

Well, I have been busy. Mainly travelling the South coast judging various shows. Sometimes the exhibits can be somewhat bizarre. Look what turned up at the Melplash show in Bridport, Dorset whilst I was judging the egg classes.



Rhea eggs. I gave them first in the any other egg class.

Eggs are a side line of mine. When I was head gardener for a New Forest hotel I rehomed many ex battery hens. Those were Warrens, very friendly hens and excellent egg layers.

When I moved to a private estate we had the fancy rare breeds. Rather a precocious bunch, though I did take a shine to the Marans. I love their speckled eggs. Anyway that's where I gained my interest in egg judging and it makes a change from fruit and veg.

Last month I trimmed all the seed off the leek heads. The plants reaction to this is to grow an abundance of mini leeks 'called grass' to replace the missing seed. The plants were moved into a cold greenhouse to keep the heads dry and avoid the grass prematurely sprouting. What we are aiming for is to keep the head of grass growing on the stem for as long as possible. If the stem rots through it must be cut and stood in a bottle of water. As I have said before, change the water every three days and should the bottom of the stem become mushy trim it back to fresh tissue. With good practice we should be able to keep the head growing on the stalk until mid Oct. More on leek propagation later in the month.



The 'Prinz Rotin' radishes are coming along. I have managed to find room for a short row in the deep bed of the polytunnel. These will be ready in a couple of weeks, time to sow another row. I was hoping to show these 'Pablo' beetroot at the NVS championships being held in



Dorchester on 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Sept this year. Unfortunately I left them in the plugs that I started them off in a little to long. So consequently they are about a week or so behind schedule. Mind you they will not be wasted.



This is a rather good example of a 'Carmen' cucumber. It is 15" long and it is growing on one of the cuttings I took about 6 weeks ago. I am hopeful that this one will make it to the show.



Another possible show winner are these 'Cedrico' tomatoes. Once again these are growing on cuttings taken earlier in the year. You can see I have removed most of the foliage to let maximum light to the plants.



'Prince' dwarf French Beans. Sown on 4<sup>th</sup> August. I shall make another sowing early this month. Grown on in the polytunnel it is possible we may have fresh beans for Christmas dinner.



When the strawberries finished fruiting the foliage was cut off and the plants given a watering with disinfectant. You can see from the healthy regrowth of foliage that these plants are not suffering from virus infection.

That allows me to pot up runners to create new strawberries for next year. Always pot up the first plant on the runner and remove all those beyond. I never pot up more than two plants from the mother plant, too many children put too much stress on the single parent.

In the picture you can see a few late setting strawberries. Ideally these should be picked off so as not to weaken the plants.



One of the jobs I like to complete this month is turning out the compost heaps. I have 6 compost bins at home and another 4 on the allotment. About half of them are full of well rotted compost. I like to turn them out on a spare bit of ground ready for digging in around early autumn. The other bins are also emptied. The semi rotted stuff on top is put into an empty bin. This is covered with a plastic bag with a dustbin lid on top, weighed down with a heavy concrete block. If you do the job this month the compost has a chance to heat up and the bacteria will become active. The last cutting of my comfrey leaves is also incorporated into the compost. The leaves act as a good activator.

A bit of advice for this time of year. Spray courgettes and cucumbers against powdery mildew. You can use Jersey gold top milk. This organic method literally eats up the fungal spores. It can be washed off after three days and your foliage will be clean once again. Don't leave spraying until the leaves are totally infected, no plant will recover from that, catch it early as soon as you spot the disease.

Another job is to order in a load of mature farmyard manure. I like to get this done in September where it will be spread thickly on the potato bed for digging in next spring.

More from me later in September.

John Trim