

Last year I harvested the **Elephant Garlic** on the 22nd June. Last week I noticed that the foliage on this years' crop was starting to yellow so I lifted a test bulb. It was so well advanced that it had burst its skin and the individual cloves were showing through. It was time to lift the whole crop which I did on the 12th June.

You can see that several bulbs have burst their skins. Fortunately a large percentage are okay. That means I shall have some of show quality after all. As it looks like we are due fine dry weather for the coming week I shall leave them outside for the foliage to die back a bit. In a couple of weeks' time I shall trim the tops to within six inches of the bulb and then move the garlic under cover.



Dwarf French Beans

Hawkesbury Wonder may well be the bean of choice when it comes to showing but for flavour and eating quality I prefer the pencil podded varieties. And my favourite of those is **Aquilon**.



I start them off in a full size seed tray. At this stage of growth they are perfect to plant out.



I make a sowing every month up to October. And that last sowing grown on in the greenhouse gives us fresh beans for Christmas.

Exhibition Potatoes

After lifting a test bag of **Winston** potatoes at 12 week and 2 days from the sowing date, I found that the potatoes were up to size for show. It was time to cut off the haulms of the rest to stop any more growth.

The bags will be lifted after three days. That will give time for the skins to harden so they will not be so prone to damage when the bags are eventually moved.

The optimum show size for a tuber is 7oz
The only problem I had with the test bag was that some were unshowable because they had a dimple end. If you are familiar with the white potato *Sherine* a lot of those have the same characteristic. That variety is a lovely show potato and a good eater but because so many have the dimple end it can be frustrating trying to get enough to match for a good dish.

Potato Amour

I was pleased that *Amour* was available again for this year as it is a potato that has given me much success on the showbench. But it is not looking as well as my other varieties. Some bottom leaves are yellowing and the haulms are not really vigorous. From the look of them I suspect it's a virus problem. That means I may struggle to get the tubers up to a decent size for show.



The *Amour* are in the middle row towards the back.



Show Perfection Peas

With the unseasonably cool weather, I may now struggle to get peas for the National at the end of July. Still we live in hope. The peas have been planted out 12" apart. They do take a bit of looking after. Every couple of days the stem must be attached to the canes with string or as in my case, pea rings. You can make those yourself by cutting up a piece of soft wire. Also all tendrils and side shoots should be removed to direct all the nourishment into the main stem. And don't forget the slug pellets.

Sweet Peppers

Red King F1. In spite of the cool conditions this particular variety of pepper is setting well and is almost ready for picking. This is a bell Boy type. My long reds *Rubens* are only just beyond the flowering stage. I feed the peppers weekly with a mix of Maxicrop and alternate with my homemade Comfrey Tea. You could also use a tomato feed.



Pot Leeks

Over the last couple of weeks the pot leeks have really moved on gaining on average an inch in girth each week. They really seem to be enjoying the rain.

Unfortunately I have had two that went out of shape. I'm not sure if this leek would have been showable.



I had to remove a few flags to get down to a tight button. This one measured just over 9" in circumference before I took off the flags. It is only 3" from the root plate to the tight button. The ones in the trench are having the blanch drawn up by the compost. I may well put on some 5" collars as I would like to get closer to the 6" of blanch which is the maximum allowed for a pot leek. Also I want the blanch to be nice and white. If there is any greening it would lose points.



Celery

The **Morning Star** celery has had the collars extended to 15" using builders damp course. I would not normally use this material because in warm conditions it would cause the celery to sweat. But as it is cool and wet it will do the job for now. Next week if it dries up I shall put on 18" corrugated cardboard collars.

The celery is given a good clean up each weekend. Removing any sideshoots from the base and split stems. A couple of sprays of fungicide has cured the bit of blight on the leaves and I have given a preventative spray of insecticide against leaf miners.

After a clean up I make sure that I reapply the slug pellets.

So far the celery is looking good.



Generally in the garden the veg is producing well. There is plenty of calabrese, beetroot, carrots, new potatoes, strawberries and raspberries. We are inbetween french beans, I slipped up with the sowings on that one but at the end of next week we should have some runner beans ready for harvest. Also the broad beans are almost there.

Black fly has been a particular nuisance this year and I have had to resort to spraying them. I was washing them off with the hose pipe before that.

Next time we shall take a look at the blanch leeks, tomatoes and cucumbers.

John Trim