

27th December 2013

Apologies that the first article is later than planned – due to lack of time and then a dose of the flu!! So what should we be doing at this time of the year? Well to be honest most exhibitors who grow leeks and onions for showing at the top level will have had them started for a while. As this is a specialist area I intend to have a couple of full articles on growing these vegetables. 250g onions will also be on the horizon for me very shortly-(although some growers will also have these started)- so we will look at that in the next article.

So if you are looking to grow for show, whether for a local village show or the NVS National Championships the thoughts at this time should be to prepare ahead and acquire the right strains of vegetable that will give you the best chance of success. It is no coincidence that when you look at a lot of the classes at shows the variety of vegetable used is almost the same wherever you go. In effect these are "banker" varieties i.e. tried and tested by exhibitors and ones they know will give them results. It is no use growing a variety of vegetable that does not have the potential to reach a good showbench standard – so the motto? – use varieties that do. A lot of people have said that it is difficult to get the right variety/strain – which in some instances for leeks, onions and long carrots has some truth. However there are a number of growers who will either part with some (some at a price) and also specialist companies who have them for sale. I have added a list of suppliers who can assist you. The one thing about exhibiting is that the vast majority of growers will go out their way to help – so don't be shy ask them for advice and whether they can help with seeds etc.

You will notice that I am using Tasco this year for 250g onions. This has been off the market for a few years but thanks to work done by Gareth Cameron with DT Brown they have brought it back on to the market.

The timings of sowing various varieties are also crucial, and will vary from region to region throughout the UK. I live in the Central belt of Scotland so these are the varieties I am using in 2014. Timings for sowing dates will be covered later

Celery	Morning Star and Starburst
Long Carrot	Own Seed New Red Intermediate
Parsnip	Panorama and Duchess
Onion Sets	Cupido and Kamal(red)
250g Onions	Tasco and Vento
French Bean	Hawkesbury Wonder
Cauliflower	Cornell
Potato	NVS Amour, NVS Sherine, Malin, Kestrel, Nadine
Stump Carrot	Sweet Candle
Globe Beetroot	Pablo
Tomato	Tourance, Cedrico

Medwyns of Anglesey	www.medwynsofanglesey.co.uk
Exhibition Seeds	www.exhibition-seeds.co.uk
Select Seeds	www.selectseeds.co.uk
Shelley Seeds	5 Speedwell Close, Chester, CH3 6DX
DT Browns	www.dtbrownseeds.co.uk
Marshalls	www.marshalls-seeds.co.uk
JBA Potatoes	www.jbaseedpotatoes.co.uk
ESP Potatoes	26 Bakehouse Lane, Ockbrook, Derby esp.derby@btinternet.com

I have also been setting my long carrots from 2013 away for seed. These have been selected from the best that I had in 2013 – which was a good year for me with wins at the Scottish and Nationals and several other big shows. The carrots have been kept wrapped up in J Clothes since coming back from the shows and kept in a cool shed. We have been lucky and have had little frost this year so they have kept ok in the shed.



I unwrap them and then clean up the crowns by removing dead stalks and then trim them to around 9 inch in length and also trim the tops to about 2 inches. They are then planted 3 to a 20 litre pot using Humax Multi Purpose Compost with some John Innes 3 added. A gentle water in with some fungicide added gets them off to a good start. They are kept in a cool (frost free) greenhouse and will stay there until around March when I will move them to their final house.

