

Judging – Showing – Growing

And I should have added enjoying the odd beer or two whilst watching the New Forest Yokels perform in Dorset.

The Dorset County Show is the only venue where I am employed as a judge and steward, whilst also being able to enter exhibits. I judge the novice and intermediate classes which are a mix of flowers, fruit and veg, so I am well away from my show entries.



One win that gave me enormous pleasure was getting a first for my **Tydemans first early** apples. These are off a family tree growing on my allotment.

Many years ago I was at the checkout of a Woolworths store, 'that shows you how long ago it was', when I noticed this family tree by the checkout, 'heavily discounted'. I think it cost me about £2.00 reduced from £12.00.

The varieties on the tree were Tydemans Early, Laxton Superb and James Grieve. I bought the tree because of the variety James Grieve which is a favourite apple of mine. Of course Sod's Law intervened and I lost the James Grieve to die back. The other two varieties continued to grow well and I ended up training the tree into a goblet shape. Over the years the Tydemans has always been a good producer. It is as early as the variety **Discovery** but in my opinion it has a superior flavour.



I have lost count how many times I have won the 250g onion class at the Dorset show. And twice in the past my onions have won best exhibit in show.



This young lady, one of the 'Floral Twins', came swanning into the horticultural marquee. She was easy to spot because as well as the stand out floral dress, she was also 9 feet tall. With her partner 'Alex' they turn up at many county shows.

On the Allotment

Now we are into September the days are getting noticeably cooler. My later sowings are given a little more protection.

These 'Marathon' calabrese are encircled with plastic sheeting, though the top is left open to the elements. That way they are not buffeted by the wind or pecked over by pigeons.



The 'Cobra' French beans are cropping well up the wigwam.

I am going to make another sowing of French beans this weekend. They will be grown in the polytunnel for a November crop. The variety will be 'Prince'. Soak the seed for 24 hours before sowing.

The leek heads are coming along.

Some heads are more vigorous than others. This one was trimmed of all its seed two weeks ago. Now the heads will get a combined spray against rust and insects.



I am not too happy. A couple of my 'Conway' trial leeks have run to seed. They are still perfectly edible but I wonder what caused them to bolt.

The Allotment Greenhouse

The late August carrot sowing will keep us in carrots during the winter months. As long as I keep the slugs and snails at bay.

'Black Beauty' Aubergines. At last they are cropping well. The final ingredient for my Ratatouille. We make loads, very handy for using up spare tomatoes and courgettes.

The only trouble with 'Black Beauty' is that for me it is a very late cropper. 'Contrary to what I thought'. The variety has been around since 1910 but for me it has had its day. Next year I shall grow the variety 'Bonica'.



Next year on the RHS Wisley trial ground we shall be assessing aubergines. So that's going to be a very good guide as to which varieties really are the best. And of course you will be the first to know.

Jobs for this month. One of the things to keep an eye on is blight. In our area we have been receiving blight warnings every day. At last it made its way into my polytunnel. I have now removed all the contaminated leaves from the plants and the remaining fruits will hopefully go on and ripen. If your plants are badly infected

take off all the tomatoes and store them somewhere cool and dry. I use my apple rack in the garage. Green tomatoes can then be brought into the warm kitchen as required and ripened on the window seal.

Also in the polytunnel I am going to plant out a row of **Perpetual Spinach**. The seed was sown into a tray some time ago and have been waiting for a home. The small plants will romp away as soon as they get their roots into the soil. The spinach will crop all winter, a very useful vegetable if you are short of greens.

As they say, there is no rest for the wicked. I have a talk to give on the '**Dig for Victory Garden**' at Winterbourne Earls, in Wiltshire. That was the garden I designed for the NVS way back in 2002.

And at the weekend I have more judging. This time the Botley village show to the East of Southampton.

Look out for another article in a couple of weeks

John Trim