

Tombreck Market Garden

Newsletter #6 July 2023

A very strange summer so far. Having spent much of June working hard to keep up with the watering and trying to stop plants getting scorched in the polytunnel, July sucked all the heat away and there always seemed to be another rain cloud on the horizon. We're now starting to worry about crops managing to ripen before the Autumn. The squash in particular are looking far smaller than we would expect them to be by this time of year. We've put some netting around them to act as a wind break and hopefully keep a bit more heat in, and a liquid feed made from comfrey leaves should give them a boost of nutrients in a little while - fingers crossed!



It has been a good year for field voles, by all accounts - apparently they have an occasional population boom and for a while there are multitudes of them before the predators catch up and bring the numbers down again. They mainly eat grasses and seeds so don't damage veg directly but the network of tunnels they dig in loose soil is a nuisance and can kill plants if the roots are left dangling in mid-air as a result. If you've visited the market garden lately you may have been puzzled by a series of tall posts with little cross-bars on top of them. These are 'raptor posts' meant to encourage predatory birds like kestrels and owls to perch and swoop down on the voles scurrying around below. That's the idea anyway - we'll probably attract a load of pigeons instead...



Otherwise things have continued to progress in fits and starts. Shop sales were quiet likely due to a combination of the poor weather and people going off on holiday, but we've had a few takers on our veg boxes (see <https://www.tombreck.co.uk/market-garden> for more info) and guests at the Big Shed have made a number of large orders which have kept things ticking over. More crops are now ready, including carrots, new potatoes and the first tomatoes. It's a good feeling to see the quantity and variety of produce slowly increase, and to get some decent harvests despite occasional set-backs and frustrations. As growers that's what we're good at - it's the selling part that doesn't come naturally, and the stress of one week panicking that there won't be enough produce to satisfy demand, only to spend the next week worrying that half of it will go on the compost heap because nobody wants to buy vegetables any more! Hopefully this will ease up as we settle in and get a better sense of what people want and how best to get it to them (in a way that also keeps us clothed and fed).

