

# Portstone

## GARDEN CENTRE

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## Newsletter for January

Well, it's midsummer now, but not as hot as some of us would like. Many tomato plants have curled up leaves due to the contrast in temperature between warm days and cool nights ie. below 10°C. The **lettuces** are growing well though; they don't like the full summer heat. Sow them and other salad greens such as rocket, mesclun and coriander in the semi-shade; otherwise they will quickly go to seed. Sow every few weeks for a continuous supply.

**Broad beans** should be finished by now, so **leeks** and **brussel sprouts** can be planted in their place. Plant brassicas now also and cover with bird netting to keep the white butterfly off them. They can do so much damage if left unchecked, so always squash caterpillars when you see them. Bird netting is a must also for the berry crops, currants and cherries, because birds will strip bushes in no time at all.

**Garlic** can be harvested when the leaves start to brown off. Don't pull by its stem, but dig out carefully with a fork, and lay them out to dry. It stores best if you leave the stalk on. Harvest potatoes when they start to flower. If you are unsure whether or not they are ready, you can put your hand in and feel around to check the size.

It's time to start planting **vegetables** now for winter harvest. There are lots of fresh new seedlings in store now. Give them a good start by feeding them with sheep pellets. They are an organic fertilizer suitable for all plants. Sheep pellets are safe to use, clean to handle, and will not burn plants. They will improve soil structure and increase microbial and earthworm activity, benefiting the soil and releasing nutrients slowly to feed your plants. Water well, then cover over them a good mulch of pea straw pellets. These expand to four times the size, are lightweight so are easy to use, and they are weed free. This cover protects young roots from the heat of the sun, as well as retaining soil moisture. As the straw slowly breaks down, so it adds good organic matter to the soil and feeds the worms.

Natures Curator is an amazing product that stimulates your plants immune system to produce essential oils that activate healthy growth, promote repair and increase defence against pests and disease. It produces brighter, more fragrant, longer lasting **flowers**. Fruit and **vegetables** are more bountiful, crunchier and taste better. It comes in a ready-to-use, 500ml or 1litre container. A fine, light mist is all that is required, so you use very little at a time. It's also good for reviving sickly plants. Give it a try.

Come and visit **Portstone Garden Cafe** celebrating 12 months in business. It is owned and run by Sharon and Brian Smith. They specialise in healthy, gluten free, and wholegrain foods, using organic and free range options (including meat) wherever possible. They are well known for their great coffee too. They are open 7 days, the same as the garden centre, giving you plenty of opportunity to come in and try their fare.