



Winter's tails

BY STUART WINTER Follow him on twitter: @birdman or email stuart.winter@express.co.uk

Urban foxes, and why they divide the nation

Picture: HIGGO/ISTOCK/REX

FOXES are the wildest of creatures: they roam the wild, hunt and kill. The General Election debate shows there are few barriers to their guile. Conservatives are in favour of hunting, while Labour's Ed Miliband has his voice on the return of fox hunting ban brought in a decade ago. Whatever the outcome of the election and any changes in legislation, one thing is certain: foxes will continue to divide the nation even more than David Cameron and Ed Miliband.

Urban foxes in particular have deeply divided the national conscience. To the right, foxes are a pest and a nuisance, an opportunity to commune with British nature and to enjoy a David Cameron-style fox hunt. To the left, not so much urban foxes as urban foxes. Others see them as unwanted cull callers and devout creatures with malicious intent. In their old-world, her beloved 17-year-old cat, Milly, was enjoying its well-earned dosage in a sunlit back garden in suburban Surrey.

Urban foxes are a suburban Surrey malarkiness of the RSPCA. Worse, it was played out in full view of Milly's owners in broad daylight. Apart from other very recent cat sympathy stories, this was the only time we believe such attacks remain a rarity. The only study of cat predation by foxes was carried out in Bristol: a few of those surveyed reported attacks on pets.

Cats are regarded in law as "free roaming", so it is very difficult to prosecute a predator. The only way to stop the problem is to take preventative measures. The following shows something is ams and a nationwide academic study into the issue would be welcome. One of our favourites are foxes are killing cats to eat. It is unlikely to be a few minutes.

IF YOU haven't got your onion sets in yet, get 'em in quick. If you've never grown 'em before get a half dozen sets in the soil, if the soil is soft, at about nine apart in rows 15ins apart. If the soil is firm just loosen it with the tip of a spade. You can grow them closer together. You want and pull every other one as they grow to grow to maturity the same. Spade under to grow to maturity the same way, but instead of growing into one big onion, these multiply into an amount of small onions which you can cook with.

There again you can plant 'em close, say 4ins or 5ins apart, and use every other one as they grow for salad onions. One of our favourite smells is that

of a root of an onion fresh pulled from the earth. Keep the weeds away from 'em and they'll grow away merrily. In all the years I've grown onions I've never had them with pests or diseases and best of all the shallots don't like 'em. I am also going to be sowing onions rows of each. Every year my carrots get devoured by carrot fly and I have been told that onions alongside carrots mask the carrot smell from the fly. I am going to try that. I shall be very happy to see what happens. I shall be a very happy man if it works.

If you are an onion lover then you really should try growing them. They are at the bottom of all stages, straight from the ground to your salad plate or you can let them ripen off and store them in the shed or the garage. Cooked, pickled or raw

I think they are just the best all round vegetable ever. My overwintered shallots I planted in the autumn and they are doing OK. Back in the 1970s Dave said he fancied growing some onions so I told him how to do it. He said he'd try it. After three or four weeks I asked him how they were doing. "Not all that," he said. "I went to the garden and I saw all the onions were rotting. But they were all upside down."

*Tickets for An Audience With Chas and Dave are available from chaskanddave.com.
*All About Us, The Chas & Dave Story written by Chas Hodges is published by John Blake. chashodges.co.uk

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