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OBSERVER ORGANIC ALLOTMENT BLOG



Things to do in July

From carrots to kohlrabi, via garlic, basil and Florence fennel: everything you need to plant and pick in the vegetable garden this month. By Caroline Foley



Time to plant carrots now for winter storage

From early July, says allotment expert [Caroline Foley](#), you can count on ten weeks of frost free weather - longer in the south of the country and in towns. This means that you can get in a good crop of carrots for winter storage this month as well as a supply of young carrots to eat through summer and autumn. For winter storage, the tried and tested 'Autumn King' or the subsequent 'Autumn King 2' won't let you down. For summer eating choose an early quick maturing variety like ['Nantes 2'](#) or the spherical ['Paris Market'](#).

There is also the new line in coloured carrots designed primarily for eating raw. These include the swarthy 'Purple Haze', golden 'Yellowstone', the cream-coloured Crème de Lite and the brick red 'Healthmaster'.

Fast growing turnips can also be slotted in now. 'Tokyo Cross' will be ready to eat in eight weeks.

July is a the ideal time to sow Florence fennel and kohlrabi, both 'swollen bulb' vegetables. Fennel ['Victoria'](#) is a new variety with resistance to bolting.

Kohlrabi, the 'turnip cabbage' that resembles a sputnik in shape, can be sown now for eating in autumn in eight week's time when the size of a tennis ball. Don't let it get any larger than that as it will toughen up. Hardy and easy to grow, it is good grated raw as well as cooked. You can buy a mixed batch of [white \('Lauro'\)](#) and [purple skinned ones \('Purple Danube'\)](#) to ring the changes.



Crop and hang your garlic in the sun or shed

If you have some young runner beans to hand, plant them in the gaps as you dig up your first and second early potatoes. You can get away with a fresh sowing of French beans outside if you pick a fast variety like 'Prince'. It matures in eight weeks giving you time to enjoy the continuing harvest.

Carry on sowing chard and purple sprouting broccoli as well as salads and cut-and-come-again oriental vegetables for late summer and early autumn.

Winter radishes, the giant oriental types, are another crop that needs ten frost-free weeks. They are as easy to grow as the salad radishes but are generally only available to buy in specialist shops. Some, notably the old variety 'Long-' or 'Round-' Black Spanish', will keep all winter if lifted, covered in sand and stored in a frost-free place. If you tuck them up with a straw mulch they can be left in the ground. To grow to full size they will need about 30cm (1 ft) of top soil. A fetching variety is 'Mantanghong', otherwise known as 'Beauty Heart', with its magenta flesh and lime green skin. The heirloom 'China Rose' is long and slim with rosy skin and lends itself to being sliced paper thin.



Drying is an answer to a tomato glut

Along with shallots, garlic should be ready this month. Hang the bulbs out to dry in the sun or in an airy shed. The smell of drying garlic is quite overpowering so I wouldn't suggest hanging them in the kitchen. Fortuitously the garlic harvest coincides with that of tomatoes. Given some basil (and a few olives) you have the makings of many

delicious Italian dishes.

Basil, grows wild in the Mediterranean but originates from India. It needs heat and mid summer is the only time you can grow it outside. It is a little late to sow from seed but if you have a young plant or two (you could harden off a couple from the supermarket) put them out in the warmest, most sheltered spot you can find. At the end of the summer you can use them up by making pesto. Incidentally, there are many different [varieties of basil](#) including lemon and cinnamon.

If you have a glut of tomatoes, you might like to try [sun-drying](#) them. Though in theory you can do this on the dashboard of a car with the windows shut on a sweltering day, generally, in the UK, you have to cheat a bit and dry them in the oven. Surprisingly, the result is equally good. Cut them in half if they are small, or slice them if they are large, sprinkle them with salt and put them on a wire rack overnight in oven on the lowest setting possible (50°C or 120°F). They are ready when they have the consistency of fresh sultanas. This is hardly an exact science. The time it takes depends on the juiciness of the tomato. It is in the region of eight to 12 hours. Put them in clean jars with some olive oil and basil and store them in the fridge where they will keep for a week or two. If you want to keep them longer, pack them dry into plastic bags (aim for a vacuum pack and get as much air out as possible) and add the oil and herbs when you need them.

Hopefully the main job in July will be to keep on picking and enjoying everything as it ripens.

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Attaturk

1 July 2008 2:14PM

What an excellent and useful blog. Many thanks.

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Dougal

1 July 2008 2:41PM

Agreed - good work. Anyone know if there's still time to sow another crop of broad beans (the first lot just didn't flourish - I think the aphids got 'em)?

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Fernverrow

1 July 2008 5:35PM

Dougal- you could try some broad beans.. they don't really like hot and dry, but we may not have that type of weather.. be sure to give them plenty of fertility to grow in. Black fly love broads, but they can be controlled.

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**Dougal**

1 July 2008 8:40PM

Ta, fernverrow - the seeds are sprouting nicely in pots so I'll give 'em a try. The soil's decent where the last crop were but it looks like they got blackfly all right - I'll try pinching the tops off this time...

[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**ipcressbaby**

1 July 2008 9:06PM

Dougal - spray the blackfly with soapy (ie washing up liquidy) water from one of those plant mister things. Apparently it bungs up their breathing bits and kills them stone dead.

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2 July 2008 1:54PM

Up here in Yorkshire I will also be sowing chard and spring cabbage this month for crops in early spring. I'd also be sowing another lot of beetroot if it weren't for the fact I have far too many already! I have three different sorts of kale already growing on in modules but I guess there would still be time if you sowed them now. I'm amazed how the butterflies find the brassica seedlings in the cold frame - one lot of broccoli I was pricking out last month had a single egg on each of the tiny leaves - I'm glad I spotted them! Next year I think I might put some mesh over the frame to stop them. A new pest I've also discovered this year is a tiny maggot - bit like a cabbage root fly only more active. I've had them devouring the roots and stems of module grown flowers and veg including french beans; larkspur and calabrese. I've never seen anything like it and I suspect they came in with the compost from a large DIY chain. A friend at work has had similar infestations. Does anyone know what they are?

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2 July 2008 2:10PM

dalesfire - 'A new pest I've also discovered this year is a tiny maggot - bit like a cabbage root fly only more active.'

These sound like vine weevil grubs, which eat everything below the soil surface. The adults leave distinctive notch marks in the leaves, where they have been feeding. The only way to get rid of them is with nematodes - www.greengardener.co.uk.

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**Fuchsiaperfect**

7 July 2008 9:54AM

dalesfire/orlovsky - yes, I've got a vine weevil problem too here in Yorkshire (they came in via the roots of some blueberry bushes I got from a garden centre). I treated them with nematodes but too late to prevent some damage to this year's crop. I'm going to give them a second blast this year.

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I tried slug nematodes for the first time this year and they've made a difference, but I still have a major snail problem. I've heard that if you put some porage oats in a dry place, the slugs/snails will eat them and will die when the oats expand. Alternatively, I wonder if the French would be interested in buying my snails - I hear there's an escargot shortage - as mine are free range and organic!

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