

Winter is coming

Today was the last harvest day of the year, time to dig up the last of the root veg and empty the beds ready for winter.



We did not bad considering it's October, we got a good haul of carrots (which are destined for Kate's Carrot and orange soup) and a few decent sized beetroots, which if you're a regular blog reader you will know that these will get roasted as I'm a massive roasted beetroot fan.

I'll maybe roast these up and add them to our wraps for lunch tomorrow.

We've said that this is the last harvest of 2013 although that's not strictly true as we are still getting a few tomatoes, but you kinda get our idea.

There was one big fail this year though, something we didn't get a single harvest from, our sprouts. Unfortunately we learned a valuable lesson this year, at the expense of my dream of having Christmas dinner from our own garden. You just cannot grow brassicas without covering them over with a net. The cabbage moths are a nightmare.



I thought as long as we were vigilant and kept on top of things we'd be OK. Well unfortunately I couldn't have been more wrong. Even with us chasing off any moths we've seen and picking off caterpillars and eggs, the Brussels sprouts were desecrated.

Not only do the caterpillars eat every bit of leaf they can get too, they also weaken and kill off the plant, in this case the leaves and stalks were all falling off meaning the areas where the sprouts grow was exposed and damaged.

I'm really disappointed, but I've learned and if we choose to try again next year at least I know exactly how I have to deal with things.

But hey, it's not all doom and gloom. It's October and you should see how nice the garden still looks. We still have lots of colour and texture out there.

The beds we put in this year are all still full of colour and we're quite excited now to see what happens with them next year as there were some bulbs and things which didn't come up this year (as it's the first year) so just how amazing will it look next year.



We've had a fantastic year for gladioli, the beautiful burst of red and purple flowers have been such a success but the best is yet to come as we had the same amount again that didn't flower this year. I can't wait. We are still enjoying them, so how amazing is next year going to be? We also had some stunning hanging baskets and some of them are still flowering as you can see. Looking out the French doors into the back garden is a stunning view at the minute and I have to keep pinching myself and saying, "its October!!!"

There's just one more photo I want to share with you before I leave you to think about winter, Christmas and then the best bit of the year, spring and what next year's garden will bring.

One of the hanging baskets on the fence has the most amazing geraniums in it, surprisingly as everything else in that basket has died off, but these have come back for a second round of wow!



Yes they really are that amazing shocking pink!

So there you go, our garden surprises for this year. I'm starting to think and plan for next year already (which Fiach will be having a good chuckle at), but I like to be organised, I'm definitely the girl with the plan. It helps too. I spoke before about the effect winter has on me and to be honest I can almost feel the dark creeping in around me, but having the garden and being able to plan for spring is a good thing. It keeps the good stuff alive and works as an everyday reminder that winter isn't actually that long and there are all the good things to look forward to like thanksgiving at Mole end and Christmas and hey, when spring comes, things will burst to life in the garden, the birds will come back to the bird table and I'll make Saison beer to celebrate.

It's all good.

And we finally have the gardens just how we want them

New beds in the front garden all planted up

Well the sun was splitting the pavements yesterday, as we say in Scotland, so we took the opportunity to get our final bits and pieces done in the gardens.

This is how the house looked when we moved in.



When we moved in last year we had little more than a red box surrounded by concrete. The previous owners had been elderly and weren't able to keep on top of the huge gardens. And so had covered them over with a mixture of blocks and red stones.

I have to be honest; when Kathryn first showed me pictures of the house she wanted to view I wasn't sure. It was characterless and I just couldn't see past all that concrete but she convinced me to give it a try and I'm glad she did.

We started this time last year with the back garden. We put in some raised beds to grow veggies and put a greenhouse in the spot where the most run down shed was. Then we painted the fences and the second shed and planted up some flowers in pots.

There were still a lot of areas which could be improved so next we moved onto the front of the house.

There was no garden at the front at all, it had been completely covered over with red bricks which we lifted to create the flower beds and a lawn (almost killing ourselves in the process – next time, we'll get a big burley bloke in).

We stopped there for last year as it was a lot of hard work and a lot of expense. But we picked it up again this year.

We removed the last areas of red stones from the back garden and planted up another four flower beds and then we did the same at the front of the house to create another two flower beds. Which run along the front of the house under the windows?

I just can't believe the difference it makes, the house looks absolutely amazing so I've put a gallery of photos in to show you just some of the work we've done and basically to show off the gardens we are so proud of. You can click on any of the pictures to see bigger versions.

Next week, I start growing veggies again: 0)

New plants

This is what the front of the house looks like now.



New beds for the garden

Big exciting news today – and it wasn't just that we saw Caroline from The Beechgrove Garden at our local plant nursery.

We told you a few posts back that we had plans this year to lift the chuckies from the back garden and create new flower beds; well today we finished doing just that.

There were four beds in the back garden, one long one against the side fence and three smaller ones along the house. We've lifted the chuckies from all of them, dug them over a couple of times and added chicken pellets to fertilise the soil (as we had no way of knowing just how many nutrients may or may not have been available).

Today we finished that off by re-homing some of our existing flowers and by adding a few new ones.

Just to remind you – this is what the garden looked like when we moved in last year, although without the pots, those were our interim solution.



Bed 1 – along the fence at the side of the house – on the right of the photo.

It is the biggest bed in the back garden and was a huge rectangle of red chuckie stones. Bland and boring.

To liven it up when we moved in, we put a selection of pots with colourful flowers in along that fence to try to make it look a little cheerier. Well today we actually planted the flowers into the bed and it looks stunning.

There are a selection of different plants in there, some of

the Primula and Primroses which we planted into the pots last year, but we also added Japonica, Euonymus, Irises, Hyacinths, and some new Primula and Primroses to pad things out. We'll probably add new things as they come into season and of course for next year – Tulips and Crocuses are a must.

I think you'll agree, it looks soooo much better now with that blast of colour. It's still quite spacious but it will fill out over time.





Bed 2 – Little teeny, tiny bed on the right of the patio doors.



Just a few of the usual suspects to brighten it up, this bed doesn't get a whole lot of light so we are going to see how it goes with things and it looks good, we may move the Azalea into that space as it's a bit sad in a pot just now.

Bed 3 and 4 – the left hand side of the patio doors and left hand side after the kitchen door

Here we had some fun and added some heather which really brightens things up and has the added bonus that I can use the flowers to make beer a few years down the line once the plants are more established.



I'm really happy with the result, the garden just looks a million times better and now I can't wait to do the same job at the front of the house and create another beautiful bed of flowers.

To give you a taster, here is the front of the house as we moved in last year...



More red chuckies to lift and replace with flowers... watch this space...