The year is moving on. For us vegetable gardeners, August is the last chance to sow some overwintering root crops. As I mentioned in the last article, the beetroot has

been lifted and put into store which has freed up that bed which has now been sown with the overwintering carrot 'Extremo'. I was going to sow 'Autumn King' but the organic seed I was after was sold out. 'Extremo' sounded a good alternative and in common with most gardeners I do like to try out something new occasionally.

As I mentioned in my previous article, the deep bed was given a light dusting of Vitax Q4 and forked over. I then used a spade to make a narrow 'V' trench which was then filled with old potato compost. That was compressed with the back of my rake to eliminate any air pockets. Then I made a shallow drill half an inch deep and thinly

half an inch deep and thinly sowed the seed. A good watering with a fine rose on the can, a sprinkle of slug pellets and that was another job done. Before the seed germinates I will encircle it with glass.

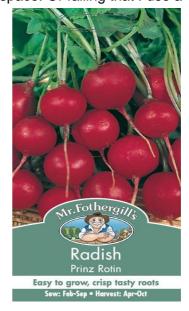


The summer grown carrots are still producing tasty roots. This is the variety 'Amsterdam Forcing', by sowing the seed thinly there is no need for thinning out. I just pull them as a bunch. Make sure you water the bed before pulling, this keeps down the smell of the carrots.

We don't want to make it easy for the carrot root fly to find them. Of course it also helps if you enclose the bed with glass leaving the top open for irrigation. Another root crop I am sowing is radish. I sow a few of these every month. They are used as a catch crop, I pop them in where ever there is space. Or failing that I use a

20 litre pot. My favourite variety 'which should be on everyone's list' is 'Prinz Rotin'. Without doubt I have never come across a better radish. It attains an edible size after 5 weeks, 'if grown in a reasonable position', 'they do like a bit of sunshine but will do quite well in semi shade' they will grow on to the size of a small plum, never becoming woody or bitter.

The lettuce 'Little Gem' has done good service during the summer, it is now time to sow other varieties that can cope with cooler weather conditions. I have done a fair bit of experimenting with these over the years. 'Winter Density' was a popular choice for a lot of people but I found it rather lacked flavour and could even be a little bitter. Then a few years ago I came across 'Rosetta', similar in size to 'Little Gem' it is reliable & tastv.





To space out the cropping period of the lettuce I start them off in a seed tray, then when the seedlings are large enough to handle they are moved on into 3" pots. From there some will be planted out into a bed to grow on under cover, either a cloche or in the polytunnel. The others will be transplanted into 5" pots. The compost is reused from my exhibition potato bags, revitalised with a little base fertiliser and ground limestone. Failing that I use the compost from the bins which is now well rotted down. Once again adding a little fertilizer and lime to sweeten the compost. In other words, to make it less acidic.

The lettuce in the beds will be mature in about 10 weeks, those in the pots will stand much longer and will not grow as large.

If you find this too much bother just get a packet of mixed salad leaves and sprinkle a few onto the surface of a large pot. Do this on a monthly basis for a ready supply of pick and come again leaves.



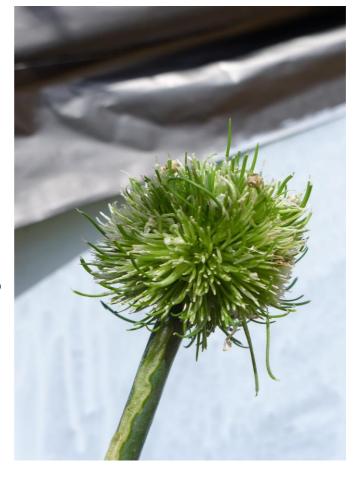
'Mazur & Rosedale' lettuce grown to maturity in 5" pots.

Leek propagation. 'vegetative method'.

The leek heads were trimmed of seed on 2nd August. Within a couple of weeks there will be a growth of mini leeks, commonly called 'grass' on the heads. The stem must

be supported with a strong stake. The object is to maintain the head of grass in good condition until the stem eventually rots through. This will usually happen around October time. It's not an exact science and you do need to keep a close on eye the heads. If the grass shows any sign of wilting that's when we shall cut the stem and stand it in a milk bottle of water. Change the water every 3 days or the bottom of the stem will become mushy. If this happens cut the stem back to good tissue. We shall catch up with leek developments in September.

The picture is the leek head after it's haircut.



I am pleased that as we approached mid August the rains were back with us. When I dug a row of potato on the allotment last week it was dry soil a foot down. And that's even with irrigation. But what a wonderful summer we have had so far. Many crops have been well ahead, I picked my first runner beans of the year 'Stenner' variety in the third week of June.

The good season has also been reflected on the show bench. Most of my early judging duties are at local village shows and the quality has been generally very

good. Later this month I move into Dorset judging at various county shows. One of my favourites is the Melplash Show, Bridport. As well as the veg I am also down to judge the egg classes.

Keeping the crops cropping.

If your tomato vines have remained in good condition you can get them to continue cropping by cutting back the main stem and then training a side shoot up the cane.

This photo is the bare stem after providing it's first crop of tomatoes. Cut through the stem just above a leaf notch. This will induce a side shoot to grow. You may be fortunate and have a young side shoot growing low on the stem that you can train up.





Here we have a side shoot being trained up the cane, this will grow on to produce another crop of tomatoes. Try and select a shoot as close to the soil as you can, just to give you more trusses of tomatoes on the vine. So far this year we have had a blight free season. Normally I get some blight affecting the tomato foliage. At this time of year I remove all the foliage from the early established plants to allow light to the un-ripened tomatoes. This has a double effect as it takes away any potentially diseased material. When the later grown toms set their first truss of fruit I remove all the foliage up to that truss. Give as much light as you can to the plants at this time of year.

The dwarf winter kale has been planted out. 18" apart is fine. Dig a hole deep enough to set the plant down right up to the first leaf.



I have planted out under mesh to keep the butterflies and pigeons off. As I have club root on the allotment every hole is given a good dusting with ground limestone before the plants go in. Don't forget to give a dusting of base fertiliser, hoed in before planting.

This pea is 'Flavora', a new variety this year. Its great merit is that it is mildew resistant. I can vouch for that. Not a touch of mildew anywhere. I have started to pick the peas and pleased to note there were several 10 podders amongst them. As well as being a fine tasting pea it could also have show potential. A couple of weeks ago I



made another sowing. These will be harvested in October for freezing. I will let you know how they get on.

That's almost it for August. Speak to you next month!

John Trim