

Notes from the Store

January, the first month, and not long prior to the founding of our concern in 1755, the new start to the year. Until 1752, New Year's Day in England was Lady Day, 25th March, which to our mind seems so much better a time for marking new beginnings than the depths of Winter.

It has long been our intention to pen something in the manner of an almanac, giving insights into the seasonal trade and uses of our peculiarly diverse stock. And peculiarly diverse it is, an array of various gums, resins, chemicals, dyestuffs, fertilisers, twines, logwoods, oils, and items of particular use around the home and garden.

It seems somehow fitting to embark upon such an endeavour in this, our 270th year, so this is the first of our entries, and we hope it is of some interest.



Hadfield

1755 - 2025

Serving Macclesfield
for 270 Years

At the Apothecary's Bench

Cold and flu season is upon us once more, which brings us to thoughts of symptomatic relief. *Simmus Blend* is a traditional composition of essential oils for the relief of congestion in the nasal passages. The precise blend varies, but our correspondent speaks highly of a formulation containing tea tree, camphor, eucalyptus, peppermint, geranium, and orange oils.

In the Potting Shed

Hopefully, by now, the Autumn planted onion, shallots and garlic are settled into their beds. Attention in the kitchen garden now turns to preparing for the months ahead, which will be busy times for seeds sowing and planting. Before long *seed potatoes* will have arrived in our stores. These should be prepared in advance of setting out by chitting. Remove all but a few of the eyes from each potato, place upright in a tray or egg carton, and store in a light, cool, but frost-free location. When the sprouts are around an inch long, and the risk of frost has passed, plant out. Elsewhere in the kitchen garden, complete winter pruning of apple and pear trees, gooseberry and redcurrant bushes. If you are lucky enough to have both an apple tree and some mistletoe berries left from Christmas, you can try establishing your own mistletoe by pressing the berries into the bark of the tree. Clear away old crops and weeds, and get to work on digging over your beds, incorporating *compost* as required.

Assuredly one of the joys of this season is forced rhubarb. Place a *rhubarb forcer* over a rhubarb plant, and the dark and relatively warm conditions will stimulate the production of tender, pink stems, for which the cook will be thankful.

Discoveries from Our Archive



"All things to all people" might well have been our advertising slogan, were such things in vogue during our earliest trading period. Originating as an apothecary in the Market Place, purchased by Charles Hadfield, in 1755, from an uncle to whom he had been apprenticed, by the time the business was removed to Churchill Way a substantial expansion in range is evident. This label from our archive proudly proclaims "chemists & druggists; oil, paint & colour merchants; wholesale & retail drysalters".

Of the Wax Chandler

In London, in days of yore, the wax chandler was strictly permitted only to make candles from that finest of waxes: beeswax. Lesser, cheaper, candles for poorer kin were the preserve of the tallow chandlers. Our modern work of chandlery is not so restricted, and a range of waxes are employed according to the properties desired in the finished article. Beeswax features prominently amongst our candle wares, and remains a most popular choice for quality, long and clean burning lights.



Glasshouses must be tidied, and can be fumigated using *smoke bombs* to reduce the pests and diseases that make their homes in these cosy structures. As the days lengthen, the first sowings of winter salads are possible under glass. It might be desirable to protect delicate seedlings from cold by the use of a *greenhouse heater*, commonly fuelled by *paraffin*. Ensure to keep the fuel topped up, and the wick trimmed and extending sufficiently into the oil reservoir. Replace the *paraffin heater wick* if necessary. Do not neglect to ventilate the greenhouse on sunny days to ensure good air flow and prevent the build up of moisture, which can lead to problems with fungi and mould. Spend time during hours of darkness or inclement weather planning sowing and planting schedules for the year ahead, making lists of *vegetable seeds* and *flower seeds* to procure. Practise good horticulture by rotating crops, a method shamefully neglected amongst many supposed professional growers over recent decades. Ensure to check stocks of *fertilizers* and *compost*. And don't forget to look forward to longer days, the bursting forth into life of the ornamental and kitchen gardens, and the pleasure and rigour of a plot well-tended.

In the Kitchen

The highlight of this month must surely be the arrival of Seville marmalade oranges. To make a good marmalade the cook must get the balance of pectin, acidity, sugar, and final temperature correct. To extract sufficient pectin, wrap up the pith and pips of the oranges in *muslin*. Acidity is traditionally assured by adding the juice of lemons to the recipe, though alternatively, *citric acid* can be used. Setting point is reached at a temperature of 104 – 106 degrees centigrade, for the measurement of which a *jam thermometer* or *confectionary thermometer* is essential. Many recipes call for skimming of the surface froth, but an easier technique is to simply stir in a small knob of butter at the end of the boil.

From the Housekeeper's Room

Much of the domestic labour at this time of year will be focused on stoves and fireplaces. *Black lead* your cast iron stoves, fire surrounds, and ranges to keep them smart and free from rust. For a black finish, buff off lightly, or for a more metallic shine, buff vigorously. Stove glass can be difficult to keep clean. A traditional technique is to scrunch up some newsprint, dampen slightly, and dip into cold ashes, then use to scrub the glass. Harder to remove marks require the use of a proprietary *stove glass cleaner*. Attention should also be given to tiled, marble, slate and stone fireplace surfaces. *Slate oil* seals this porous material to protect against water and staining. Restore marble with *Italian Marble Polish*, which imparts a long-lasting shine by chemically modifying the surface. Should you find sooty residue has accumulated on stone and brick surfaces, treatment with *fireplace cleaner* is recommended. Work on stoves and fireplaces will be found to be made very much easier with a good *companion set* and *fireside brush*. Replace worn *brush heads*.

Attention must be paid to the condition of fire backs, *grates*, and *ash pans*. Burned through and rusted castings should be replaced, and cracked fire backs or bricks should be repaired with *fire cement*, or replaced if in very poor condition. Be sure to keep flues swept to reduce the risk of chimney fires.

Be sure to keep a good stock of *logwoods*, *kindling sticks*, *firelighters*, *matches*, and *coal*. Always use well-seasoned wood to minimise tarring and the emission of nuisance smoke. Recall that coal fires require good ventilation through the fire bed from below, thus should be kept free extensive ash accumulations. Wood, on the other hand, burns well on a bed of ash. A wood fire laying method that comes highly recommended to us is that of the top-down fire, which is illustrated here.

