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*When holding such a great sweet pea harvest, a selfie seems compulsory*

While being sat at the Fulham Palace desk reflecting on my last three months, I can hear, smell and feel the “Oh so desired” rain that has finally decided to come down! Twenty-three litre per square meter is the stingy amount of water that we have had in the last month over the Fulham Palace grounds, whereas a sweltering 41.5 degrees is the maximum temperature that we have recorded! No wonder that our main lawn has turned golden, our trees and shrubs have started to droop and our vegetables have gone straight into bolting.

What a summer! What a heat! What a drought!

Wearing shorts is now a given, clumsily changing a geka fitting between two hoes to get some refreshing water splashes are intentional and moving at a much slower pace is part of the daily summer rhythm. The prolonged heat and drought have made us all work differently. As a result of a brainstorming session led by head gardener Lucy Hart, the team has come up with an action plan to try to reduce the

water consumption at Fulham Palace. Although exempt from a hose pipe ban as the WIA 1991 water industry act, can only prohibit watering of private/domestic and non-commercial sites, a change in habit has been discussed in response to the climate crisis that we are facing. Some of the tasks to reduce our water consumption are:

- to mulch several times a year, rather than only in autumn
- to water at the roots of the plants with a lance attached to a hose, rather than a sprinkler
- to start watering earlier in the mornings, when possible
- to identify priority areas in the garden that shall be watered, e.g the historical plant collection on the Compton border
- to continue planting drought tolerant borders and beds



*Harvesting some parsley in my miscellaneous bed and a selection of organically grown vegetables from the garden*

One of the many aspects that fascinates me so much in horticulture, which, thanks to your generous support I get to discover every day, is the ever-changing world it represents. Thinking differently, trying out, adjusting, daring and failing are all part of the gardening process. Being in charge of various areas in the vegetable garden, I am excited to be able to share my personal favourite highlights and successes. The upright and elegant growing habit of flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) between the bushy



and unashamed cornflowers (*Centaurea cyanus*) was one of my visual planting successes. Interplanting young leeks, which will take many months before they will be harvested, with the stunning Poppys 'Lauren's Grape' gave a lot of height to my bed. A pleasing visual trick, but also a space-optimising one. My coriander decided to bolt straight away, but the beauty of those flying umbrella flowers made up for it. Tasting the strong citrus flavour in the fresh, still green coriander seeds was also a pleasant surprise. Having learnt to grow and harvest so many vegetables in the garden, another learning curve has been to harvest many cut flowers to be dried. With the vinery hitting more than 50 degrees, it was an excellent space to hang and dry them within days. To name a few, we have the following dry flower selection to work with (did someone say Christmas wreath?!):

- *Statice sinuata* 'Special Mix'
- *Helipterum roseum* Giant Flower Mix
- Poppy seed heads
- *Xerochrysum bracteatum* 'Salmon Rose'



*Flower bouquets I have arranged, which are ready to be sold on the barrow*



We have also been taught to Chelsea-chop many plants in the knot garden. The technic consists of cutting down 2/3 of the plant to trigger a bushier more compact growing habit, resulting in smaller but more flowers. When chopping down the Sedum, I decided to collect some cuttings and tried propagating them. It has now been two months and those cutting have fully rooted and are ready to flower. A quick and successful experiment!

I have had many more great times during the last three months, such as a fascinating talk from Dr Marc Spencer about the biodiversity report he made in 2020 about Fulham Palace, training on how to summer prune wall-trained fruits, a workshop on how to take soft cuttings and semi ripe cuttings as well as a presentation on decolonising museum collections. All of these intertwined with a huge amount of knowledge passed on from all of the people I have the pleasure to work with.

I am so grateful for having this fabulous experience here at Fulham Palace thanks to your support. Many thanks!



*Chicory flowers blooming since several months & Delphinium chinensis 'Blue Butterfly' in the sunlight*