

With many vegetables now in store, don't forget to check them over once in a while. I store most of my main crop potatoes in paper sacks in the garage. A couple of times during the winter I empty out the sacks and remove any that have gone rotten. The best keepers are the main crop varieties. Mainly because the haulms on those crops were allowed to die down naturally, hence the potatoes went into a natural dormancy. The first and second early potatoes were harvested in the green. 'Whilst the foliage was still growing'. I lifted those as soon as they were of useable size in the kitchen. 'Mainly because the ground was needed for brassicas.' The bulk of that crop was stored in dry peat which kept the skins fresh for a few months. Of course we can't expect our early varieties of potato treated that way to store like the main croppers and in fact they break dormancy quite early.

Mind you if you only grew one variety such as 'Kestrel' and you wanted them to store. Then let part of the row go into natural dormancy and they will keep into the New year without premature sprouting.



The result of lifting in the green is premature sprouting. In the photo, my wife Sally is sorting through a box of 2<sup>nd</sup> early 'Kestrel'. By removing the sprouts the potatoes will remain usable for several more weeks.



The skins are still in very good condition, considering these were originally lifted in July. Once Sally has finished removing the sprouts, the potatoes will be stored in paper sacks. Don't be tempted to use plastic bags for storage unless you store them in plenty of dry peat. If you don't, the lot will rot.

One of my specialities is sweet pickled Jermore shallots. White vinegar and sugar combined together, is warmed to dissolve the sugar, then allowed to cool. The sterilised jars are packed with shallots, red and green sweet pepper strips and a couple of sprigs of tarragon. Delicious and perfect at Christmas time.



'Amsterdam Forcing Carrots' layered in damp gritty sand. Stored this way they will remain in good condition for several months.





I never see the point in wasting seed. Even with lettuce I will sow just one seed per station. Here we have 20 'Rosetta' lettuce with 100% germination. During the winter I sow once a month. Some of the lettuce will be used prematurely when loose leaved. Others will be grown on to maturity in 5" pots.

I have suffered a bit of a disaster in the polytunnel. I was growing our late cherry tomatoes in there but unfortunately they became heavily infected with late blight.

So, they had to go. I still have plenty of toms in two other greenhouses and of course all the green toms I picked off the blighted plants will ripen on the kitchen windowsill. But of course that's another lesson I should have learnt. When blight is about be careful what you touch. I probably unwittingly carried the blight into the polytunnel myself.

The 'Hawkesbury Wonder' French beans have taken off. I think they have got their roots well down into the compost of the deep bed. One of the plants is snaking its way up a tomato cane 'just like a runner bean.' I must admit that I did not know they could climb like that.



My little helper 'Susie'. On a rainy day she much prefers a warm greenhouse.





Down on the allotment the 'Autumn Neptune' leeks grown from seed are large enough for kitchen use. This is a bonus as we have just finished our summer leeks.

Also the garlic is putting on good growth, time to check on root development.



This is just what I am looking for. A good root ball. This is the perfect time to plant the garlic out. Don't leave it too long or the roots will just go round and round the pot



forming into a tight root ball, which will make the roots somewhat reluctant to break out into the surrounding soil when planted.

I am hopeful that this year we shall get a decent spell of cold weather. What the garlic really need is a month with the temperature at sub 50f/10c to initiate clove set. Last season in the south of

England we did not achieve that, so our garlic was rather below par. 'Undersized'. So potash at the ready, it's time to plant them out.

I have one last show to look forward to in November. The Wisley RHS show near Guildford in Surrey. So the onions will have their final outing of the season. After that the large ones will be put aside for seeding. The 'Takmark' onions in the foreground are still in excellent condition. The only thing that might let me down is their slight lack of uniformity in size. As my tomatoes are still in good condition I might put those in the class for any other





veg. I will let you know how I get on later in the month.

The 'Cascade' sprouts are coming along. These are a very tasty variety that I have grow for over 10 years. I normally start picking in October and they go right through until next March. A really worthwhile vegetable to grow.

Yellowing leaves are constantly removed and each plant has a strong stake. Whitefly has been a problem; they seem to survive no matter how many times I spray them. Of course on an allotment site they quickly get

re infected by whitefly from neighbouring plots whose owners are not as diligent when it comes to controlling the pests.

Never mind, that's gardening for you.

More from me later in the month.

John Trim