



Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden



The real growing season.....

June and July are the real growing months as you will hopefully see from this combined June and July edition of the Garden Newsletter. Indeed, these two months are usually dependent on the weather conditions to facilitate the necessary growth, so, the weather the past couple of months has been nothing short of challenging with extremely hot dry conditions punctuated by some rain. Essentially, almost the perfect growing conditions. We shall see.....

Black Peppermint is amazing.....

Black Peppermint – whether it be herbal tea or even adding some leaves to your ice cream, it has such a great taste. Plus, the stems and the leaves on the plant are stunning too.....



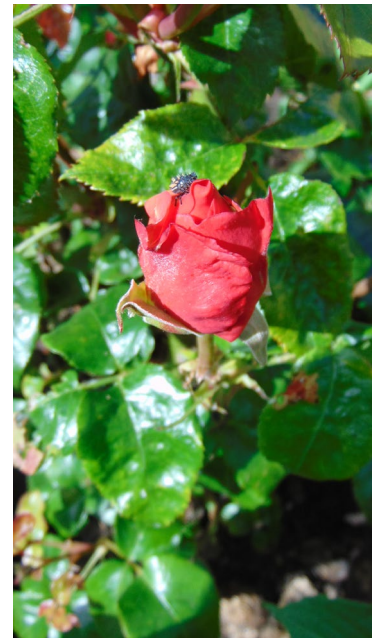
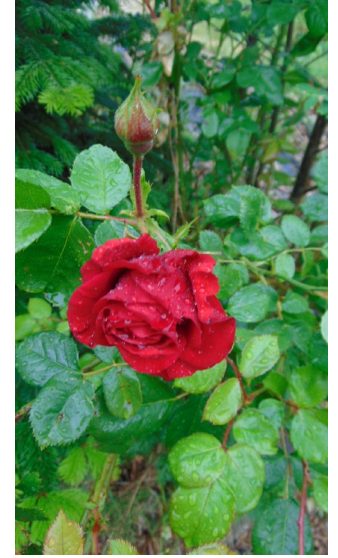
Nasturtiums and Californian Poppies.....



Nasturtiums

Californian Poppies

Beautiful Red Roses.....



Roses Roses Roses Roses Roses

The First Week of June – the ground is cracked!

Now we are into the first week of June, after some rain at the end of May, it just shows you how dry the ground is – the photographs show very clearly that the ground is not only very dry but it is also cracked!



Rain showers have come.....

Tuesday June 3rd has seen some rain showers arrive, not really heavy rain but enough to wet the surface and more importantly put some much needed water into our water butts. The big downside now is that with the mixture of warmth and rain, the grass and the weeds will accelerate their growth.....

We cannot have everything!

Spinach is looking green and lush!

Sown from seed, our spinach has made plenty of lush green growth, hopefully it tastes as good as it looks.....



Bring me sunshine.....

This is a beautiful rose – just look at the formation of the flower – the way the petals are formed to make up the flower. An absolutely stunning rose which is aptly named Bring me Sunshine.....



Blackcurrant crop is going to be huge!

Looking at our blackcurrant bushes, they are absolutely loaded with fruit, the bushes have so many currants, with the rain and the warm sunshine, this should swell the currants even more. So, once this crop is ready there will plenty of fruit picking to do.....



Blackcurrants are ripening fast.....

As our blackcurrants ripen quickly, we will have to make sure that the pigeons do not indulge themselves – they have already been spotted amongst the fruit bushes. Short of netting the bushes, there is not much else we can do.....



Pea plant flowers have some stunning colours.....

Our pea plants are producing some stunning coloured flowers, remember these are vegetable plants not sweet peas which also produce stunning and sweet smelling flowers.....



Self – seeded Poppies

Here you can see some poppies that have self-seeded around the garden area, indeed, there are lots of red field poppies all over the garden. The poppies in the two photographs have special significance – they are called Victoria Cross because if you look inside the flower, the significant markings resemble a Victoria Cross. These flower seeds have been developed especially to raise funds for the British Legion.....



Weather Challenges.....

Within a week we have gone from dry, parched ground during the month of May now followed by heavy rain showers which have turned everywhere lush and green again coupled with unseasonably high winds.....

Also, the light levels are not great either – all factors that dictate growth of plants particularly at this high point in the growing season.....

“Flaming June” is an expression that usually describes the warm, sunny conditions that we associate with the month of June, although we are only in the first week of June, it has certainly started completely different to normal....

Give it time I suppose is the mantra that we need to adopt.....

Here we can see some lush green herbs that are relishing the rain showers.....



Hyssop...

A real bee favourite when the plant is in flower during the summer months.....



Cola Plant..

A plant with a very distinctive smell of cola – use in drinks.....



Fennel.....

Has a great aniseed taste with both culinary and medicinal uses.....

Tashkent Mint.....

Makes wonderful herbal tea with a gorgeous minty aroma.....



Corn Marigolds are attracting the pollinators.....



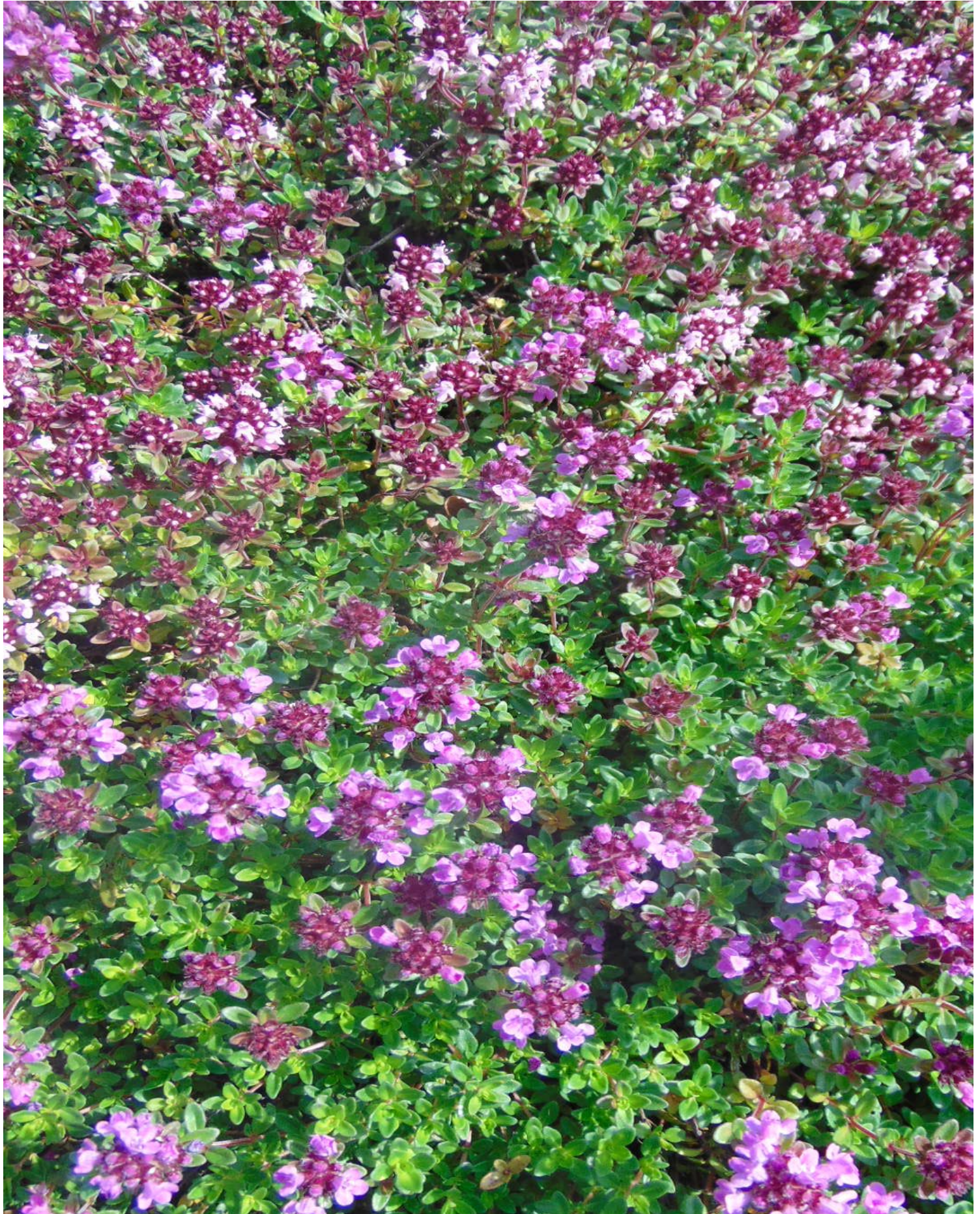
If you look closely at the two corn marigolds, you will see a bee on one of the flowers and then look more closely at the other flower and you will see another small insect on the other flower.....

Pollinators are crucial to our food production, so the more planting we do to assist these insects, then so much the better.....

POLLINATION

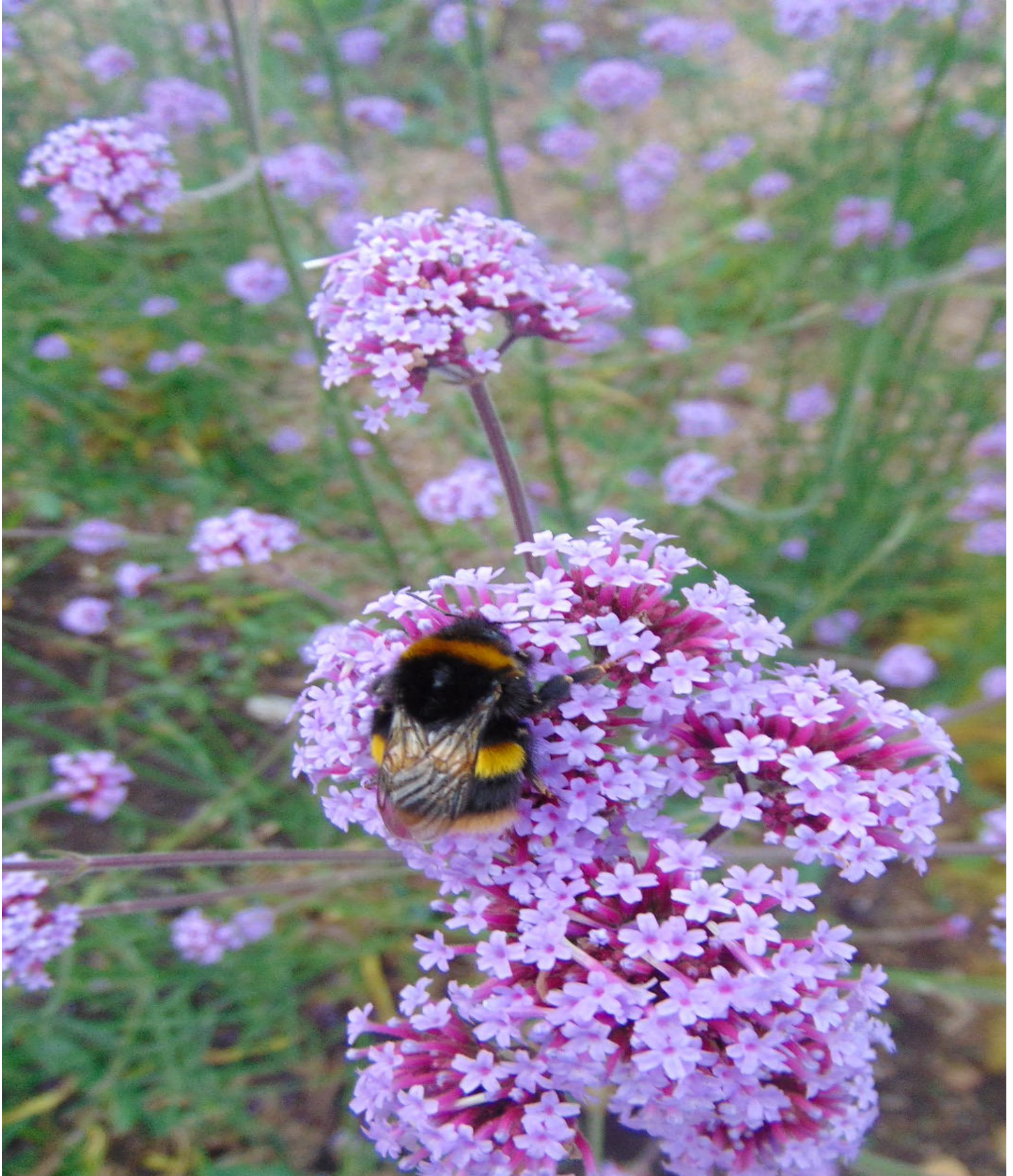
Thyme Pink Ripple.....

Here is our Thyme Pink Ripple, it is almost like a carpet of beautiful flowers with an absolutely gorgeous aroma that thyme provides. Not only does it look and smell great but just as important, if not more important it is such a great space for the bees and all of the other associated pollinators.....



Pollinators at work.....

The value and the importance of the pollinators can never be overstated, indeed so much of food production relies on pollination that the more flowers and pollinator friendly planting that we can plant plus a commitment to not use any pesticides or nasty chemicals in the garden is absolutely paramount to the ecology of our garden. Below you can see a bee working away on our bee – friendly planting. *Verbena Bonariensis* is a real favourite of the bees.....



Seed germination is underway.....

During the summer months the soil is warm, any natural rain that is around or if necessary, watering will provide the perfect growing conditions for seeds to germinate particularly quickly too. Sown direct into the ground, runner beans and peas have germinated and are growing fast as you will see below...

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Runner Beans.....Peas.....

Dwarf French Beans are starting to crop.....



Potatoes are flowering.....

Once potatoes start to flower, it is usually a sign that a couple of weeks after flowering the potatoes are ready to harvest. These potatoes are a First Early variety so they will hopefully give us a crop of fresh, home - grown potatoes.....

Here you can see the bright flowers that potatoes produce.....



Lots of different fruits in all areas of the garden.....

The fruiting hedge that is well established now at the bottom end of the school is loaded with sloes which come from the blackthorn hedge, a spiky hedge that produces masses of white blossom in the springtime.....

Here you can see the sloes.....



Blackthorn Bushes - Sloes

Pumpkins and Courgettes producing lots of flowers.

We have lots of pumpkins and courgettes that are established now with these plants producing lots of big, bright yellow flowers. But, members of the cucurbit family of plants such as cucumbers, squash, marrow, pumpkins and courgettes all produce male flowers to begin with. Now, male flowers do not produce any fruit – look at the back of these flowers, they are all male so there is no fruit from these flowers. By producing male flowers first, this is nature's way of alerting the pollinators that there will be plenty of flowers to pollinate particularly as the female fruit bearing flowers will come a couple of weeks after the male flowers – a fascinating feat of plant science.....



More courgette and pumpkin growth.....

Below you can see more courgettes with plenty of male flowers plus the photograph below shows our first pumpkin growing behind the female flower..

So, plenty of water is the order of the day now and hopefully there will be many more fruits to follow.....



Nasturtiums providing plenty of bright colours.....

ur nasturtiums are in full flower now as they provide plenty of colour too.....

Plus nasturtiums are edible too – both the leaves and the flowers are edible having a peppery taste, often used in salads providing both colour and taste....



Nasturtiums....

Plenty of fruit growing.....

We have plenty of fruit growing all over the school allotment but the fruit crop could possibly have been much bigger, despite plenty of blossom being on the trees in the spring due to the very dry spring a lot of this fruit did not set.....

Potentially another area that we need to really look out for if we are going to get hot dry spring weather on a regular basis. You really do not expect to be watering trees during March and April but our weather is neither normal or predictable anymore.....



Apples are looking good.....

Going back to the comments about the dry spring, it is interesting to see that some of our more established apple trees have more fruit on them as opposed to the younger, less established trees. More mature trees will have deeper root systems which will enable these trees to search out water from deeper down in the ground.....

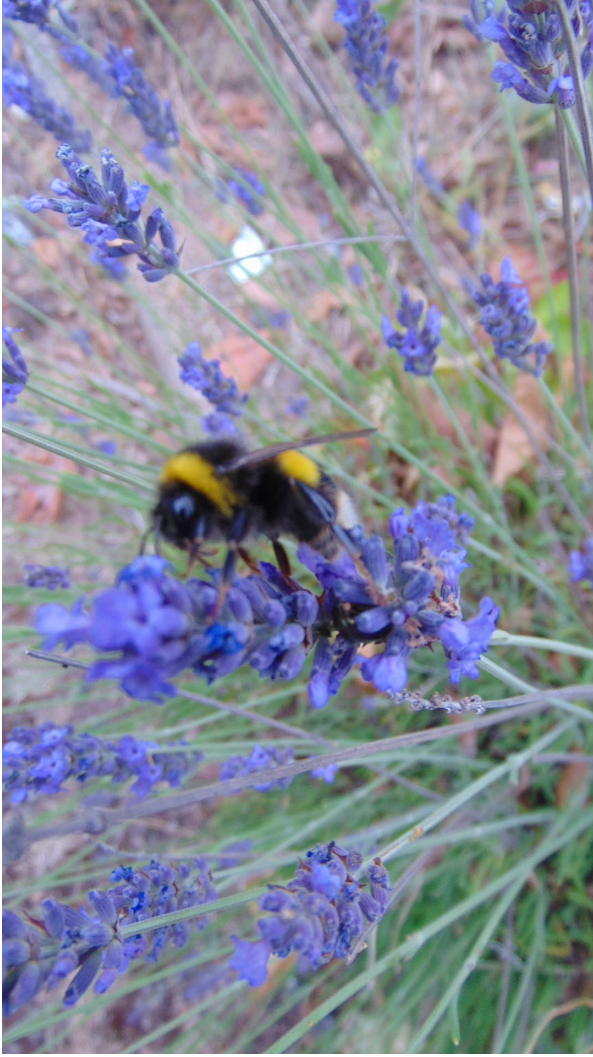


More apples.....

Below you can see an unusual variety of apple – this is called appletini which produces small firm golf ball sized fruits. Once established it is a very heavy cropper as you will see from the photographs below.....



Bees are active all over the garden area.....



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Garden Ecology.....

We are always looking at different ways to improve the overall ecology of the Echo Eternal Curriculum Garden – with the garden space being a relatively “new space” in that the area where the garden is situated is very much a recovered building site. After the old school was demolished the site was levelled covering over masses of bricks, stones and builders rubble which was covered over with a very thin layer of poor quality soil which was then seeded to essentially cover over to create nothing more than a cosmetic green space with the likelihood of being able to grow anything in it not very high on the agenda. Hence why we have built the garden almost entirely on the raised bed principles, growing in pots and containers and a No Dig philosophy apart from tree planting which will allow the trees to extend their roots and seek out water and any nutrients that are in the soil. To go along with this philosophy, we do add plenty of nutrients into the soil by way of adding volcanic Rock Dust and the use of peat free multi – purpose compost..

What is always interesting to observe is what emerges from barren ground, to date it is not unexpected but there are plenty of weeds such as dock leaves which are notoriously difficult to get rid of because of their ridiculously long tap roots that go deep into the soil plus another “nasty” weed called ragwort.

Now ragwort is not welcome anywhere because it is a weed that is poisonous to livestock and horses plus it can cause irritation to human skin so strong thick gloves need to be worn. Better still, do not make any contact with it!



On the left you can see some ragwort plants that are in the garden area.....

We have endeavoured to trim as many of the plants as we can but you will see that there are some very distinctive looking caterpillars feasting on these ragwort plants. Indeed, they will strip these plants very quickly indeed....

These caterpillars are from the cinnabar moth which will feed on ragwort plants.....

Gorgeous Calendula.....

Below you can see some gorgeous colourful Calendula or as some people call them Pot Marigold. The flowers have both medicinal and culinary properties plus they make excellent companion plants which means they are planted next to other plants to encourage more pollinators.....

