

The EXCHANGE and M A R R O W

OXTON ORGANICS CUSTOMER NEWSLETTER

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I don't know about you but I'd have to say good riddance to summer 2007. Of course May through to October is always a hectic period for us as for all growers but the hardness of the work is usually tempered by plenty of lovely home grown veg and profit to boot. Before July 20th, or black Friday as it's become known, the season was already shaping up to be a poor one, but a single weekend's rain turned a poor season into a catastrophic one. We've estimated that those fateful few days in July cost us around £15000 in lost income and left us having to work all the hours sent in an effort to get the business back on track. Still, it's an ill wind, as they say, and I must confess to experiencing a certain irrational satisfaction with certain aspects of the deluge. Firstly, the feeling of total powerlessness to prevent what happened served as a timely reminder of human insignificance when judged against the forces of nature. I also felt myself a lucky man in that I was not left grappling with a faith in a God who, despite my constant devotion, couldn't see his way clear to keeping the river out of my living room. I should mention at this point that the river didn't enter my living room because we built our house four feet above ground level and that this was our idea, not Gods. But enough atheistic rhetoric.....for now.

Another source of comfort was the way that, despite the assertions of David Cameron and the like that the fabric of British society was unraveling, the larger majority of my contemporaries pulled together to help the stricken, both neighbour and stranger, in so many acts of kindness and self sacrifice. For our part we had more offers of help from friends and customers than we could have imagined and to those of you who helped with the clear-up and subsequent tunnel raising sessions, a huge and most humble "thank you".

But what of the world? Well, as the party conference season draws to an end it should be possible to get an idea of who stands for what and why. Now, if I heard it right, Gordon Brown's New Labour mark II is to champion traditional British values, the Tories are going to soak rich people who pretend not to be living in Britain to avoid paying tax (non doms in the jargon) and the Lib Dems are going to do lots of completely different things because they're, well, different. Hmm. And suddenly there's talk of a snap election. I can't help thinking that in this case the word snap might denote it's similarity to the kiddies card game rather than it's earliness. Should our Gordy see fit to invite us to vote within the next few weeks, however, it's fairly likely that a large percentage of us will shun the privilege. So those of you who won't be arsed to pop in to your local polling station and make your mark, you need only look to Burma to be reminded of how fortunate we all are to be able to change our government at will. Even if there isn't actually anyone you want to vote for just go down and voice your unhappiness by soiling your ballot paper. As strong as you think our democracy may be, with or without your participation, if we don't overcome our growing political apathy it may well become a case of "use it or lose it".....

WHAT'S GROWING ON

As you may have gathered from the above, the floods pretty much wiped us out, crop wise, but despite these losses we have managed to turn things around a bit. The new tunnels which, with your help we installed in record time, are all planted and hold out the hope at least of some limited winter production. This includes one or two items you might not expect including bunched turnips, chinese cabbage and for the first time black radish. Despite their rather disconcerting appearance (and name), their crazed black exterior conceals tender white flesh and a mild radish taste which goes well in salads and stir fries. This new protected ground will also mean, barring a hard winter, a better than normal supply of leafy stuff for Jaynes wonderful winter salad bags.

BOXERS BRIEFS

Our main wholesale supplier has recently written to us outlining the present market situation and how they expect availability to pan out over the next few months. In brief the situation appears to be as follows. Expect spuds to be dearer, smaller and of limited variety. Onions are short and are bound to rise in price. A doubling in feed costs (blame the insane world wide rush to embrace biofuels) means egg prices will rise, initially by 10p/doz but possibly by more later. The news is better for autumn and winter brassicas and most root veg so hopefully carrots, parsnips, cabbage, cauli, etc., should be relatively easy to source as will leeks.

CLASSIFIEDS

Entry free to all box customers

DAVE HALLIGANESQ. - Physician to those worried by Windows. Hardware and software problems diagnosed. Bespoke databases by appointment Tel.07730775085

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FOR SALE - PEUGEOT 106 KID - L reg. Pretty tidy and a good runner. MOT 'til August 2008. Taxed 'til January. New stereo. £350. Great, inexpensive first car or run about. Contact Oxtons.