

During July, I was greeted with the news that in our area we had experienced a Smith Period. This is when conditions allow the sporulation of the potato blight pathogen. A Smith period occurs when we have two consecutive days when the air temperature does not fall below 10c and the humidity is above 90% for eleven consecutive hours on each of those two days.

That means if you have potatoes growing it is time to give a preventative spray against the blight. These days we gardeners only have a couple of choices. Either the old Bordeaux mixture or Bayer's Fruit & Vegetable Disease Control.



For the first and second early potatoes blight is not likely to be much of a problem as their tubers will probably be fully developed before the blight hits. The only thing regarding these early crops is to pick off and destroy any blight infected leaves. And don't forget to wash your hands as the blight spores can easily be carried into a nearby greenhouse and infect the tomatoes.

These healthy looking haulms on a late sowing of **NVS Amour** will need a spray or two if they are to stay in prime condition. If the foliage on your main crop potatoes become infected, remove the foliage and wait a couple of weeks before lifting the crop. This will allow the blight spores that have fallen onto the soil to die. If these spores should come into contact with the tubers they could well become infected and rot when in store.

The New Forest Show. Venue for the NVS Southern Branch Championships 2015



Sherie Plumb has won more potato competitions than I have had hot dinners. So it was no shame when I came runner up to Sherie in the prestigious South of England Potato Championship held at the New Forest Show in Hampshire.

The potato in the foreground of my collection is the white trial variety I have been growing.

I think it is outstanding and was certainly the best dish in my collection. I also entered the varieties **Blue Belle** and **Bonnie**.

Ah well, there is always next year.

On the open bench it was Darren Blick who took the honours winning both the white and coloured potato classes.



Best exhibit in show went to Clarence Thomas from Truro in Cornwall. With this lovely dish of [Show Perfection](#) peas.



Sherie Plumb is also a pretty good cauliflower grower. As is evident by the quality of these magnificent [Raleigh](#) variety caulis.





The NVS Southern Branch Championships is one of the best shows in Britain. An ideal event to see top quality vegetables grown by the best exhibitors around. Well worth making an effort to visit the New Forest Show next year.



Of course not everything goes to plan when growing for show. This superb specimen pot leek was destined for great things until it threw a side shoot from between the flags which made it unshowable. Fingers crossed that the others behave themselves.

My next competition will not be until September, until then

I shall be busy in the coming weeks enjoying judging all manner of village and county shows.

### Foraging.

We are fortunate to live in an area where we have the opportunity to do a bit of foraging to vary our diet. During the autumn and winter months this means fungus forays into the New Forest. I have been interested in mycology for many years, so I know what to pick. Mind you my wife is sometimes a little dubious until I have tried them first.

Another thing we forage for is walnuts. In the forest we have several trees growing wild. What we do is pick the Walnuts in the green and pickle them. But it is important that you gather your walnuts before 15<sup>th</sup> July.

After that date the shells start to harden and no amount of pickling will make them edible. The test is to insert a darning needle into the flesh. If it can be pushed right through the walnut then it can be pickled.



### The method.

Soak the green walnuts in brine. 1lb of salt to 1 gallon of water for 5 days. Change the brine for a fresh mix and continue soaking for a further 3 days. Then drain and spread the walnuts out on a large flat dish. Leave until they turn black turning them over a couple of times, this will take about



24 hours. Then pack into sterilised jars and cover with spiced malt vinegar laced with sugar. 1oz of sugar to 1 pint of vinegar. Heat together until the sugar dissolves. Allow to cool then pour over the walnuts.

When handling the walnuts wear your marigolds or else your hands will be stained for weeks.

A word of caution. If you are thinking of growing a black walnut tree in your garden, keep it well away from the veg plot. Walnuts will poison the soil for potatoes, tomatoes and various other plants. The safe distance is 80 feet. The toxin produced by the roots is called Juglone.

Today I was accosted by big Tony on our allotment site, 'what happened to July part two'.



Well my apologies to Tony and to all the readers waiting for that article, it has now become the August edition. I'm afraid I ran out of time what with preparations for the New Forest Show.

The summer harvest is in full swing. The last of the first early potatoes have been lifted. This bucket of [Lady Christl](#) will be a tasty treat. I shall cover them with a layer of peat which will keep the skins from drying out too quickly. Then all they

need is a light scrub with the vegetable brush and into the pot of boiling water for 10 minutes.

You can't leave the allotment to fend for itself for longer than a day or so at this time of year. Runner beans are coming in by the bucketful and must be picked. One bean left to mature and the plant will think its job is done and stop producing.

The [Black Forest](#) courgettes have been very successful. Here they are growing up canes. This method keeps them off the ground, where they stay clean and out of the reach of most pests.



I shall make a last sowing of St George runner beans this week. This bi coloured variety will only succeed in the South of the country when sown this late in the year. White

and bi coloured runner beans are self pollinating which means you should get a crop even when pollinating insects are less abundant. To protect against frosts these beans will be grown in the polytunnel.

A more successful option is to sow French beans. They are quicker from sowing to harvest is 8-9 weeks. In the more clement parts of the country they will survive ok, 'as long as they are not subjected to an early frost'. And as they are self fertile they do very well under cover.

Yesterday I sowed a tray of **Hawkesbury Wonder**, these should be just right for the RHS Show held in London in early October.

Whilst I was on the allotment site another friend asked what was wrong with his brassicas in his greenhouse. Nearly 300 plants had toppled over. The stems appeared to have been nibbled through



and had started to rot. A quick inspection revealed a maggot lurking within the stems. Cabbage root fly was the culprit. But I have never known it to devastate plants like this in the greenhouse. All that could be done was to bag up and destroy all the plants so that the maggots would not have a chance to pupate and overwinter in the soil of the allotment.

Ted, the unlucky chap, was left washing down the interior of his now empty greenhouse with Flash disinfectant.

Another article will be along later in the month. Definitely!

John Trim