

Stratford sub-Castle Garden Club. January 2023

Our talk from Ray Broughton on Pests and Diseases in January was both informative and amusing.

He shocked us all at the beginning by saying that since 2015 it has been illegal to use milk, vinegar or salt as pesticides, but they can be used as a deterrent e.g. wipe pots with vinegar to stop slugs. However, he recommended a product called SB Plant invigorator which is made from milk.

Ray had so many nuggets of information for us that there is not enough space in this article to list them all. We have asked for his fact sheet to be able to pass on. He emphasised that prevention is better than cure so I am passing on a few of his amazing tips.

To prevent leggy plants early on in the season in the greenhouse, you need a container about the size of a washing up bowl, fill it with pony pooh, cover with cling film, punch some holes in the top and put in the greenhouse. This produces the CO2 needed by the plants.

Encourage the two-spotted ladybirds as they can dispose of up to 200 aphids a day. They bite them and suck out the juices which makes them too fat and heavy to fly so they stay in your garden.

Ray gave us three good potato tips:

Firstly there is an APP on line that tells you when potato blight is in your area. Cover your plants for a few days to protect them.

Secondly you can grow potatoes in straw, which means no earthing up. Plant the tubers just a few inches down, then cover with organic barley straw, available in pet shops. Spray with tomorite once a week then the potatoes will grow cleanly in the straw.

To prevent potato scab cut the Daily Mirror or Sun into squares and place these under your potatoes. These tabloids are not waxed unlike other more prestigious dailies.

To prevent leek moth, grow your plants in two-and-a-half-inch diameter plastic pipes about nine inches tall.

If your blackcurrants have extra-large buds, there is no cure- dig them up!

One interesting tip was for getting rid of leatherjackets. On August 1st. Wet an area of lawn for two hours then cover with black plastic weighted down. At 6.30 the next morning, remove the plastic and you will be able to rake the insects off the grass.

We look forward to hearing all those alarms going off on August 2nd.

We were also told there is a Natural Pest Control site on the internet for useful information.

It was a very interesting evening enjoyed by members and visitors alike.

Good luck with the bugs.

Chris Goldsmith