



This weekend we had the great fortune to have **Rekha Mistry** from the BBC's Gardeners World, give us a talk on her approach to gardening. She covered a number of different topics from Climate change and how to cope in the garden, to how and what plants to grow to encourage insect life to improve fertilization and minimize damage to our precious plants.

As quite a number of you were not able to attend for one reason or another, and because she gave us quite a lot of information which those attending may not have been able to note down, I thought you might appreciate some of the key points she made.

Extending the season

Rekha doesn't like to see bare soil! So even though Autumn is almost with us and we have harvested our vegetables, there is no reason not to sow seeds (preferably harvested from this year's plants, of which more later). For flowers consider sowing hardy annuals now in the cold frame, such as **Sweet Peas & Marigolds**. Some of her other favourites, which can be directly sown in the ground are the **California Poppy** 'Peach Sorbet', **Viola Tricolour** "Johnny Jump Up", **Cerithe** Major var *Purpurascens* and don't need much in the way of watering. This way as soon as Spring comes, you will have some colour in the garden. She says that even if they have sprouted and we get a frost they may slow down but as it gets warmer, they will have a head start.

Vegetables too can be planted now. Her recommendations were; **Spring Onions** "White Lisbon", **Winter Onions** "Senshyu", "Hybound", **Carrot** early Nantes, **Radish** "Cherry Belle", **Spinach** "Bloomsdale longstanding", **Chard** "Giant Winter", **Pea** "Meteor and **Winter Lettuce** "Arctic King".

Jobs to do in the garden

Rekha looks to Autumn as the time to prepare for the following year as this is when you can make a huge difference to the quality of your plants with a little forethought. These were her top tips;

- Turn your compost heaps
- Mulch! If you do not have abundant mulch then don't scatter it across the plot but mulch the individual plants. She says it might make your plot as if it has been invaded by moles(!) but your plants will benefit.
- Think about sowing Green Manure. It is simple and can make a big difference.
- Grow flowers in your vegetable plot, encouraging pollinators and insects that will devour greenfly and caterpillars.
- Make leaf mould. This is particularly good for potatoes, either in pots or in the ground. The slight acidity it imparts to the soil will prevent potato scab. A very easy way to make leaf mould is to make a container from chicken wire supported by canes. Gather as many leaves from your garden or the hedgerow and pack them down hard into your wire containers.
- Finally, make organic feed using nettle or comfrey. One way to do this is to pack as much as you can into a bucket and water. Doing it now reduces the rather unpleasant smell that it makes and the 'tea' will be ready to feed your plants in the Spring using the tea diluted at a ratio of 1:10 with water.
- Gather seeds from your own plants. There is a better germination rate as they are acclimatised to your garden.

Rekha finished with a question-and-answer session and the signing of her book "Rekha's Kitchen Garden", which she made available at a discounted price of £15, saving attendees £3!

So, a thoroughly good afternoon enjoyed by all and we hope more of you will be encouraged to come to our next meeting on October 17th @ 2:30 pm when Caroline Sheldrick will be talking about Medicinal Herbs in the garden.