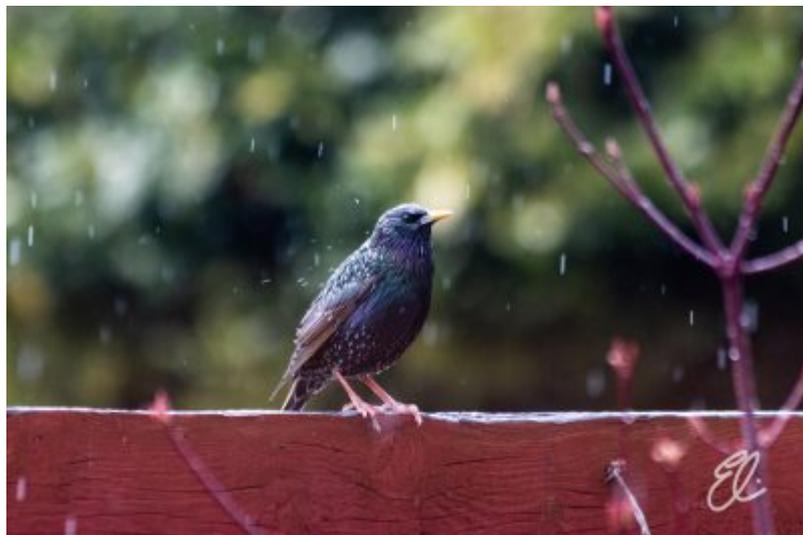


A gardening journal – the most essential piece of gardening kit for newbies

Well after some beautiful, sunny days recently, normal service has been resumed and the skies have opened and its now chucking it down. The rain is coming down so hard that it's bouncing off the patio and going straight back up again.



It doesn't seem to be deterring the garden birds, but I, however, have decided that this gives me the perfect opportunity to talk about one of the most important jobs you can do as a gardener, and you don't have to go out and get wet.

I want to talk about journaling, notebooking, recording and just keeping a record of your work, progress, lessons learned and things to watch out for.

As a gardener, we are always learning, always. Even the most experienced gardener will quickly be able to rhyme off a list of things they learned this year and its that constantly learning which helps you and your garden evolve. However, that's an awful lot of info to keep in your hear so that's where keeping a journal comes in. When it comes to gardening, of course, the best education is experience, and keeping a gardening journal is a great way to keep a record of that experience so you can learn from the things that work – and essentially, all the things that don't!



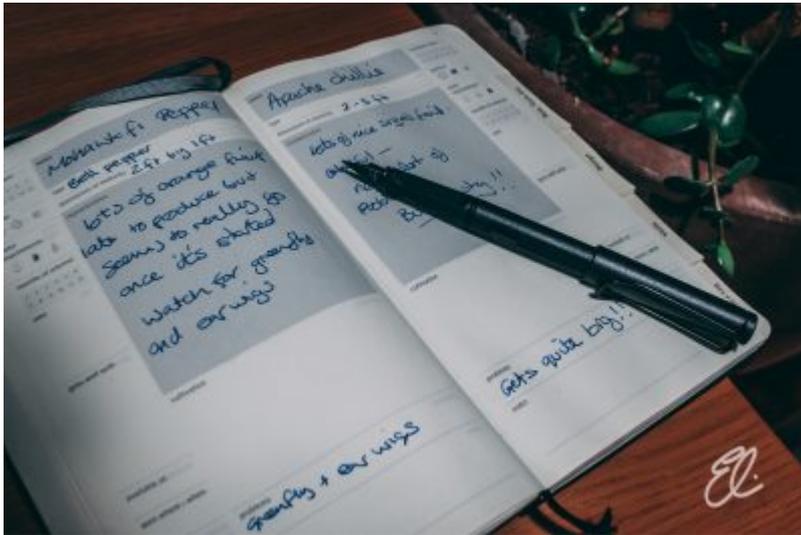
My journal was the vital piece of knowledge that let me know just when I had to make decisions about my tomato, pepper and chilli seedlings this year. I was able to check back and see how long it took for things to sprout, grow, flower and produce fruit, so when things were slow to sprout this year I knew exactly when to call it a day with those particular plants and visit the garden centre for replacements.

So what sort of things do I record?

Well, to be honest, everything. I make notes of the different plants I sow, when I've sown them and what the conditions are like, what the weather is like, where I've sown them. I note the time it took for them to germinate, how quickly they've grown. I also record any problems, pest or difficulties I've had to overcome and how I overcame them. A good note for next time.

You can also record details about the garden itself, what the soil is like, where the frost pockets are, what areas seem to work well for different plants. Even, when you fertilised and what you used. You can record everything that might be useful at a later stage. Or even, to a friend who is beginning their garden journal, you can give them all your experience and knowledge to help them learn because you've got all your notes right there.

What should I use as a journal?



This is entirely up to you. For the past 5 or so years, I have been using a little notebook which is set up specifically as a gardening journal. It was a present from our friends Valerie and Dave, who are super supportive of our

gardening and that journal has all my notes from the very beginning and I check it every year when I am planning the garden, as I buy seeds and continuously as things grow. For instance, this year I am growing Mohawk F1 peppers again and I know from my journal that last year they were severely attacked by greenfly, however, at the same time I grew Bellboy peppers and they weren't touched at all. So now for this year, I know to keep an eye out for greenfly and try to catch them early. Without my journal, these are the types of things that would get lost and you'd be learning from scratch each year, but I digress, my paper-based journal has been a real help but the one thing I would like to be able to do is to record images of the garden, visual records of plants, disease, damage, success and failure and this is much harder to do on a paper journal, although not impossible. So, for this reason, I am currently considering how I would transfer my journalling to an electronic format. One where I could snap pictures using my phone and load them somewhere. This could be as simple as a word document that I use to keep my records or I may have an experiment with some of the apps and websites which offer a garden journal type service. I haven't decided yet as I have a lot of info that I don't want to lose and also if I'm honest, it will be a lot of work to transfer it. Maybe I can convince Kate to do that?

Anyways, gardening journals/notebooks are my top tip for new gardeners. Get into the habit of keeping one and make it part of your routine, maybe with a cuppa and a biscuit, to update it at least every week.



Gardening Journal – <https://amzn.to/2SKVHsa>

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