January is a strange month, I think. The winter solstice has passed and technically it’s all uphill now towards spring. The problem is no one seems to have told January that that is the case. Middle winter can often bring some of the coldest, harshest weather of the year and it’s impossible to notice any gain in day length yet. Most of us by now are suffering from cabin fever and are raring to get on and garden again; whilst the weather may mean this isn’t possible, for me, January is still a month of great activity. January is the time to try and get myself organised and prepared for the growing season to come. I’ve spent Christmas happily perusing seed catalogues. Now is the time to sit down and be ruthless with my lists. Sometimes it’s just too difficult to choose though, I want to grow everything. When I feel like this I dig out some graph paper and draw up plans of my beds. I find it a really useful way of focussing my mind as to the reality of the space I actually have.

Do I really need to grow 4 types of beetroot and what’s the point of growing radishes again when neither of us really likes them? I’ll go back through my notes that I made of which crops and flowers worked well over the last year and which ones I wouldn’t bother with again.

Once my seed orders are done then I’ll start looking at ordering some extras for my allotment cutting patch. Summer flowering bulbs, dahlias and possibly some alstroemerias are all on my wish list, and now is a great time to order them before stocks of your favourites run out. Once the weather improves it can be hard to find time to do anything other than seed sowing and weeding so I use this winter period to write up a seed sowing
It can be easy in the frantic seed sowing of March and April to forget a particular packet of seeds lingering at the bottom of your seed box, only to discover it once it is too late to sow. There are seed labels to clean, tools to sharpen and oil, and I like to do a general stock take of the shed to see if I need to replace anything. There’s the idea for a small fruit cage around my blueberries and tayberry to keep the birds off the crops which I need to look into and a heated propagator to buy so that I can get a head start with some plants this year. So it might be cold and maybe even snowy but there is more than enough to do to make January pass by in a flurry of activity.

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