

**A reflection on Midsummer gardens**

Here we are, almost Midsummer and the gardens are full of colour – boasting a wide assortment of flowers, trees and vegetables. Everything is growing as usual, despite the coronavirus and lockdown, and garden life is much the same as every year.

From the first early snowdrops and crocuses, and the hellebores and daffodils which trumpet the arrival of spring, we have seen cherry blossom, with petals falling like confetti; hyacinths with their heady perfume, tulips standing straight like soldiers in red or yellow tunics, or fancy varieties with pink, frilly petals.

The fruit trees have blossomed attracting early bees and now are showing promise of heavy crops of fruit later in the months to come.

The spring flowers have gradually given place to dainty aquilegia and colourful spikes of lupin and foxglove with the old fashioned coloured verbascum vying for height.

Then have come the showy peonies, so fragile and so often heralding of a spell of windy and wet weather. We are reluctant to acknowledge the gardens need the rain by this point.

Through all this time, if we have taken time to sit or stand and listen, the birds have been filling the air with their melodious songs, attracting mates and sometimes it seems singing for the sheer joy of living.

Now as we find ourselves halfway through a very strange year, we can take heart that nature has continued its usual path whatever else seems out of kilter. The grass keeps growing and the dandelions are as prolific as ever!

So, as we enjoy the roses and their perfume, the lilies and red-hot pokers, ripening strawberries and other summer fruits, we can surely look forward to the coming harvests of apples and pears, autumn berries and vegetable crops to store for the winter.

We can anticipate the glorious colours of autumn leaves that are to come and their crunching sound underfoot, and be assured by the words of the third chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible:

"For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under the heavens"

So, let us enjoy our gardens – whether big, small or ones we visit that are tended by someone else – and marvel at the flora and fauna around us and not let it go unnoticed because it is truly wonderful. ENJOY!

