

I can now definitely see that the pot leeks are putting on some growth.

Just on 7" in circumference. Photo taken on 31st May. In 2016 I had a girth of 8.5" on my Yorkshire Giants. But of course they were set away much earlier than the Sammy x Cumbrians that I am growing this year. These are also really short in the blanch, about 3" so I don't think my leeks will be going over length come show time.



I have had a couple of problems. A minor one when a few leeks developed spots of rust that I have treated with a spray of Corbel. And another problem that I can do little about. Some of the leeks have developed a lean to one side. Now this could be because my raised trench is not in a perfect North South alignment. Meaning that each side of the leek is receiving an unequal amount of light. I'm not sure if that's the cause but it seems logical. In another couple of weeks I am going to start drawing up the blanch by covering with top soil. In the last 4 weeks up to the show I shall put on a collar to exclude the light.



Blanch Leeks

31st May. It was time to move the blanch leeks into the 14" pipe lagging collars. The girth is now 5" round. With 2" of leek below the soil that gives a blanch of 16".



The collar serves a triple purpose. It keeps the blanch area straight and white. The pipe lagging does not cause the leeks to sweat so much in hot weather and it is softer so it gives a bit as the girth develops. I use Velcro tape as it is easy to put on and take off. Quite important when you are inspecting the leeks on a weekly basis.

More on Alliums

I have started harvesting my **Hative de Niort** shallots for the pickling class. As soon as I got these home I trimmed the leaves and roots. They were also measured with the 30mm NVS official ring. Of course as usual several did not go through. Those will end up in the pickle jar. The contenders are now in trays in the apple storage cabinet in my garage. You need

somewhere that is dry, cool, airy and dark to ripen the bulbs slowly. When you lift the shallots you will find some have flat sides where they have pressed against another shallot whilst growing. Very often this will improve as the shallot ripens as it will take some moisture back into the bulb from the leaves that are left on after trimming. Of course this means that some shallots that initially went through the 30mm ring will later fail to do so.



Its all down to the name of the game. Some diligent show people purposely harvest their shallots at 27/28mm to allow for this increase in size. But its not a pure science.

Vegetables in Harvest

A polytunnel is a real boon for bringing on plants early. Last week we started picking **Black Forest** courgettes. I have a plant at each end of the polytunnel and they will be trained along a cane just under the roof.



Don't forget to remove the flowers from the lower courgettes to avoid botrytis rotting the fruits.

The ever reliable **Boltardy** beetroot are also ready for harvest. It's amazing that these are growing above ground and rarely suffer with any corkiness around the shoulder.



Outdoor Tomatoes

It's not often that I get an outdoor tomato to ripen before those in the greenhouse. This is **Cherry Kisses**. It's not going to be super prolific and as yet I can't vouch for the taste but it is certainly an early one.



I didn't think I would see this type of damage again. Ted, on a nearby allotment asked my advice about these tomatoes. Straight away I said it's either contamination from weed killer spray or its herbicide damage. It turned out to be the later. So one still has to be careful about using old compost.



A culinary Tip for bread bakers

Ever since I have been married I have baked my own bread.

And that is now over 40 years. The metal tins are the same ones and they are never washed. But my top tip is not to cover the bread with a damp tea towel, 'as many cookery books suggest'. But to place a thick plastic bag for life over the proving loaves. That way nothing sticks to the surface of the bread when you remove it. I only do one proving straight in the tins and most of the

time my bread is perfect.

Jobs completed in the last week. Planted out the sprout plants and the **Raleigh** cauliflowers. Sowed more French and runner beans. Sowed carrots direct in the soil for autumn use. Planted out French marigolds between brassicas to ward off white fly.

Next week, how are the potatoes doing.

John Trim

