

ABUNDANT BORDERS



Creating a network of local food production in the Scottish Borders

visit www.abundantborders.org.uk **contact** robin@abundantborders.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

We plant seeds, we pot them on, we plant them out, we weed, we water, we nurture until finally we have a crop to harvest.

Typically, everything comes together, a glut of soft fruit at the start of the summer and a mass of top fruit, beans, peas, courgettes and root vegetables in the autumn.

At Abundant Borders we work in the Scottish Borders to create an abundance of food for sharing and to increase knowledge through courses like this one, so that folk can create their own abundance.

So what do we do with the surplus food?



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Vision

Our vision is a world where everyone, regardless of personal circumstances, has access to healthy, nutritious food.

- We teach the skills needed to grow food. Many folk don't have access to garden space, so we usually base the training on a piece of community land. These small pieces of land, previously underused or derelict, are turned into productive use for community benefit
- Knowing how to grow food is only part of the picture so we then teach how to cook healthy, inexpensive meals from the food grown or sourced locally
- Having created a community food garden as part of the food growing course, people can stay engaged with and continue to work in the garden, sharing food amongst themselves and donating surplus to community food initiatives



SHARING SURPLUS

Human communities started as groups of nomadic hunter-gatherers who later learned how to farm and cultivate crops. Since then, harvest time has been an important event in the year to celebrate bountiful crops. It also became a time for sharing surplus with those who were less fortunate as a means of helping folk survive a harsh winter.

Harvest festivals are still a focus of sharing, and swapping, surplus of one crop with another.

We could also get together with our neighbours in advance of sowing crops to make sure that we have just enough of each kind of fruit and vegetable for everyone, thereby avoiding gluts altogether.



INTRODUCTION

In practice we always have some fruit and vegetables in such large quantities that we can't eat them all.

And often when we have a fantastic crop of, for example, apples then so does everyone else so it can be difficult to give our surplus away.

So this module will look at what else we can do to harvest, store and preserve our precious crops in order to enjoy them for longer and throughout the year.

We will look, specifically, at the plants being grown in the community gardens across the Scottish Borders.



CAULIFLOWER

Harvesting

As the head grows it can become discoloured so to keep the creamy white colour consider blanching. When the head is about the size of an egg tie up the large outer leaves to cover it. The leaves should be tied loosely to give the head plenty of room to grow. From tying to harvest varies from 4-5 days in spring to 2-3 weeks in autumn.

Cut the head from the main stem but leave a few of the outer leaves attached to help protect the head until ready to eat. Handle the head carefully as it can bruise easily.

Storing

Once harvested, soak the head in salt water (1/2 tbs to 1litre) for about 20-30 minutes. This will help remove any cabbageworms that may be hiding inside the head. These beasts will come out so that the cauliflower can be stored without worrying about the beasts eating it before you do!

Cauliflower keeps best when frozen.

A head will keep for a week or so in the fridge.

Preserving

A good way to preserve cauliflower is by ***pickling***.

- Break head into florets. Sprinkle with salt, cover and leave overnight. Next day, wash and dry
- Put teaspoon each of mustard, cumin and coriander seeds, 1 tsp turmeric, ½ tsp chilli flakes, 200g sugar and 500ml vinegar into a saucepan and bring to a simmer, stir until the sugar has dissolved
- Pack florets into sterilized jars and fill with warm pickling liquid until florets covered. Seal and leave at least a week before tasting
- Will keep for up to a year



Image by pagerniki from Pixabay

TOMATO

Harvesting

From seed to crop will take 2-3 months depending upon the weather.

Tomatoes often ripen from the bottom up, so check the bottom of the tomato first. Once the entire tomato has reached the same colour, it is ready to be harvested.

Tomatoes continue to ripen while the temperature is warm, on or off the vine.

Storing

Remove the stems and store unripe tomatoes upside down at room temperature until they fully ripen.

Ripe tomatoes are best stored around 12°C to prevent further ripening or cold damage, so if you have a cellar or larder, that is perfect.

Overripe tomatoes can be stored in a fridge to prevent further ripening.

The most common way to store/preserve tomatoes is by canning. This can be done at home but requires experience and the correct equipment.

Preserving

A better way for most people is as passata.

- Put 1kg tomatoes, 6 garlic cloves (chopped) and 1 tbsp olive oil in a saucepan over a medium heat
- Cover and cook for 10 mins, shaking occasionally, until the tomatoes have collapsed completely
- Add teaspoon of castor sugar and season to taste
- Allow to cool, then sieve the pulp
- Passata will freeze-proof for up to 3 month

Green tomatoes make excellent **chutney** and you could also make ketchup.

BROAD BEANS

Harvesting

Pick from the bottom up when ripe and continue to harvest throughout the season.

Finger thick beans can be eaten whole or wait until the pod bursts open to harvest the fully ripe beans inside.

When the harvest is finished, cut off stems and leave the roots in the soil to make use of captured nitrogen.

Storing

Kept in a cool, dry place beans in their pods will keep for two or three days.

Pods will keep for 1-2 weeks in the fridge.

Podded beans don't keep very well but they do freeze well (either blanched or straight from the pod).



Image by Renia123 from Pixabay

Preserving

Podded beans can be preserved for up to a year in oil.

- Blanche beans for 2-3 mins
- Cool and remove skin (or not!)
- Add equal parts olive oil and vinegar to a bowl with a handful of parsley (or herb of choice) and 1 tsp salt per cup of shelled beans. Mix thoroughly
- Place beans in sterilised jars and cover with the marinade mixture
- It is important to cover the beans and to make sure they remain covered if you use some beans and reseal the jar

RUNNER BEANS

Harvesting

Runner beans are ready when the pods snap easily and while the seeds are still small and pale in colour. This is usually at about 15-20cm long.

Pick the beans regularly to encourage further pod production

Storing

They keep well in the salad drawer of the fridge for 4 or 5 days.

If they go soft, they will crisp up if you put them in cold water.

Runner beans store well when frozen, either blanched or raw. Trim off the ends, chop to the size you like to eat and freeze in portion sized food bags.



Preserving

The traditional method of preserving runner beans is to layer them in **salt**.

You will need roughly one pound of salt for every three pounds of beans.

- Take a container with a tight-fitting lid and layer the beans and salt
- Finish with a thick layer of salt and press down to exclude as much air from the layered mix as possible
- Seal the container and keep in a cool, dark place
- When ready to use, take out beans, rinse under running water and then soak for up to two hours before cooking

Image by paula693 from Pixabay

COURGETTE

Harvesting

Courgettes should be harvested before they get too large as they can go tasteless and marrow-like.

The more courgettes you pick the more, new ones will develop, so there is every incentive to pick them small.

The flowers can also be harvested and can be eaten deep-fried in crispy batter, even better stuffed first with cream cheese.

Storing

Courgettes store in the fridge for up to a week. Make sure they are not bruised as these deteriorate more quickly

You can store them by letting them grow on the plant, letting them grow to marrow size. These can then be hollowed out and stuffed (e.g. with mince) before cooking.

Courgettes will freeze but do tend to go mushy when defrosted due to their high water content.



Preserving

Courgettes are good in *chutneys* but can be preserved in oil too.

- Finely slice the courgettes lengthwise and coat in olive oil
- Lightly cook in a griddle pan then toss in lemon juice and set aside
- When cool, layer the ribbons with sliced garlic and thyme in sterilised jars
- Top up with oil so that the ribbons are fully covered and seal

Will keep for up to six months.

ARTICHOKES

Harvesting

Artichokes are harvested once they reach full size, just before the bracts begin to spread open.

The flower buds look like a dark green pinecone about 10 cm in diameter. A leathery bract surrounds a purple-blue flower, though they should be harvested before the flower shows.

To harvest, cut off the bud along with about 7.5 cm of stem

Storing

Sprinkle artichokes with a few drops of water and store in a perforated plastic bag in the coldest part of the fridge.

Stored like this, they will last for up to a week.

Artichokes can be frozen but only once cooked, never raw.



Preserving

Artichokes can be preserved in oil.

- Remove outer leaves and soak hearts in a bowl of water and lemon to prevent browning
- Cook hearts in 3 parts water to 7 parts vinegar for 5 mins. You can add bay leaves and peppercorns
- Remove hearts and wrap in clean tea towel and leave to drain until dry
- Pack hearts into sterilised jars and top with olive oil until completely covered. You can add garlic cloves to the oil

Last for up to four months.

Image by Susanne Jutzeler, suju-foto from Pixabay

KALE

Harvesting

Kale is a vegetable that will produce more leaves the more you harvest.

If you take a handful of leaves at a time, the plant will continue to produce new leaves from the top.

Avoid picking the terminal bud, found at the top centre of the plant, as this will inhibit regrowth.



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Image by Gerhard Gellinger from Pixabay

Storing

The best way to store kale is on the plant. Since you can keep going back to harvest throughout the year as it will continue to grow down to around 10°C. It may even taste sweeter after a frost.

Raw kale doesn't keep well but if you wrap in kitchen paper (to absorb moisture) then store in a plastic bag in the salad drawer, it will keep for three or four days.

Don't wash before you store, wash before you eat.

Preserving

Kale will work well in ***pickles*** and ***chutneys***.

Kale also makes delicious healthy crisps that will last for up to a week.

- Heat oven to 150C
- Wash and dry shredded kale, then place in a large bowl
- Drizzle with oil, then massage into the kale
- Sprinkle over sea salt or spice mix like ras el hanout and mix well
- Turn onto baking trays and spread out in a single layer
- Bake for 18-22 mins or until crisp but still green

POTATO

Harvesting

First early potatoes should be ready to lift in June to August. Wait until the flowers open or the buds drop; the tubers are ready to harvest when they are the size of hens' eggs.

Maincrops are ready from late August through to October. Wait until the foliage turns yellow, then cut it and remove it. Leave for 10 days before harvesting the tubers.



Storing

Properly stored, potatoes will last for 1 to 2 weeks at normal room temperature.

For longer periods, store in a dark, dry place (warmer than a fridge but colder than normal). A cellar or larder is ideal. This way potatoes will last up to 2 to 3 months.

Never store in plastic as the moisture build up causes them to rot. Use a paper, mesh or cloth bag.

Make sure potatoes are dry before storing. Only perfect (undamaged) potatoes store well so remove any bad ones first.

Potatoes can also be stored in **sand**.

Preserving

Raw potatoes are not easily preserved. When cooked, potatoes can be preserved as:

- Potato crisps
- Potato cakes (cooked and frozen)
- French Fries (cooked and frozen)
- Dehydrated, for later reconstitution into mashed potato



CARROTS

Harvesting

Carrots are ready for harvesting about 12-16 weeks after sowing.

Harvest as soon as they are large enough to use; a good indication is when the tops are about 6 inches tall.

Don't wait for the very large carrots to form or you'll sacrifice flavour.

Lift carefully using a fork if the soil is heavy.



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Image by Holger Grybsch from Pixabay

Storing

Carrots can be stored in **sand**.

Carrots can be left in the ground until needed. Cover the ground around the carrots with 6in of straw, cardboard or bracken. Carrots will keep this way overwinter but may become frost damaged during harsh winters.

Carrots can be wrapped in a paper towel and placed in a plastic bag in the salad drawer of the fridge where they will last up to two weeks.

Carrots can be sliced, blanched then frozen.

Preserving

Carrots can be used in **pickles** and **chutneys** and **salted in**, for example **Kimchi**.

Carrots can also be preserved in brine.

- Cut carrots into sticks and pack into jars
- Cover with brine and screw on lid
- Leave for 5-10 days

You can also add sliced chilli peppers, onions, garlic, dill or ginger to the jars to add extra flavour to the mixture.

You can also make carrot and parsnip **jam**.

PARSNIP

Harvesting

Parsnips can be harvested from late autumn right through to the end of January, once the foliage begins to die back.

The flavour improves when left in the ground as frosts initiate the process of turning starch into sugars.



Storing

Parsnips can be left in the ground and lifted when required. Loosen the soil around the roots with a fork before lifting them to avoid damaging the roots.

Parsnips can be stored in **sand**.

Parsnips can be wrapped in a paper towel and placed in a plastic bag in the salad drawer of the fridge where they will last up to two weeks.

Parsnips can be sliced, blanched and frozen.

Preserving

Carrot and Parsnip Jam.

- Place 50g parsnips, 150g carrots, 200g sugar, ½ lemon ½ orange (juice and zest) into a bowl and mix well
- Cover and leave overnight
- Place in a saucepan with 2 tbsp water and cook for 5 minutes
- Remove from heat, cool slightly and blitz with hand blender
- Return to heat until the mixture is sticky
- Remove, cool and place in sterilised jars

Will last for up to 6 months.

HORSERADISH

Harvesting

Horseradish is a hardy perennial capable of surviving winter temperatures, so great for Scottish gardens. It spreads easily so we grow in tyre towers.

Cool soil promotes the formation of compounds that give horseradish roots their pungency, so harvest in autumn, winter and early spring for the best flavour.

Loosen the soil all around the plant to see where the main root is growing and then dig out with a fork.

Storing

Store horseradish root unwashed in a plastic bag in the salad drawer of the fridge. It begins to dry up as soon as it is cut, so use it within a week or two for spiciest flavour. Once it is cut or grated, use within a few days.



Image by annca from Pixabay

Preserving

- Mix 1 tablespoon white vinegar, 1 tablespoon water, and a quarter teaspoon each of sugar and salt
- Peel the horseradish root then shred the flesh into the brine. Make sure all the flesh is covered with the liquid (make more if you need it)

This will keep for up to a month

- Combine the prepared horseradish with cream, sour cream, or mayonnaise to make a milder, creamy sauce

BULB FENNEL

Harvesting

Fennel is a perennial. It is not entirely cold tolerant but will survive mild winters.

Fennel leaves can be harvested as soon as the plant is established.

The bulb is ready for harvest once it reaches the size of a tennis ball.

Since the plant might not survive the winter, harvest in Autumn.

Storing

Trim the fronds to two or three inches above the bulb. Wrap loosely in a plastic bag and the bulb will store in the fridge for 5 days to 10 days.

To store frozen, slice the bulb and blanch in slightly salted water. Drain, cool and freeze the bulb sections.



Image by Beverly Buckley from Pixabay

Preserving

- Clean the bulb and cut into wedges
- Fry 6 garlic cloves in olive oil until golden brown
- Add fennel, a litre of water and a lemon cut in two
- Cover and boil for 30 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste
- Place cooked fennel in a sterilized jar and cover with cooking liquid
- Top off jar with olive oil and seal the lid

Preserved fennel will keep for 2-3 months.

ONIONS

Harvesting

Onions are ready to harvest when the bulbs are large, and the tops begin to turn yellow and fall over.

There's no perfect size, pull them at a size that suits you.

Pull them up, shake off the soil, and lay them out with the tops still attached.

Don't leave the onions in the ground for more than two weeks after the tops die back as they become open to organisms that can cause rot in storage, or they might even start growing again.



Storing

To dry onions, spread them out on a clean and dry surface in a well-ventilated location.

Onions should be cured this way until the tops are completely dry and the outer skin on the onion becomes slightly crisp.

Onions can be kept for many months in an unheated basement or garage. Hang in bunches to allow air circulation or in single layers in crates.

Or, put an onion in an old, clean stocking, tie a knot, add another onion and tie. Continue until stocking full then hang in cool dark place

Preserving

Onions can be ***pickled*** or used in ***chutney***. Small onions can be pickled whole, larger onions should be sliced.

- Peel the onions. Layer in a bowl and sprinkle each layer with salt. Cover and leave overnight
- Pour 600ml malt vinegar, 100g sugar, peppercorns, mustard seeds and bay leaves into a large saucepan
- Cover and bring to the boil. Remove from heat and leave overnight
- Rinse and dry onions. Pack into sterilised jars then fill with vinegar, including the mustard, peppercorns and bay, completely covering the onions
- Seal and allow to mature for 6 weeks

GARLIC

Harvesting

Autumn-planted garlic will be ready to harvest in June/July and spring-planted garlic will be ready slightly later.

Wait until the leaves have started to wither and turn yellow, and then loosen the bulbs from the soil with a trowel.

Dry after harvesting, in a single layer in a cool, well-ventilated place. Drying takes 2 to 4 weeks.

Storing

Store garlic at room temperature in a dry, dark place that has plenty of air circulation. Store in a wire-mesh basket or open paper bag or hang in bunches.

Properly stored garlic will last up to 6 months.



Image by Shutterbug75 from Pixabay

Preserving

Garlic cloves can be preserved in oil.

- Pack peeled cloves into a sterilised glass jars
- Add herbs (if desired) and top up with olive oil to cover completely. Seal

Garlic can be stored in the fridge for up to 2-3 months.

Use garlic-infused olive oil for dressings.

If packed in a safe container it can be stored in the freezer. Use a spoon to remove cloves as needed and return container to freezer.

BEETROOT

Harvesting

Beetroot are easy to grow and harvest, around 90 days after sowing.

Depending on variety and your own preference, beetroot is ready to be picked when the roots are between the size of a golf ball and a tennis ball. To harvest the beets, gently hold the tops and lift while levering under the root with a hand fork.

To harvest the leaves, snip just one or two leaves from each plant. If you leave the inner leaves intact, the beets will continue to grow beneath the ground.

Storing

Harvested beets can be stored in layers of moist sand or sawdust in a frost-free, dark place such as a shed or cellar.

Beets will keep in the refrigerator for 1 to 3 months, stored in the salad drawer in a perforated plastic bag.



Image by Photo Mix from Pixabay

Preserving

Beets can be stored as pickles.

- Wash and trim the beetroot
- Rub each with vegetable oil
- Wrap in foil & roast at 180°C
- Cool, peel, then cut into slices
- To make the pickling vinegar, put a tablespoon each coriander seeds, peppercorns, yellow mustard seeds and 6 cloves in a medium saucepan
- Toast over a low heat until they begin to smell aromatic
- Add 700ml vinegar and 100g sugar, let it dissolve, and bring to a simmer
- Pack the cooked beets into sterilised jars and add 1 tsp sea salt to each
- Pour over the hot vinegar and seal
- Ready to eat in 2 weeks

APPLES

Harvesting

Apples are easy to pick when they're ready. Hold an apple in your hand, lift it towards the stem, and twist. If it comes off easily, it's ready. If you need to pull at the apple, it isn't ready to pick.

Fruits at the sides and top of the tree usually ripen first because they receive more sunlight.

The presence of windfalls is also a sign you can start harvesting.



Storing

Only store firm, unblemished apples, as damaged fruits are likely to go mouldy and infect the entire crop. Check regularly and remove any damaged ones immediately.

To store apples over winter, wrap each one in a single sheet of newspaper and place them in single layers on a tray.

If you have lots to store, then you can make/buy an apple rack to allow many layers to be stored.

Keep apples away from potatoes as they release a gas as they age which causes apples to spoil.

Cooked apples can be frozen.

Preserving

Apples can be preserved in **jams** and **chutneys**.

Apples can be preserved dried.

- Thinly slice the apple and soak slices in lemon water for half an hour
- Place dried slices on baking sheets in a single layer
- Bake for 1 hour at 200°C
- Remove from the oven and turn each slice over and return to the oven
- Bake 1 more hour for soft dried apples or about 2 more hours for crispy apple chips
- Leave in oven to cool completely

APPLES

This is not an exhaustive list but a guide to some north hardy varieties. Most varieties are somewhere between eating straight away and those that will store for a couple of months. It's good to know the varieties that are good for storing if you are planting lots of trees so that you will have apples from harvest until the following spring.

Eat Straight Away

Beauty of Bath
Discovery
Ellisons Orange
Laxtons Fortune
Golden Spire
Irish Peach
James Grieve
Katy
Lord Derby
Lord Lambourne

Short Store (couple of Months)

Charles Ross
Christmas Pippin
Hawthornden
Kidds Orange Red
King of the Pippins
Norfolk Royal
Scotch Bridget
Scotch Dumpling



Good for Storing (3+ months)

Blenheim Orange
Crawley Beauty
Duke of Devonshire
Galloway Pippin
Lady of Wemyss
Laxtons Superb
Lord Clyde
Maggie Sinclair
Ribston Pippin
Tydemans Late Orange
White Melrose
Winter Banana
Winter Gem

PEARS

Harvesting

Pears tend to ripen from the inside, so if you leave them on the tree until they look ripe, they may already be mushy inside.

So it is best to pick pears when they are mature but not fully ripe and let them ripen off the tree.

Cup the fruit in your hand and tilt horizontally, and it should come away easily.

Doyenne du Comice grows well in Scotland and keeps very well.

Storing

If the pears are not ripe, store at room temperature in a single layer.

If the pears are ripe, store in the fridge where they can last for a few weeks.

In proper storage pears can last for several months.

- Spread the pears out in crates, or on shelves, without them touching each other
- Ensure that air can circulate well
- Store the crates in the dark, dry cool conditions
- Inspect regularly and quickly remove those that deteriorate

Preserving

Pears can be preserved in *jam* or in syrup.

- Peel, core, and quarter 8 pears and add them to a bowl of lemon water
- In a large saucepan, mix 400g sugar, 2 litres water, 2 star anise, 2 cinnamon sticks and 4 cardamom pods
- Bring to a boil
- Add pears and bring back to the boil
- Cook for 5 minutes.
- Pack sterilised jars with the pears
- Cover with syrup and seal

PLUMS

Harvesting

Plums are ripe and ready to pick if the skin of the fruit feels soft when pressed between finger and thumb.

They should come off the tree easily with just a slight twist of the fruit.



Image by congerdesign from Pixabay

Storing

Plums freeze well for storage.

- Halve and pit the plums
- Lay the plums on a baking sheet in a single layer
- Put the tray in the freezer until the plums are frozen
- Remove from the tray and store in freezer bags until needed

Cooked plums can be stored in the freezer as a stew or compote too.

Preserving

Plums can be preserved in *jams*.

Plums can be preserved in jars.

- Mix 3 cups water to 2 cups sugar
- Bring solution to the boil until sugar dissolves
- Wash, halve and pit the plums
- Pack into sterilised jars and cover with the hot syrup. Seal

Take care with the hot syrup on cold jars. Best to warm the jars before starting to pack.

DAMSON

Harvesting

Damsons are best left to ripen on the tree.

Harvest as the fruit starts to fall.

Merryweather produces larger fruit than the average damson and is sweet enough to be eaten raw

It grows well in Scotland and is particularly suitable for colder, wetter areas.

Storing

Damsons quickly start to soften, and rot once picked so don't store well.

They can be stored frozen, as with plums.



Image by Dimitris Vetsikas from Pixabay

Preserving

Damsons can be preserved in **jams** and can be **pickled**.

- Heat 300ml cider vinegar with 3cm cinnamon stick, 6 cloves and zest and juice of an orange
- Simmer for 5-8 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow to infuse and cool before straining
- Pierce each damson (500g) all over with a sharp needle and add to the vinegar
- Simmer gently until the damsons soften
- Pack the fruit into warm sterilised jars
- Add 300g sugar to the vinegar and bring to boil for long enough for the syrup to thicken slightly
- Pour the liquid over the fruit in the jars whilst still hot and seal immediately
- Leave in a cool, dark place 2 months before eating

CHERRIES

Harvesting

The sugar content of cherries rises in the last few days of ripening, so wait to harvest the fruit until it is completely red.

When the fruit is ready, it will be firm and fully colored.

Sour cherries will come off the stem when they are ripe enough to be harvested.

Sweet cherries should be tasted.

Picking with stem on avoids damage to the fruit.

Storing

Cherries don't keep well at room temperature.

They can be stored for a couple of days in the fridge or will freeze, as plums.

Preserving

Cherries can be preserved in *jams*.

They can also be stored in syrup – as plums.

- Pit and stem the cherries
- Pack into sterilised jars leaving about a half-inch at the top of the jar
- Bring water and sugar to a boil and stir continuously
- Gently pour the hot syrup over the cherries, also leaving a half-inch of room at the top
- Seal tightly and store in the fridge

Use within one month.



Image by Steve Buissonne from Pixabay

RHUBARB

Harvesting

Allow rhubarb to establish for a year before taking the first harvest.

Wait for the leaves to fully open before picking, May to August.

Stalks don't need to be cut from the plant. Ripe stalks can be harvested by gently twisting the stems and pulling from the base of the plant.

Leaves shouldn't be eaten as they contain oxalic acid and are poisonous.

Storing

Wrap rhubarb stalks in a damp tea towel or paper towel and put them in a perforated plastic bag in the salad drawer of the fridge.

Cut stalks will keep in the refrigerator for two to four weeks.

If freezing, wash and slice the stalks. Freeze in a single layer on a baking tray. Put frozen slices into freezer bags and take out as required.



Preserving

Rhubarb can be preserved in **jams** and **chutney** and bottled in syrup, as plums. Or try this rhubarb butter.

- Place 4 cups chopped rhubarb, 1 cup sugar and 1 cup orange juice in a saucepan
- Bring to a simmer and lower heat until you get a gentle bubble
- Stirring regularly
- Cook for at least an hour, until mix has reduced and turned a deep, rosy colour
- Turn into sterilised jars and seal

Sealed jars can be stored in a cool, dry place for up to six months.

BLACK/RED/ WHITE CURRANTS

Harvesting

In Scotland Blackcurrants tend to ripen in late June, July.

They are ripe when they are black and soft.

Redcurrants are ripe when a rich red colour.

Whitecurrants are almost translucent when ripe.

The best way to be sure with all three is to taste for sweetness.

Storing

Currants will store well frozen.

Lay them in a single layer on a baking tray (line with greaseproof paper as the berries tend to stick to the metal). When frozen, transfer to freezer bags.

Berries also store well in ice creams and sorbets.



Image by Pia Andersson from Pixabay

Preserving

Currants make great **jams** and can be made into **cordials**. Try this sorbet.

- Make a syrup with 150ml sugar and 200ml water. Cool
- Cook blackcurrants in syrup for 5 minutes.
- Strain through sieve (use back of a spoon to force through as much pulp as possible). Stir in juice of a lemon
- Pour into shallow container and put into freezer. Beat every few minutes as it freezes. Sorbet will keep for a couple of months if the container is now sealed.
- Allow to defrost for 10 minutes before serving

RASPBERRIES

Harvesting

Raspberry canes will begin to produce fruit in their second season.

Harvest berries on a sunny day, when they are dry.

Ripe raspberries will come away from the stem without a lot of pulling. If the berries are overripe, they'll be mushy when you try to harvest them.

Loganberries and Tayberries are harvested, stored and preserved in the same way.

Storing

Raspberries store well frozen.

Lay them in a single layer on a baking tray (line with greaseproof paper as the berries tend to stick to the metal). When frozen, transfer to freezer bags.

Raspberries also store well in ice creams and sorbets.

Preserving

Raspberries make great *jams* and can be made into *cordials*. As blackcurrants they make a delicious sorbet. Try making fruit leather.

- Blitz 350g raspberries, 1 teaspoon lemon juice and 75ml honey
- Pour into lined baking trays to make a thin layer
- Cook at 70 degrees C for about 3 hours until tacky
- Cool and remove greaseproof paper
- Cut into slices and store in an airtight container in layers, separated with greaseproof paper



Image by Pia Andersson from Pixabay

STRAWBERRIES

Harvesting

Strawberries are ready to harvest 4-6 week after blossoming.

The best way to harvest strawberries is to grasp the stem between your forefinger and thumbnail, then lightly pull and twist at the same time.

Strawberries are at their sweetest when fully ripened on the plants, so best to leave the berries on the plant for a day or two after they are fully coloured.



Storing

Strawberries are best eaten fresh but can be stored if you must.

Keep berries cold and dry so they don't go mouldy. Arrange the berries (without washing or removing the stems) on a paper towel-lined tray and cover with plastic wrap then refrigerate.

Before using, wash the berries under cool water and then remove stems.



Image by Shutterbug75 from Pixabay

Preserving

Strawberries make wonderful, **jam**, sorbets and ice creams.

- Purée 400g berries add 1 tsp lemon juice
- Warm 600ml double cream and 300ml milk in a pan until steaming
- Whisk 150g sugar and 5 egg yolks
- Slowly pour the hot cream mixture into the eggs, whisking continuously
- Strain through a sieve back into the pan
- Gently cook over a low-medium heat until it thickens slightly
- Cover, cool for 10 mins, then chill for 1 hr
- Stir the strawberry purée and 2 tsps vanilla extract through the cold custard.
- Freeze for 4 hrs, whisking vigorously every hour to remove any ice crystals
- Will keep in the freezer for up to two months

GOOSEBERRIES

Harvesting

You can expect to harvest in the second/third season.

Gooseberries are ready to harvest in late June to mid July when the fruit is full size and soft.

Gooseberries are ripe if ,when you squeeze gently between your fingers, they are soft.

Red varieties will redden when ripe.

Storing

Fresh gooseberries will keep for a couple of weeks in the fridge and freeze very well.

Lay them in a single layer on a baking tray (line with greaseproof paper as the berries tend to stick to the metal). When frozen, transfer to freezer bags.



Image by Ruslana Babenko from Pixabay

Preserving

Gooseberries make great *jams* and compote.

- Spread 500g gooseberries on a baking sheet and sprinkle with 30g sugar
- Bake at 180°C for 20-30 mins, until tender
- Tip the gooseberries into a bowl and squash gently with a fork to break up the fruit and release the juice
- Taste to check sweetness and add more sugar if required
- Compote will keep for about a week in the fridge or a couple of months if frozen

ELDERBERRIES

Harvesting

Elderberries are harvested in the autumn.

They are easy to spot and to collect.

Use a wide toothed comb to remove berries from stalks.

Storing

Elderberries can be stored frozen, as with other berries by freezing as a single layer.

Lay onto greaseproof paper as berries will tend to stick to a metal tray.



Image by Hans Braxmeier from Pixabay

Preserving

Elderberries can be made in **jams** and **cordials**. It makes a great winter warmer syrup for coughs and colds.

- Put elderberries and chopped ginger into a pan and cover with water
- Bring to boil and simmer for 10 mins
- Pour through a jelly bag or muslin and allow the juice to drip through. Extract as much liquid as possible
- Add equal parts sugar to the liquid mixture, e.g. for 500ml of juice, add 500g of sugar
- Add a cinnamon stick and simmer for 5 mins
- Cool. Remove cinnamon stick. Bottle

SALTING

Salting is an old-fashioned and highly effective method for preserving vegetables, layering them with salt to preserve them. It was a popular food preservation method in the early twentieth century, especially during the first and second World Wars.

- Using low salt concentration lets the vegetables ferment and create a sharp pickle. The salt creates the right conditions for growth of lactic acid bacteria. As they grow, they increase the acidity of the brine and prevent the growth of spoilage bacteria. The result is a tangy, pickled vegetable with less sharpness than vegetables preserved in vinegar. Sauerkraut is made by layering raw shredded cabbage with salt.
- Using high salt cures the vegetables by replacing their cellular water with brine. Fresh beans can be layered with salt and preserved in this way.
- If you can, use pickling salt as table salt (containing additives) and sea salt (containing naturally occurring minerals) can inhibit the salting process, and are more likely to create spoiled ferments or oddly-colored products.

PICKLING

There are two types of pickling methods. The first uses vinegar. Vinegar has a strong acid content that prevents the growth of harmful bacteria that can spoil the vegetables. The second is fermentation in brine, as with Kimchi.

Pickling in vinegar works best with fresh vegetables.

- Choose the vegetables you'd like to use and wash thoroughly
- Leave whole or cut into slices or discs, depending on the vegetable
- Place the pieces in a bowl and toss them with enough salt so that each individual piece has a light covering. Leave for a minimum of one hour
- Choose a pickling vinegar and add sugar, herbs and spices to taste
- Put the ingredients into a saucepan and bring to the boil
Immediately remove from the heat and allow to cool to room temperature
- Drain any fluid that the salt has extracted from the vegetables and pack the vegetables into sterilised jars
- Cover with the pickling liquid and seal



Image by Alina Kuptsova from Pixabay

KIMCHI

Kimchi is a very popular way of preserving vegetable in South Korea, where there are at least 200 varieties produced! In fact, most families and villages will have their own variation.

It is made by layering chopped cabbage with salt and seasonings such as soy sauce and ground dried red chilli. Other vegetables can be added, such as carrots, radish and onion.

- Cut cabbage into strips and toss in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salt
- Cover with water and cover with plate to keep cabbage submerged
- Leave overnight then drain (reserve brine)
- Cut other vegetables (carrots, radish etc) into fine strips
- Mix together cabbage, vegetables and chilli flakes (to taste)
- Pack very tightly into a jar and cover with the reserved brine
- Leave a little room at the top and don't screw lid too tight as fermentation creates bubbles
- The kimchi is ready in about a week but can be left longer. In Korea it can be left for up to a year or longer, often buried underground! If you are going to store for long periods screw the lid tight after first week



Image by seonae song from Pixabay

CHUTNEY

Traditional chutney originated in India. The ingredients include a combination of fruits, vegetables, herbs and spices that create a sweet and spicy flavour. The type we are used to seeing in jars on supermarket shelves are made with a method like making jam.

Green Tomato chutney is great for those end of season fruits that just refuse to ripen!



Image by Couleur from Pixabay

- Slice 2.5kg green tomatoes and finely chop a large onion
- Layer in a large bowl with a tablespoon salt. Leave overnight
- Chop 500g sultanas and 500g apples
- Put 500g muscovado sugar and 1 litre vinegar into a saucepan
- Bring to boil to dissolve sugar
- Add sultanas and apples and cook for 10 mins
- Strain tomatoes and onions and add to the pan
- Bring to boil then simmer for 1 hour
- Transfer to sterile jars

Will keep for up to a year.

STORING IN SAND

Storing root vegetables in sand is a traditional way of prolonging useful life.

Potatoes, carrots, turnips, radishes, beetroot, Jerusalem artichokes, onions, leeks and shallots can all be sand stored with excellent results. They will keep for up to 6 months.

- Do not wash the vegetables before storing in sand
- Remove any green parts, like carrot tops
- Use “play sand” as this is dirt and moisture free
- Place several inches of sand on the bottom of the storage container
- Lay vegetables on the sand in a single layer, not touching each other
- Cover them completely with sand and continue layering until box or bin is full
- Top with a layer of moist sand
- Store in a cool dark place; basement, pantry, cellar, shed or even an unheated garage, provided the temperature doesn't drop below zero



CORDIAL

Traditionally people made fruit cordials as a way of preserving summer fruits to enjoy over the winter months. Ribena is a great example but lots of blossoms and berries make delicious cordials.

- Put 300g golden caster sugar in a large saucepan with 300ml water
- Bring to a simmer then add zest and juice of two lemons and 450g blackcurrants
- Cook on a medium heat until the blackcurrants start to soften and burst.
- Strain through a sieve lined with muslin
- Bottle in sterilised bottles

Keeps in the fridge for up to 1 month, longer if you use more sugar.



Image by Lisa Redfern from Pixabay

JAM

Jam is typically made from chunks of fruit cooked with sugar until the fruit mixture reduces and thickens. Berries, grapes and other small fruits can be used, as well as larger fruits like apricots, peaches and plums.

To make jam, take fruit and combine it with water and sugar. Cook in a large pot to reduce the liquid and activate the fruit pectin.

Once the mixture reaches its setting point it can be transferred to clean jars.

The amount of sugar you need to make jam depends on the amount of pectin in your chosen fruit. Some fruits such as apricots, berries, and peaches are low in pectin. In order to thicken, they must be combined with higher pectin fruits, like lemons, or shop bought pectin can be added.

Jelly is made from the juice of fruit that isn't suitable for jam, either because it doesn't contain enough natural pectin or because has seeds that are difficult to remove. After cooking, jelly is strained through a strainer or jelly bag to remove any solids.



Image by congerdesign from Pixabay

A close-up photograph of several green leaves with prominent veins and numerous small water droplets on their surfaces. The leaves are arranged in a fan-like pattern, filling the entire frame. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the leaves and the clarity of the water droplets.

Any Questions?

We will have a Q&A each Wednesday morning 10am to 12 noon to answer questions in real time. But please feel free to post your questions to the group at any time.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Books

- The Permaculture Way, Graham Bell
- The Permaculture Garden, Graham Bell
- Creating a Forest Garden, Martin Crawford
- Permaculture 1, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren
- Permaculture, A Design Manual, Bill Mollison
- People and Permaculture, Looby Macnamara

- The Grafters Handbook, R J Garner

- The Wild Food UK Foraging Pocket Guide

- A Handbook of Scotlands Trees – Reforesting Scotland

On-line

- The Permaculture Association - www.permacultureassociation.org.uk
- Permaculture Scotland - <https://Scotland.permaculture.org.uk>
- Abundant Borders - www.abundantborders.org.uk
- Royal Horticultural Society - www.rhs.org.uk
- Foraging Gudes - Wildfooduk.com

Facebook groups

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/virtualcommunitygarden/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/foodcommunities/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/permaculturescotland/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/reforestingscotland/>

THANK YOU

We are a small, growing charity (SCO49008) supported by several organisations.

We are grateful for their support - without which we wouldn't be able to do what we do.

Thank you

