

Spring - Prolong the Lifespan of Overwintering Vegetables

Extreme Temperatures

Average temperatures at this time of year tend to be between 7° - 13° centigrade and extremes so far recorded were 1° - 21° centigrade.

The last two days we have seen a strong anomaly in daytime temperatures up to 24° centigrade in Sussex and 27° degrees in London. In Sussex in open spaces temperatures went down to 1° centigrade in the mornings with some ground frost.

This has proven to be very stressful to plants particularly in covered spaces.

Our night-time temperatures in our polytunnel went down to 3° centigrade and daytime with open doors to 44° centigrade.



Overwintering Plants

You might have noticed that any overwintering vegetables in covered spaces are going to seed very quickly.

And even outdoor vegetables have already started going to seed since end of March.

How Could we Prolong their Lifespan?

Here a few tips:

- Most of the overwintering crops are leaf crops and either grow up a stem like Kale;

Harvest maximum 1/3 of the lowest leaves to encourage new growth.

- If they started putting forth flowering buds, harvest them as you would harvest the central shoot in sprouting Broccoli. Then, keep harvesting lower leaves and keep cutting back side shoots (sprouts).
- With all vegetables like Chinese mustards, lettuce, endive, radicchio, sugar loaf, Pak choy, Swiss chard, spinach, parsley and chervil harvest just a ¼ of the oldest leaves close to the soil. This encourages the heart of the plant (growth point) to reproduce leaves rather than push up a flowering stem.
- When all your other leaf vegetables have pushed forth cut out the stem half-way up and keep harvesting lower leaves. They will also develop side shoots.
- Make sure you water your vegetables with warm water, particularly in covered spaces not to shock the roots and soil life.
- Stir and spray on extreme temperature days Valerian and horn-manure preparation alternating with feldspar preparation (If you contact me I could provide you with the feldspar preparation).

Treat outdoor crops in the same way and you extend the longevity of your overwintering crops by 2-3 weeks, which will give you time to beginning of May to plant out your warmth loving plants and start harvesting overwintering peas and broad beans, the first radishes and thinnings of carrots and parsnips sown in February.



The best is that after lent and a possible fast you are starting to introduce parts of the plants

growth which are more fibrous and bitter, meaning your gut lining will be strengthened with the aklamencia bacteria fed by the fibrous vegetables and your liver will also be assisted with detoxing particularly if you have been fasting or do intermittent fasting only eating once a day.



A few tips for outdoor sowing

Make sure that if you sow half-hardy vegetables outdoors under cover where possible and make sure that your tender annuals as in the tomato and cucumber family have even extra protection in your greenhouse or cold frame as windchill factors drop very low this coming week. Otherwise, excessive cooling will affect them even indoors as they grow best around 15° - 25° centigrade.

You most likely will have sown all your half-hardy annuals indoors and also your tomatoes, cucumbers and courgettes under cover for later outdoor planting a while ago, hoping that spring was on the wing. They might even have become a bit leggy by now so make sure you have them as far away from a heat source as possible and give them more bottom heat than heat from the top.

Also, if they are close to a window, having the window popped open for fresh air in the daytime to harden them off, is a great interim solution.

As night temperatures for the next week are forecast to be lower than usual with the possibility of air frosts in exposed areas and further north even wintry showers, it might be a good idea to consider potting up the tender annuals a second time if they got root bound.

These pots need to be an 1 inch larger than the previous ones just to give them extra root space.

Possibly even prick out the half-hardy annuals another time into deeper boxes with a richer mix.

Or at least make sure you give them regular feeds with liquid seaweed extract or even using the BD Yarrow or Chamomile Compost Preparations to encourage rooting instead of top growth. This could also be supported by the Valerian preparation. All it needs is the volume of a pin of the needle to soak in water and apply diluted to remediate these extreme conditions.



Enjoy the fast growing light,

Hans-Günther

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