

Marigold Cottage

July in our garden





Clematis

I love clematis, and although we have some in flower every month of the year, in July so many reach their zenith, so that a walk around the garden just to admire those in flower is a treat. I have found the best ones are supported by other plants or trellis, and this month it is not the large flowered ones that hold central stage.

Outside my kitchen window is the blue *Clematis viticella* (wild form) which is an absolute mass of small four petalled flowers for weeks on end - I actually let it come in through the top window which never closes. Blue being a favourite colour, I have 'Harlow Carr', 'Wisley', 'Jackmanii superba', 'Prince Charles', 'Perle d'Azur', 'Polish Spirit', 'Venosa violacea', 'Etoile violette' to name just a few all in flower now. There are of course others I love too, and the velvety maroon 'Warsaw Nike', pink 'Princess Diana', pale pink 'Comtesse to Bouchard', very dark 'Black Prince' and last to mention, but not least 'Alba luxurians'.

In the early days I bought a lot from Hainton Nursery and then Lincoln Green Nursery, neither which exist anymore, and of course like most gardeners I have a number of no name bargains!



Summer pruning

Midsummer is the perfect time to prune flowering cherries, so we booked Nick and Leanne Morgan from Southernwood Garden Services to come and work their magic on seven of our trees. The work was long overdue, and we are so pleased with the outcome, and the trees must be breathing a sigh of relief. We will have them back in November to work on other trees such as the alder, willow and oak when they have lost their leaves.



I have a lot of hardy geraniums, which although some are still flowering, it is a good time to give them a really good haircut, knowing that they will recover quickly, and some will even flower for a second time.

I have pruned the early summer flowering shrubs like **Weigela**, **Spireas**, **Deutzia**, **Kolkwitzia** and **Coronilla** removing the flowering stems and if in need of renovation taking out one in three of the old stems. The roses I am constantly deadheading, but those that give a good second flush I have taken the flowering stems well back as well - 'Buff Beauty' is one that responds particularly well to this treatment.

The bamboos have put on a lot of new canes, and we will wait for them to harden before harvesting for use in the vegetable garden.



The Vegetable Garden



The vegetable garden has been producing well and as early items come out, I've been trying to sow additional seeds for late crops.



First bed The garlic has been harvested and is drying. The white radish (daikon, mooli) and the beetroot didn't work that well and were probably planted too early. The middle of the bed is now chock full of sweetcorn, tomatoes, courgettes and butternut squash. The courgettes have been slow but we have had 2-3 including one giant that had escaped attention. Some of the planting - sweetcorn and butternut squash is supposed to be complementary but the courgettes and tomatoes are threatening to take over.



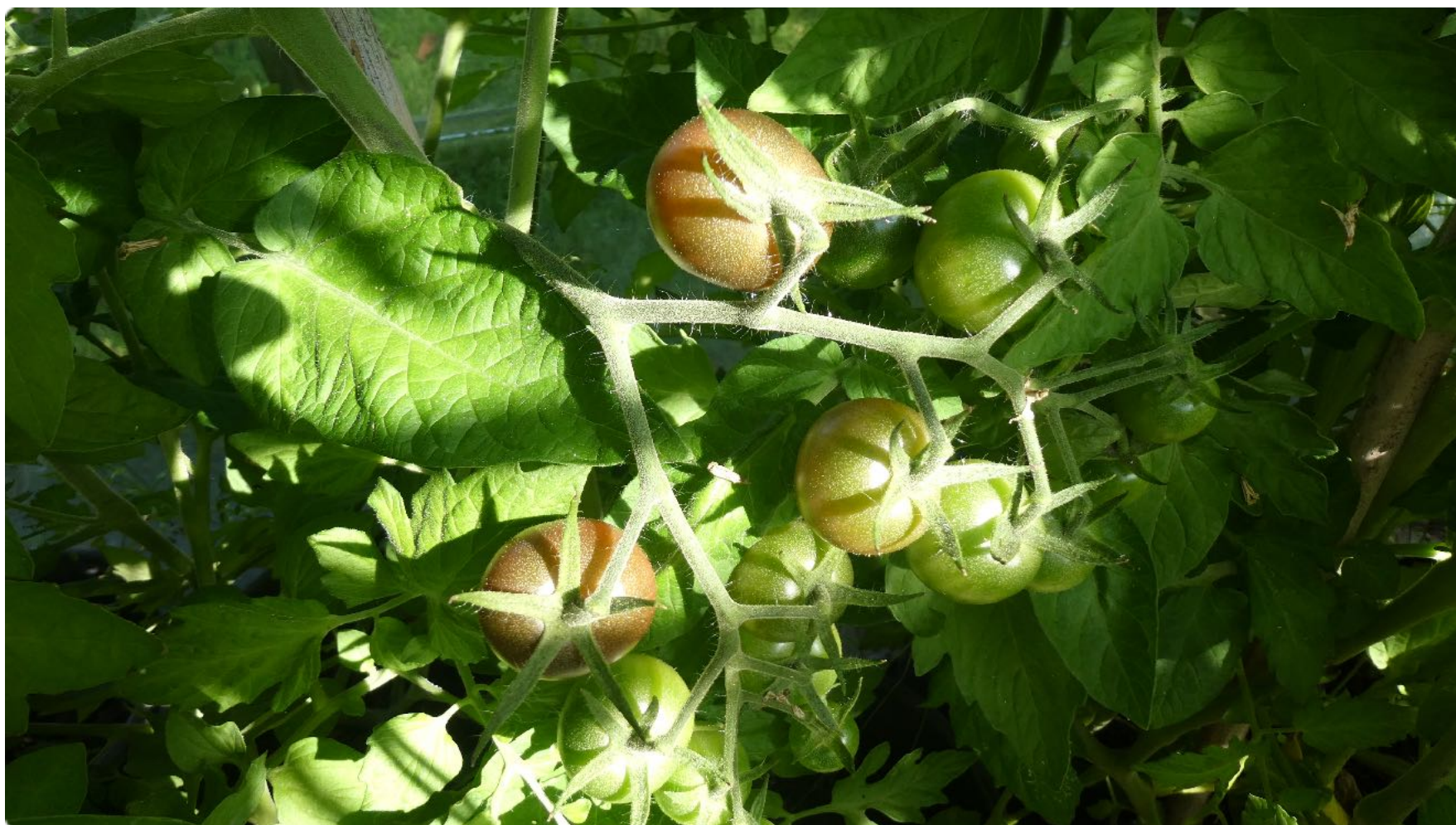
Second bed The first early potatoes - Lady Cristl - are now all lifted. They were a bit slow developing and produced a few large potatoes rather than the expected mass of small salad potatoes. They are very versatile for steaming, boiling, roasting and baking. Their place is being taken by a second sowing of runner and climbing beans, peas, soy beans and an attempt to get a late crop of broad beans. I am about to start digging the second early potatoes - Charlotte - which we treat as a main crop.

Third bed This is full of Charlottes apart from the rhubarb in one corner. The rhubarb is still being harvested and I made a good rhubarb chutney last week to go with a curry.

Fourth bed - Asparagus bed The asparagus are now producing their forest of fronds, the peas have been harvested and removed and replaced with leeks. We have started cropping a climbing bean and we have dwarf beans coming on. The salad area has produced some beetroot, white radish, spring onion and lettuce and I have just sowed some more beetroot. This is experimental as a bit late for sowing according to the packet.



Fifth bed The broad beans are out but the runner beans are just beginning to crop. We have a genuine broad bean and a white bean of similar habit growing. I have planted out some shiso (perilla) which we use in Japanese dishes and salads.



Greenhouse We decided not to grow peppers and aubergines this year due to poor success in recent years. The Chinese climbing bean was the earliest crop followed by cucumbers and the tomatoes. We have had a few tomatoes of the dwarf variety. I think I have around 6 tomato varieties growing. It will be a challenge to work out what they all are as there are no labels and we are trying two new varieties this year!



Overall, I can go out most afternoons to pick vegetables for dinner. Currently potatoes, various beans, Swiss chard and courgettes are available.



Special July plants

Triteleia 'Queen Fabiola' I have had these summer flowering bulbs for many years – people often mistake them for a mini Agapanthus – they used to be called Brodiaea. I have a few variety 'Starlight' which are yellow and flower late May into June, but I have not seen these for sale of late.

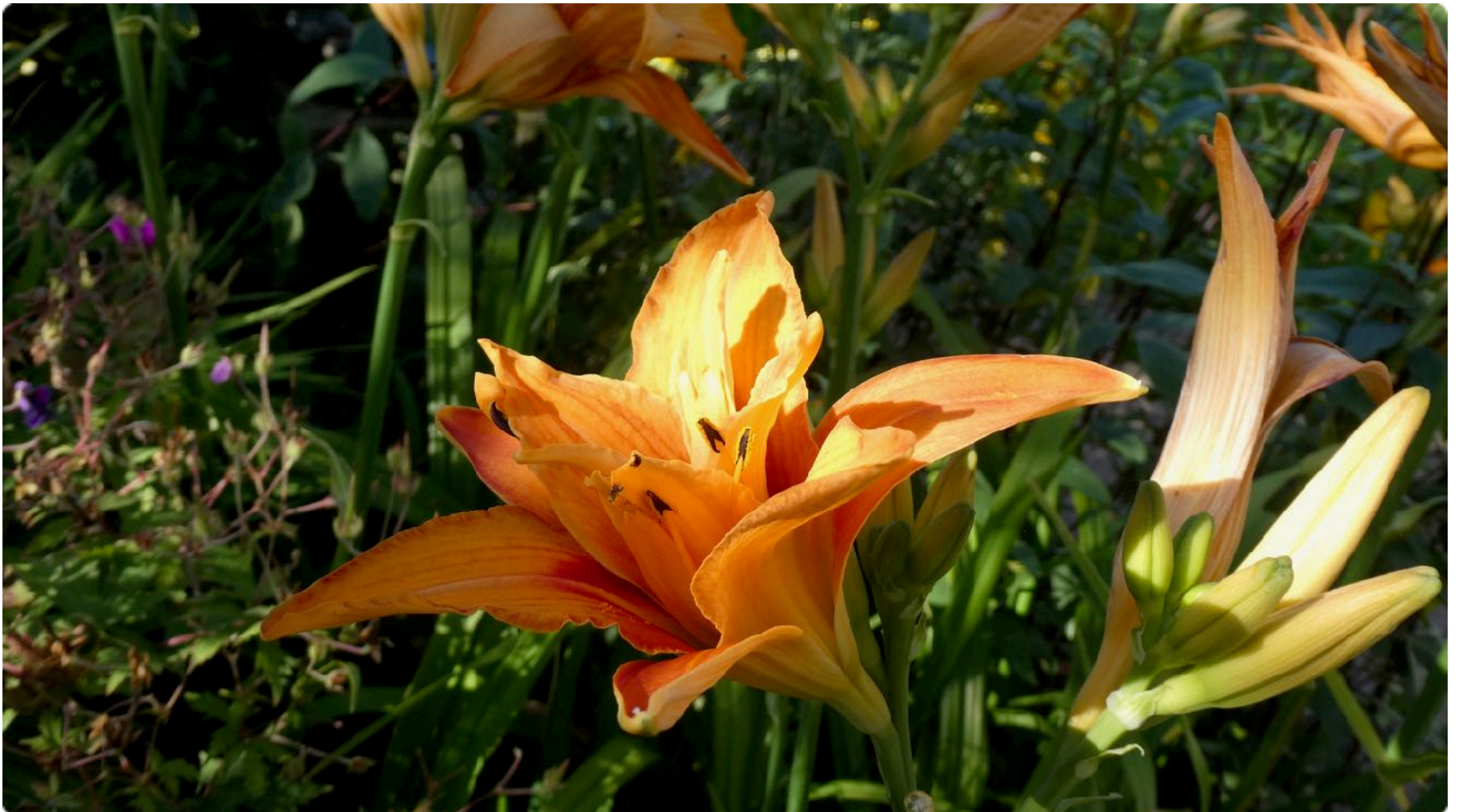


Campanulas, there are so many lovely campanulas in flower right now. Campanula lactiflora in all its forms are often mistaken for phlox. In my garden I find they need some support and like to have their own space. Campanula persicifolia 'Chettle Charm' is a particular favourite, then Campanula glomerata 'Superba' is such an intense blue sturdy and low growing for me. I have campanula poscharskyana all over the garden, and I let it scramble, then early August I cut it right back, and it comes all over again. Nettle Leaved Bellflower (Campanula Trachelium) in the wild is generally best suited to growing in shady areas, hedgerows and woodlands – I first saw it growing on the edge of the woods at Swaby, so I grow it in a shady spot in the garden. (see net page).



Onopordum, the scotch thistle, has self-seeded on the West facing side of the house - it turns out to be a perfect place as the unseasonal winds have left it alone.

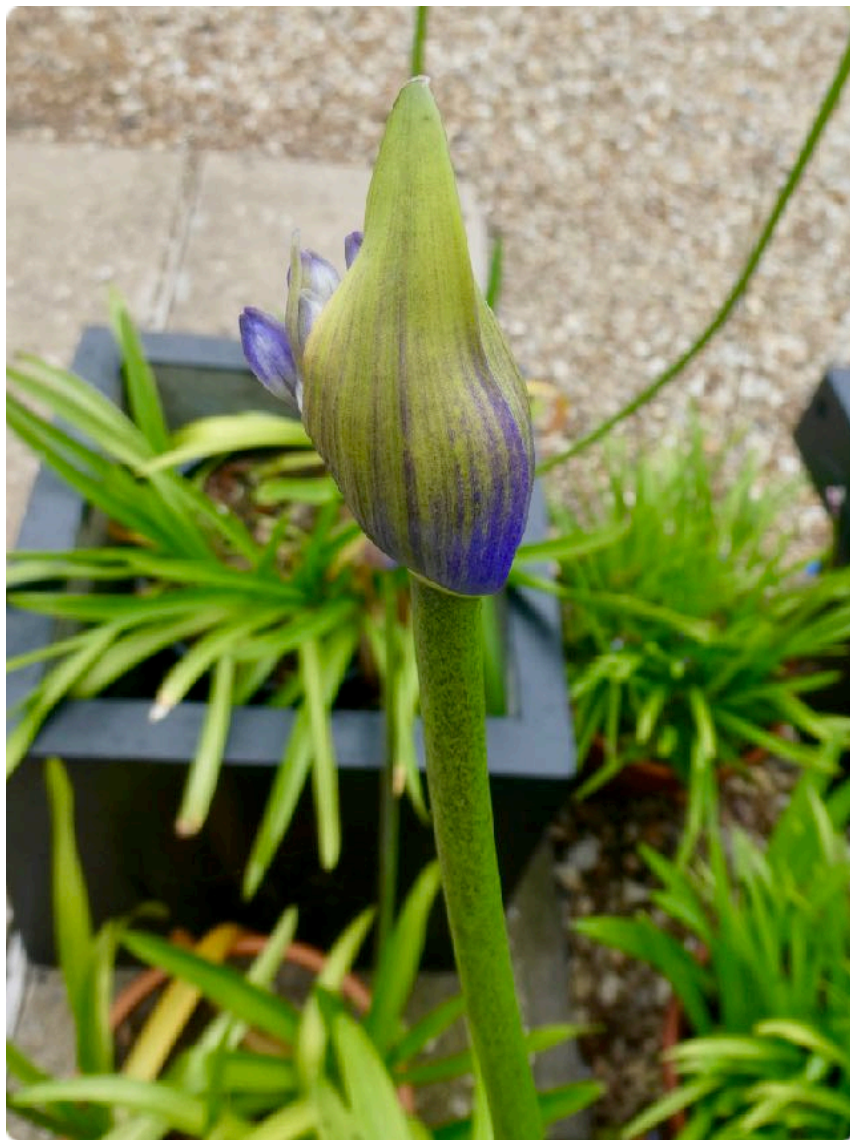
In my 'Hot Bed', the **anthemis** are the first to flower, and have been quickly followed by the **hemerocallis**. I have four varieties in that bed, and they are such good doers over a long period. The **heleniums** are beginning to flower and the **heliopsis** looks as though it is about to take over. After years my **bronze fennel** seems to have gone, but self-seeded in front of the house looking quite magnificent.





The **Eryngiums** are turning a glorious blue and attracting the bees, and the **Agapanthus** this year are full of promise in the borders and in the pots.





Best wishes from Stephanie & John



And from Tassie & Momo!
22 July 2020