**August**

If you’re on holiday during this month, it’s worth asking a neighbouring plot holder to keep an eye on your patch, as no doubt everything will come into season all at once and need picking.

**Harvesting**

Continue with the harvesting of all vegetable crops and keep up with the picking of runner beans to maintain cropping well into the autumn. Continue with the lifting of potatoes. Prepare to lift onions towards the end of the month. Wait until the tops begin to fall over as this indicates that the bulb has stopped swelling. Dry them before ‘stringing’ and putting into store. These bulbs will then keep until next March.

Start to thin apples and pears down to one or two fruits per cluster. The apples and pears will soon begin to colour up. The plums and damsons will be in full flow so harvest regularly.

Harvest the earliest grapes such as ‘Black Hamburg’. If not already done, carry out the last thinning of the bunches on late grapes.

Harvest soft fruit. The late fruiting raspberries will be cropping well by now.

**Sowing and Planting**

Make the last of any outdoor sowings to provide a late harvest for this season, radishes and lettuce will still produce a crop.

**General**

The end of this month signals the time to begin summer pruning your apples and pears (grown as cordons, espaliers or fans. For trees and bushes, leave these until the winter to prune). Start with the pears and then move on to apples. The purpose of summer pruning is to encourage the development of fruit buds for next summer.

August is definitely the last month to prune stone fruit trees (plum, apricot, cherry and peach), complete the task as soon as possible. You want to aim for an open structure of branches and remove any that cross over so they don’t damage each other.

Trim any box hedging before the first of the frosts arrives. Remember, “Make the first cut after the last frost and the last cut before the first frost”.

**Pest and diseases**

Blossom end rot can affect aubergines and tomatoes causing black sunken blotches on the skin of the fruit. Usually due to a lack of calcium, the disease can be stemmed by amending your watering habits to ensure the calcium found in the soil is fed through the water to the plant – so water regularly and don’t allow the soil to dry out. (Discard any damaged fruit).