**September**

In many ways this month can be regarded as the start of the new gardening year. Now is a good time to take stock of the successes and failures of this year and make plans to ensure that next year will be the best ever. Also, if you are starting out from scratch you will have plenty of time to prepare the ground whilst planning your dream allotment.

**Harvesting**

Top of the list has to be onions and potatoes they need to be got out of the soil before the cold, damp days of autumn arrive. They have completely the opposite storage requirements. Onions must to be kept in the light and potatoes need to be stored in the dark to prevent them from turning green, but both have to be stored somewhere that will keep the frost out.

Harvest apples and pears as they become ready and pick the late season strawberries and raspberries to keep them producing fruit. They will keep cropping right up until the first frost.

Cut courgettes and marrows regularly because they will be finished by the end of the month, as will outdoor tomatoes. Remove any green tomatoes and place them in a drawer or shoebox to ripen.

**Sowing and Planting**

Now we have shorter, cooler days it is the perfect time to sow the seed of the Oriental vegetables. They will germinate quickly and are hardy enough to withstand the cold of winter and will provide a steady supply of fresh leaves well into the Spring of next year Also make a sowing of hardy winter lettuce and spinach. There is still time to sow an early variety of turnip to be able to use the tops as greens.

Plant out earlier sown spring cabbage and protect with netting or fleece.

**General**

Complete the summer pruning of soft fruit bushes, apple and pear trees. Continue with their training and tying in.

Feed all late crops with a general fertiliser such as pelleted chicken manure.

Dig up and compost any plants that have finished their season.

Clear the soil of spent crops and leave it rough dug over for the winter. It is also a good time to sow winter grazing rye as a green manure. It can be dug back into the soil as part of your spring preparations.

**Pest and diseases**

Wasps are attracted this time of year due to the ripening of your fruit. Hang wasp traps in fruit trees and protect any grapes from wasps with netting or mesh. But also remember that wasps are the gardener's friend because they are major predators of aphids and caterpillars at this time of the year.