

I have recently returned from a very enjoyable weekend at the Dorset County Show. This year the show hosted the National Vegetable Society National Championships for 2014. This premier event attracts some of the top show persons from all over the British Isles. As well as the showing side of things it is also a great social weekend, it is worth putting in an entry just to be part of it.



I don't regard myself as a premiership player when it comes to growing for show, more championship level with the occasional foray into the big time. This year I did manage to get among the prizes with a fourth for my runner beans. They were a street behind the fantastic beans of the winner, Sherie Plumb, but any card at the National is a great achievement.



One of the first jobs awaiting me after my weekend away was to harvest some peas. 'Flavora' has proved to be very successful. In the past any peas growing on the allotment at this time of year would have been consumed by powdery mildew. 'Flavora' has showed no sign of being affected. Also as I mentioned in a previous article it is setting plenty of 10 and 11 seeds to a pod. Any 11 seeders have now been marked with a piece of coloured string and reserved for reselection.

Leave the selected pods on the plant until they are dry as a crisp. When you shuck the peas store the seed in a strong brown paper bag in the crisper section of your fridge.

Of course most of the peas will end up frozen for winter use. This is one of those vegetables that taste almost as good frozen as fresh, 'almost' as there is really nothing like a freshly picked pea eaten on the allotment.

For me it is a little too late to be sowing peas. Of course you can sow and overwinter the plants under a cloche or some other protection. In the past I have found losses too high and no longer bother with Autumn sowing.

Freshly shucked and ready for the freezer. 'Flavora' peas.



'Douce Provence' is a cracking pea. As it says on the packet it is suitable for overwintering, my advice is to sow in early March. An early sowing will catch up an overwintered one, 'if you live in the warmer parts of the British Isles'. My all time favourite for an early sowing is the evergreen popular variety 'Kelvdon Wonder', a reliable sweet tasting pea.



At this time of year I am often asked what can I sow and grow through the winter months. Well as I have said before there are a range of Saladings that can be grown right through the winter. A last sowing of radish can be made at the end of the month and should bulk up and stand for a few weeks in the ground if given some protection. Make sure the variety is 'Prinz Rotin'. Here are a few packets of seed that I picked up at the Dorset County Show. 'At a bargain price', I might add. All suitable for sowing now.



I was particularly taken with the Chinese Broccoli as it grows very fast. With the exception of the 'Marion' carrot all the other vegetable seed will be sown in seed

trays and then grown on in 3" pots until big enough to be planted out. All of them will be grown under netting.



October is the ideal time to be planting out garlic. Just as long as the soil is not waterlogged. The very wet winter of last year did tend to influence the eventual size of my garlic bulbs.

Don't leave it too late to buy your bulbs as Provence Wight is one of the best long keeping garlicks and quickly sells out. Easy to grow if you have a

sunny well drained soil. Mine came from Marshalls who have an offer of free postage for NVS members.



As soon as you receive your bulbs break them apart, pop the cloves into a net bag and store in a cool well ventilated area until planting time. The fat healthy cloves around the outside will eventually produce the best garlic. I must admit I sowed the inferior ones as well, as long as there is a bit of meat on them. That's them, top right of the photograph. Weather permitting I shall be sowing on the 1st October. The ground will be dressed with 4oz of Super Phosphate per square yard a week before planting. Get your dibber ready as there will be more cultural information in the late September article.

Don't forget, you can still sow dwarf French beans providing you can grow them under cover. I shall make my last sowing at the end of the month. Will we manage to have fresh beans on Christmas Day, we shall have to wait and see. It all depends on when we get the first frosts and how severe they may be. I must admit that this is only really possible to achieve in the Southern areas of Britain and grown under cover in a greenhouse or polytunnel.



I have had a bumper crop of sweet peppers this year. Keep them well watered and feed weekly with a soluble balanced fertiliser. They will keep producing until the end of the year.



One of the jobs to complete is staking and tying in the Brussels' sprouts to avoid wind rock which could break the feeder roots and result in blown and undersize sprouts. Keep an eye out for white fly and use an appropriate insecticide if necessary. 'By the way the sprouts are not small, I am standing on a box to reach over the row of peas.'

I am very fortunate with the location of my allotment. There is a farm to the right of the picture and Southampton water is just 400yds further on. To the left behind the row of trees is the ubiquitous railway line. This is a purely commercial line taking oil products away from Fawley refinery. Our site is well sheltered and slopes gently up hill. My soil was heavy clay. After 17 years of liberal applications of rich manure it now digs as easy as Monty Don's plot on Gardeners World. The soil depth is further enhanced by the use of deep beds. A project for this autumn is to replace deep bed

scaffold boards with more durable railway sleeper. These I was lucky enough to source for free from my sailing club.



The dwarf curly kale is coming along really well. Even though the netting tends to draw it up I am loath to take it off because I am sure the pigeons would have a field day.

This is 'Marathon' calabrese. I estimate we should be picking by the end of



September. Time for another sowing.

I will not be sowing any more cauliflowers this year as they tend to occupy the ground for too long. I need some spare ground to

prepare for the overwintering onion sets that I shall be planting in October. My usual choice is 'Radar' for the white fleshed and 'Red Barren' for the red fleshed. I have tried those expensive F1 sets that are available in March, but quite honestly they did not perform well for me. So for this year it was back to my normal selection.

That's it for now, more from me at the end of the month. John Trim