

Most of my weekends are usually taken up with actually judging various shows. As the Westbourne show was on a Sunday it gave me the chance to show off a few of my veg. I entered 10 exhibits. I came away with 7 firsts and 3 seconds.

Overall I did rather well, but I was beaten by outstanding grower Peter Rogers in the collection of five vegetables.

I first met Peter when he was just seventeen. He sat the NVS judges exam which I organised in my home village of Hythe in Hampshire. Peter passed the exam to become the youngest ever NVS judge. He first entered the Westbourne show when he was just five years old. 'Talk about catching them young'.



I knew I was up against it the moment I saw Peter's collection. His **Hative de Niort** shallots were superb. The judge marked them 16 out of the available 18 points. I also really liked his tomatoes variety **Zenith**.

I did manage to stage a lovely dish of **Amour** potatoes in my collection which

scored 18 out of 20 points. I also won the collection of three dishes of five potatoes.

I was also very pleased with my **Sweet Candle** carrots. They were grown in a deep bed in my polytunnel. The bed is a mixture of top soil and old exhibition potato compost. The bed was given a really good soak and then I dibbled 18" deep holes which were filled with Levington F2s seed compost. Nothing else was added.

The carrots had been on the bench for several hours before I took the photo, that's why the skins are looking rather dry.

The seed was sown on 1st April. Some were lifted for show after 19 weeks growth and all had stump ends. The carrots had a very occasional watering overhead. I don't like to water too much as I think this encourages the growth of thick feeder roots. The carrots were grown under enviromesh. Not a single carrot pulled to date has shown any sign of root fly. It just goes to show you don't need to go to extreme lengths in order to grow decent carrots.



These **Sweet Candle** carrots were pulled dry. 'Not soaked out with water'. All had perfect tap roots. That's one good reason not to water too much. Let the carrot go searching for the moisture. Once lifted I cleaned each carrot under running cold water. I use a Jeye cloth and wipe lightly around the carrot. Never rub up and down. Finish off by wrapping the carrots in a damp towel. The top foliage should be trimmed to 75mm.

Amongst my wins was this one for my **Elephant Garlic**.



Apero is a top show winner. When staging tomatoes try and cut them leaving a nice long handle on the calyx.



My **Hative de Niort** picklers only got a third at the NVS Southern Branch Championships in July. The colour has now improved and they could go on to win a few more shows yet.



Even the Marshalls **Gogorez** peppers did the business for me.



And this one is a bit of a monster. If I had produced this pepper in July for the Marshalls heaviest

pepper competition, I would be a little richer today. I have two more peppers in the greenhouse which are bigger than this one. Marshalls reckoned that grown well it would be possible to get **Gogorez** up to 300 grams. Perhaps they will need to revise that figure now.

On the Allotment



The pigs are a constant source of entertainment. Our sow has just been weaned off her litter. Beetroot is one of her favourite foods.

It's also a favourite of my neighbour Ann. Here she is raiding my patch for a few **Pablo** beetroot.

At this time of the year continuity is the name of the game. I have just made

sowings of cauliflower and calabrese. Those will be grown on under cover. A week ago I made a last sowing of runner bean and those are now through. In another week I shall be sowing carrots in a deep bed under glass. Those will see us through the later months of winter right through to late Spring.

I have delayed lifting the main crop potatoes as the haulms are still too fresh. I need them to die down so that the tubers go into a natural dormant stage. Which basically means they will last longer in store.

Strawberries

Our **Florence** strawberries have now finished fruiting and it was time to take runners and give them a tidy up. This variety is a late season type, fruiting from June until the end of July. On each runner several plants will develop 'if you let them'. I only take the first plant and snip off the runner beyond it. I allow the runner to root into the soil. These will now be given a dip in a bucket of water with two tablespoons of bleach added. Leave the whole plant submerged for 20 minutes.

Then plant them up into half litre pots using fresh compost. If you are growing them for replacements on your own plot you could use riddled top soil. As most of my plants will be sold on via the NVS Hants D.A plant sale, I can't risk passing on any disease. That's why my plants are disinfected and grown in compost.

After removing the runners the foliage on the parent plants is cut down to soil level. I then disinfect the row using a sterilant such as Jeyes fluid or Citrox. If you have used straw under the plants this can be raked up over the row and burnt. Next



March give the plants a light feed with Fish, Blood & Bone. If you treat them right, strawberry plants should give you four years of cropping. Though as the years go by they will produce fewer but larger fruits.

On the 15 August I finished lifting the French beans for seed.

This is **Prince** they are already quite dry so in a week or so I shall be shucking these. In the allotment shed I have bunches of **Hawkesbury Wonder**. I carefully reselect, I don't keep any with less than six beans in a pod.

Now we have the rain back with us, beware the slugs and snails.

That's it for now, I will be back in a week or two.

John Trim

