**Adam’s Gardening Tips for January 2019**

**Is A Greenhouse For You?**

Greenhouses can be used for a variety of purposes; permanent crops can be grown in them or they can be used for starting off plants to put outside when risks of frost have passed or to simply provide temporary shelter in cold conditions. The minimum useful size is 8 feet by 6, or 4 feet for a lean to model. Probably the best shape is a conventional apex roof design with upright sides, glazed to ground level. This would certainly apply to metal framed greenhouses. Larger wooden framed structures could have brick work up to a height of about three feet around the base. A central pathway to allow access and growing space on both sides is usual. It must be remembered that wooden frames require more maintenance and attention than metal.

It is worth saying that a cheaper alternative to a glass greenhouse could be a poly tunnel which is a heavy duty plastic sheeting stretched over a metal frame. The sheeting is best replaced approximately every four years. A door at each end is useful to improve ventilation as condensation can be a problem.

When laying out the greenhouse it is best to have staging on one side and soil for growing all season plants on the other. It is also possible to use grow bags successfully inside. This is especially useful if the same crops are grown regularly. It is possible to grow traditional outdoor crops such as carrots or lettuce for example to produce crops both earlier and later in the growing season.

Good ventilation is essential to avoid overheating and the interior becoming too damp. Automatic vents can be fitted to windows to prevent extreme change in temperature. Even on winter days, when conditions are right it is important to ventilate. Another method of reducing temperature is to paint the glass with a proprietary greenhouse shading which can be washed off, in autumn, when not required. Over the winter period it is essential to clean the greenhouse thoroughly to remove algae and dirt for both good hygiene and to allow maximum light in during the growing season.

Watering in the greenhouse can be done by hand or by automatic capillary systems, which would reduce the amount of labour required. Everything, especially trays and small pots can dry out very quickly so constant monitoring is required.

Traditional plants for greenhouses would be tomatoes and cucumbers. In a larger greenhouse it is possible to have a permanent planting such as grapes to trail across the roof space. The root is outside the greenhouse to avoid the necessity of frequent watering. Adam likes to grow ‘Black Hamburg’ .

**Crispy Kale**

This is a very easy and quick way to cook kale which April has just discovered. It melts in the mouth and is great instead of crisps or nuts as a snack.

Take a large bunch of **fresh kale** which has been washed and cut out the thick stalk. Cut the kale into approx. 2.5cm. Then toss the kale in a little **olive oil** and spread on a baking sheet. Put this is the oven for about 10 minutes at **175oC**. If you want you can turn it during cooking. Remove from the oven when it is crispy and season with a little salt and any other seasoning you want. Eg sesame seeds. Enjoy! They won’t last long! (You can also oven bake the seeds of a pumpkin. Again delicious when crispy with a bit of salt.)