

Get your tomato ketchup ready we are going to have hot summer!!

This month Beech gardeners were very lucky to have Ray Broughton at their meeting, giving advice about "Gardening on Chalk". His talk was very informative, with useful tips coming thick and fast.

Chalky soil is deficient in iron, magnesium and manganese, but did you realise that if the top of your plant has yellowing leaves it has an iron deficiency and if the lower leaves are suffering they are deficient in manganese and magnesium? The solution to this problem is to use a chelated fertiliser such as Miracid.



Evidently alkaline soil contains more bacteria than other soil types so it is imperative that secateurs are kept clean to avoid cross contamination. The best solution is tomato ketchup (yes, really!!) Smother the blades with tomato ketchup and leave for three days and your tools will be sterilised, cleaned and lubricated. Only **tomato** ketchup works for this.

If you have a problem with moles on your lawn, don't panic. Water your lawn with half strength moss killer every two months for a year and the moles should disappear. Apparently, the worms on which the moles feed, move deeper into the soil and the moles can't be bothered to dig for them so move on to pastures new (next door?) Neither mole nor worm is harmed.



The two spotted ladybird is the most efficient at getting rid of aphids and you can now buy these to release into the garden.

Do your tomatoes suffer from end rot? If so put fleece over the plant and this encourages a better release of calcium, gives better flavoured tomatoes and prevents blight.



Talking of blight if you register with www.blightwatch.co.uk they will warn you when blight is in your area. They give you 4 days warning and if you cover your potatoes or tomatoes with fleece for the four days warning period and two more days while the blight spores are in the vicinity, your vegetables shouldn't suffer.

Don't bother planting runner beans that have red flowers. The white flowered varieties are self-pollinating so are more prolific.

Gardeners with chalky soil shouldn't use Growmore or Bone meal on their soil but should use Vitax 4 because it contains the 13 nutrients that plants need. (I am sure there was another reason as well but I can't remember what it was!)

When taking cuttings from plants, take them from the middle of the host plant and it will produce better shaped new plants.



In order to get uniform germination from poppy seeds soak them in vinegar for 20 minutes and plant a day later.

Did you realise that if you use marigolds as a companion plant in your vegetable garden it is the dead heads that deter pests? When you dead head your marigolds leave the dead heads on a tray in the vegetable garden.

Not only did Ray impart all these valuable tips and many more, but he also told us that he is a predictor of the weather, using a combination of plant knowledge, cloud formations and computer programmes and according to Ray we are in for a long hot summer. So that is something to look forward to!

