

Growing like crazy

By all means relax with a summery drink,
but don't let the courgettes get the better of you

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ ILLUSTRATION GEORGINA LUCK



THREE OF THE BEST...

Edible flowers

Edible flowers are so at home in allotment beds that it would be easy to enjoy them for looks alone, nestling brightly among the broad beans and courgettes. But each of these will add a distinctive taste and look to your cooking.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

The glowing, deep yolk-orange petals have a sweet but peppery taste, and look like little shards of sunlight sprinkled on to a salad.

Borage (*Borago officinalis*)

Sapphire-blue flowers with a cucumber taste are as happy with savoury salads as they are in fruity, summery drinks such as Pimms.

Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)

With a strongly peppery taste, whole nasturtium flowers look amazing scattered on salads.

THINGS TO DO

If you haven't got much time, just do these essential tasks...

Tomato plants keep sending out side shoots that draw energy away from the plant. Nip them out the moment you see them.

It's time to stop picking rhubarb and let it recover for next year. A deep drink and a mulch wouldn't go amiss.

Harvest garlic and hang bulbs in an airy place for two weeks so they'll store.

Sow carrots for winter. You will need to thin these to 'big carrot' spacing.

GARDEN BLOG...

Ben's Garden Blog

Ben's Garden Blog is intelligent, witty and so occasional that I fall upon each new one greedily, with a silly smile on my face. Ben is a jobbing gardener, but the blog is less a glimpse into his professional life and more the thoughts of a funny and well-read man doing ever-so slightly mind-numbing work.

Recent blogs have featured a group of estate agents being whipped into a knotweed-based frenzy; surviving the winter quiet as a Victorian beggar-style 'sham frozen-out gardener'; and Real Gardeners' Question Time (sample question: "Am I paying you to sit in your van and smoke rollies?").

As Ben does not make a song and dance about it, this blog rumbles along below the radar, feeling like a barely inhabited corner of the internet, and is all the more charming for it. <http://bensgarden.wordpress.com>





PRACTICAL JOB

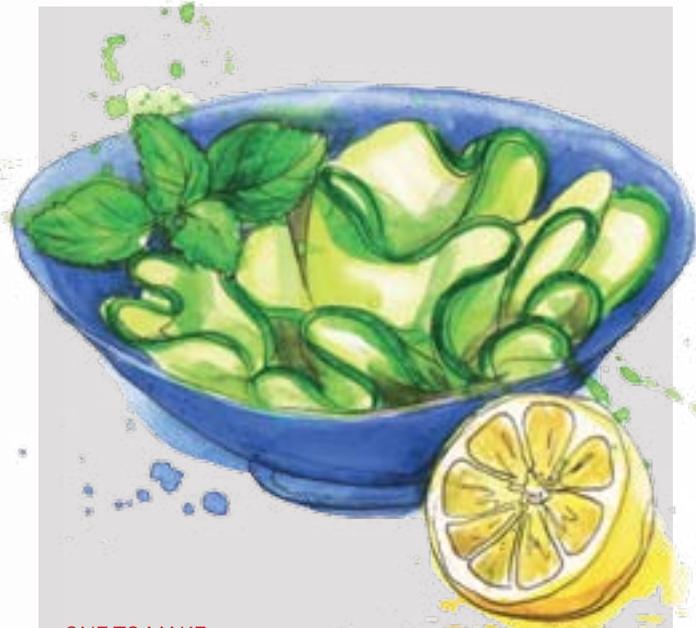
Lavish attention on beans

This obviously won't be a problem if we are experiencing a typical British summer, but in the event of hot, dry weather the flowers of beans can drop prematurely, leaving you beanless. The traditional remedy is to mist the flowers, but you can also try good, deep watering. This is also a moment to pay great attention to the frequent harvesting of beans. You want them young and tender and you want the plants to keep producing more, and as soon as you let them turn into tough, stringy old things the plant thinks its work is done.

PRACTICAL JOB

Biennial herbs for winter: parsley, chervil, coriander

Sow these three in spring and they put out a few unhappy looking leaves before running to flower and seed. It's all over in weeks. Sow them now and they clump up into happy, fat plants which – given sufficient protection – can keep making tasty leaves to herb up your cooking all winter long, before running to seed in spring. Plant them out into the soil once they are decent-sized plants and cover with a cloche, or plant into soil in a greenhouse or polytunnel.



ONE TO MAKE

Courgette ribbons with lemon and mint

If you don't have courgettes coming out of your ears right now you are doing something wrong. Courgettes are the glut vegetable to end all glut vegetables: they can always be relied on to go spectacularly over the top. Keep picking them whether you are sick of them or not, or they will quickly turn to marrows and production will stop.

This is one of my favourite ways to eat them, adapted from a recipe in *Green Seasons Cookbook* by Bath-based vegetarian chef Rachel Demuth (www.demuths.co.uk). It's simple and pared back – yet quite delicious.

INGREDIENTS

4 medium courgettes

2 spring onions

Dressing:

4 tbsp olive oil

2 tbsp lemon juice

1 garlic clove, crushed

Pinch of sea salt

Use a vegetable peeler to make the courgettes into ribbons, then blanch them for two minutes in boiling water. Drain, immerse them in cold water and drain again as soon as they're cold. Chop the spring onions finely and combine all of the dressing ingredients. Mix the spring onions with the courgettes, pour on the dressing and leave to marinate for at least 15 minutes before serving.