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beating the january blues

Posted in *All posts*, *January* on 16th January 2015

January is a strange month for me, I loath that overwhelming feeling that January brings, yet enjoy the planning stage while curled up next to the fire. The long dark days of January just make me want to go into hibernation, curled up like a little hedgehog in a cosy pile of leaves! I find it far too easy to procrastinate over the jobs that must be done by the end of the month.....the dreaded Tax Return! Plus there is always a huge list of things to be done in the garden as I never seem to manage to get it put to bed properly due to work being so busy in the run up to Christmas, I haven't even got my garlic planted as yet.....

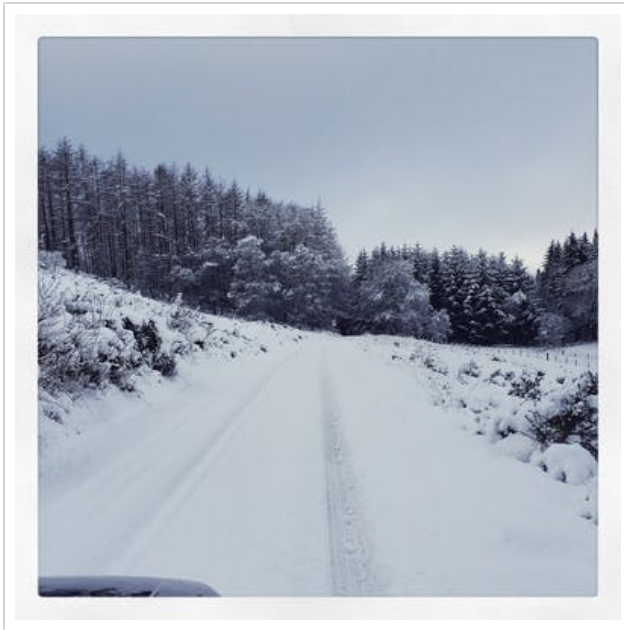


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We had a reasonable crop of garlic last year, but I think given the mild winter of 2013 into 2014 the bulbs weren't as big as in previous colder winters, where we had temperatures down to -15°C and lots of snow. **Garlic** needs a good spell of cold weather, ideally 10 weeks below 10°C, to make the bulbs split, I always think Scotland must be the perfect place to grow Garlic as it's generally always so cold during January, February and March!



As I sit and write this, we're currently getting battered by Storm Rachel, having had two days of heavy snowfall, the perfect cold weather for bringing on my garlic, currently still sat loitering, probably sprouting, in its packet.....! Never mind, next week we are due a cold snap, some sunshine over the weekend and hopefully a session out in the garden getting those bulbs planted. Even if they're just popped into cellular trays in the greenhouse this will allow them to get going and I can pop them into the ground in the spring. So, if like me you're behind in your gardening "to do" list, have faith, there's still time to catch up!



On these cold, wet, windy and often snowy days, there's nothing better than firing up the wood fired cooker in our kitchen (she's called Bessie the ESSE) and getting the preserving pan out. Now that does cheer me up! There's nothing more pleasing than a row of beautiful jewel coloured jars full of marmalade or chilly jam lined up on the kitchen counter.



This year I ran a number of wreath making workshops in the run up to Christmas. I'd been lucky enough to attend a Christmas [flower arranging workshop](#) run by Sarah Raven herself a few years ago where she taught us how to make traditional mossed up wreaths. I've never returned to oasis wreaths and have enjoyed making them every year since and teaching others how to make them over the last couple of years. We used brightly coloured chillies, cranberries and limes to decorate them and I was left with a few spare "ingredients" after the workshops. Out came the preserving pan and a big batch of chilly jam was made. There's nothing better than a slathering of chilly jam on a bacon roll or with a nice strong cheese, that kick of heat is rather joyous on a dreich, cold winters day!

I'm looking forward to the Seville oranges arriving in our local farm shop soon as we've ran out of marmalade, the pantry shelf is looking slightly depleted of the gorgeous amber filled jars. I'm a toast and marmalade kinda girl, there's not many mid morning breaks where I don't enjoy a good cup of coffee and a slice or two after I've put the hens out and walked the dog! I'm enjoying the new series of recipes in Country Living Magazine where Sarah is writing about superfoods. Februarys edition has a great looking recipe for Blood Orange, Lemon and Pink Grapefruit Marmalade, so along with her tried and tested [Seville Marmalade recipe](#) in her Garden Cookbook (I won first prize for it one year at our local show!) I'll be giving this recipe a go to ensure we don't run out of my tasty morning treat this year!



So, plenty of jobs to see me through the long, dark days of January, and I must get that Tax Return done, but maybe once I've made a batch of marmalade first!

Keep cosy!

Kija
x

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