.

Then: make, buy or steal about 2 cups of Chou paste.

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup butter
- About 1 1/2 cups flour
- salt
- 4 whole eggs

Put the water and butter in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Add the flour and salt, stir well and return to the heat and keep stirring until the paste leaves the sides of the pan. Remove from the stove and add the eggs one at a time, stirring well. The batter should be fairly stiff and bright yellow.

Mix the creamed potatoes with the Chou paste, turn onto a floured baking sheet like a brioche or farmhouse loaf and bake at 400°F for a half-hour until golden. I like to bake at 425°F for 20 minutes or so, then reduce the heat to 375°F to cook through. Serve hot with slices of salmon or roast beef, truffles, salad and champagne! ☞