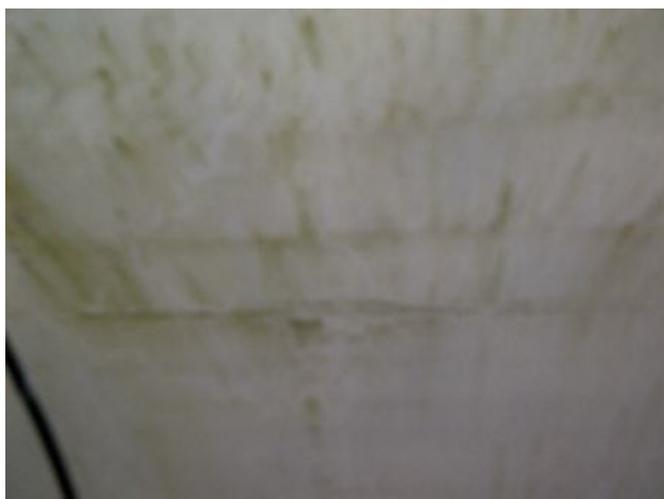


2nd February 2014

This week was a sad one for me personally and the rest of the Scottish Branch members as our President Bill Rodger passed away on Friday evening. Bill was the epitome of all that the NVS and vegetable growing is - always eager to help you no matter who you were and always talking with you about how you and your vegetables were. Bill was the man who really pushed the growing of heavy onions to new highs along with his brother Bob in the 1980`sculminating in breaking the World Record, but was also an accomplished all round grower. If we all could be half the gentleman he was the world would be a lot better place,

My own growing apart from 250g onions and shallots doesn't really start until the 3rd week in February and then just takes off for the next couple of months - so there is not a lot happening growth wise.

Apart from having completed the parsnip tunnel with regards to the barrels and moving on to the carrot ones I have been concentrating on "renewing" the parsnip tunnel. The tunnel covers haven't been washed for 2 years and were in some areas bright green with algae - so badly needed done.



One of the main things most plants need is light and that is the one thing they would have been struggling for in the tunnels the way they were. Funnily enough last year the carrot tunnel in particular was really bad around June/July but with the temperatures and strong sun we had I am convinced that the light was diffused enough to keep the heat and strength of light down - which seemed to benefit the long carrots. However this is Scotland - there is no way we are getting that weather 2 years in a row. I used stuff called Polytex Pro this year which is specially designed for polytunnels.



Once on its an easy job but standing at the top of a ladder with no real support to get to the middle of the tunnels is no joke! The difference however is startling - particularly if you spend the time and wash the inside as well.



I am also renewing the enviromesh sides as they have been on for a few years - and it was second hand netting to begin with. The net is almost green with algae - I had thought about trying to wash them in a bath of bleach but thought stuff that - and have bought some new stuff of the Wondermesh site.

I have also had a slight change of heart with regards to onion sets. I was going with Hercules but I am now going to grow Cupido. Jackie Davidson from Pathhead(who has won the sets class at the Scottish more than a dozen times) grew it last year and had a 2nd with a really good set. So another

tip - if it's a good enough variety for a top grower consider growing some of that variety yourself. As I said before it is no coincidence that it is the same banker varieties that are winning regularly.

And lastly I have sowed some Tasco onion. They were a wee bit late in arriving but I am sure they will be OK for the end of September shows - I'm not a "real" onion grower but will be giving them a good go this year. I am convinced that even if you are the best grower in the country at one thing you can still struggle with others. Point in case for me was at our local show last year. I have struggled to grow even reasonable tomatoes despite trying all sorts of methods - but managed after 30 years of growing to get a 1st prize with them! So the motto-don't know if there is one! but to get to the top you have to specialise in a few types of veg. There are only a few people that I could count on one hand who have the ability to grow right through the range of vegetables at the very highest level. So don't see it as a defeat if you can't grow a particular vegetable -see it as a challenge but concentrate on growing the types that you know you can.