

The 1st November is about the time I usually turn on the heating in the greenhouse. Up Until then the leeks that were potted up during October have been grown on cold. Keeping them just frost free.

My 'Wee Willy Winkie' has done sterling service for many years. I know electricity can be rather expensive and this is certainly reflected in our energy bills during the winter months. 'I think its for the best that I don't have a smart meter'. As an alternative method of heating I have considered a portable butane gas heater. An extra benefit of using gas is that it produces carbon dioxide, which is an essential part of photosynthesis. Fir Tree seem to be a good company. Though for the moment I shall ponder a little longer on that decision.

While in the greenhouse I had a look at the blanch leeks

All the young plants are looking fit and healthy. There is just a tiny bit of die back on a few of the lower leaves. Most of the grass has now been potted up and making good progress.



Looking underneath the tray you can see the first roots emerging. With the heating turned on the leeks will now start to make quite rapid growth. It's also time to give them a watering with Calcium Nitrate as a bit of a nitrogen boost and to ward off White Tip. The plugs they are growing in are quite small so nutrients are rapidly used up by the developing plants.

I use a variety of trays containing plugs. The polystyrene ones have small plugs and in a couple of weeks those will need potting on. I have other trays with deep 3" plugs. Those are the ones I prefer to use.



Every serious gardener should have a box of calcium to hand.

When the leeks are potted on, they will go into a mix of good medium strength compost, aerated with fine vermiculite and

sweetened with Dolomite lime. 4oz per 2 gallon bucket of compost. This year I shall add a teaspoon of root grow to each pot. 'I don't normally do that until the later pottings.

Even the rejects are making good growth and I am setting these away in seed trays to grow on for garden use. They will go into a cold greenhouse and will not be mollycoddled at all.

In the Polytunnel



The exhibition **Sweet Candle** carrots have regrown new foliage since dibbering back into the soil after their last show. They will be used up in the kitchen during the winter months.

The **Prince** French beans are in flower. In a couple of weeks we shall be dining on these. Which is just as well because a heavy frost has polished off the allotment runner beans. Let that be a lesson to me. Next year for late beans I shall grow a white flowered variety in the polytunnel. '**Lets hope I remember**'.



And this is really what a polytunnel is for, extending the cropping season and protecting vulnerable crops. If I grew these calabrese and cauliflowers on the allotment they would soon be decimated.

They are better off where I can keep an eye on them. Also the finished vegetables will be clean and easy to pick. The deep bed on the left has just been cleared of cherry tomatoes. Manure will be dug in and the bed covered with black plastic. It will eventually be used to grow the 250g exhibition onions in 2019.



Mini spinach ready to use. When they get to this stage I sow another tub so that we always have something to pop into a winter salad.



The last of the **Cedrico** tomatoes. The green ones will go to join others in store in the garage. The red ones we finish ripening on the kitchen windowsill. We bring a few green ones into the kitchen as required. They soon turn colour and are still better flavoured than any bought in the supermarket.

The last cuttings of the year. And with seed no longer available this is the only way to keep **Cedrico** going.



Flowers will continue to develop on the cuttings. Nip them off as soon as they are large enough to handle. I am bringing these cuttings on for an NVS member.

For myself I shall be trying some of the varieties that have recently been winning prizes on the show bench. Namely **Zenith** and **Red Dragon**. Both purchased from **Medwyns Seeds**.

In the garden

At home a few changes are taking place. The 38 year old Alton lean to greenhouse that for years has grown my cucumbers is coming down.

I got the sheets of glass out without breaking a single pane. They might come in useful for a cold frame on the allotment.



Fruit Judging Workshop

Every judge should endeavour to keep their skills up together. I have previously done several Fruit Judging Workshops and I still find them informative and an enjoyable day out. And no judge should assume that they have reached the extent of their knowledge.



Grape Lady Downes Seedling

The course takes you through the possible pitfalls, negotiates the rules and gets you practically judging the fruit. Everything from top fruit like apples and pears to the less common quince and medlars.

My thanks to Gerry and Colin for an informative day out.

In mid October I gave a talk to New Milton Allotment Association.

I was pleased to see that they had an area of raised beds with hard standing for people with dementia and other disabilities.

I have been invited to visit the allotments which will be of great benefit to me as my local parish council has asked me to design a similar site in my home village.



The allotment site is open on Tuesday 10-1pm and Thurs 1-4pm

Becton Lane Allotment Site. New Milton BH25 7DL

Details can be found on the parish website.

Well that's about it for this time. In the next article I shall be talking about lights and how long to keep them on. Also the young leeks will be ready to pot on. Also my exhibition shallots are sprouting prematurely. So they will need potting up.

John Trim

