

One of the saddest things that occurred in our village of Hythe recently was the demise of a lovely fig tree that overhung a wall in Waitrose supermarket car park. Early each morning I would drive down to collect the newspaper and do the daily shopping. At this early hour I would cast my eyes across Southampton water towards the docks to see what cruise ships were in. But one morning something was missing. The brown turkey fig had been felled by the high winds. Our most local source of fig foraging was no more.

### Crab Apple Jelly



Thank goodness there are still plenty of crab apple trees around. My wife Sally makes the jelly from those that we collect on the forest. This contraption is an upended kitchen stool. Adapted with a couple of dowels to hold a muslin bag in which Sally drains the stewed apple juice. There are plenty of recipes on line for crab apple jelly, so I will leave that up to you if you wish to have ago.

### Birch Boletus

As far as foraging is concerned I think this is going to be a good year for fungi. Last weekend whilst out on a forest walk we came upon these **Birch Boletus** at Abbots Well near Frogham in the New Forest. They were in perfect condition and they are edible. But I left them alone as they are the poor cousin of **Boletus Edulis** when it comes to taste.

### Blanch Leeks

Three weeks ago these leeks were shorn of all their seed. Look at them now. Heads of grass that will be my exhibition leeks next year. As long as the stalks stay healthy the head will remain in good condition.



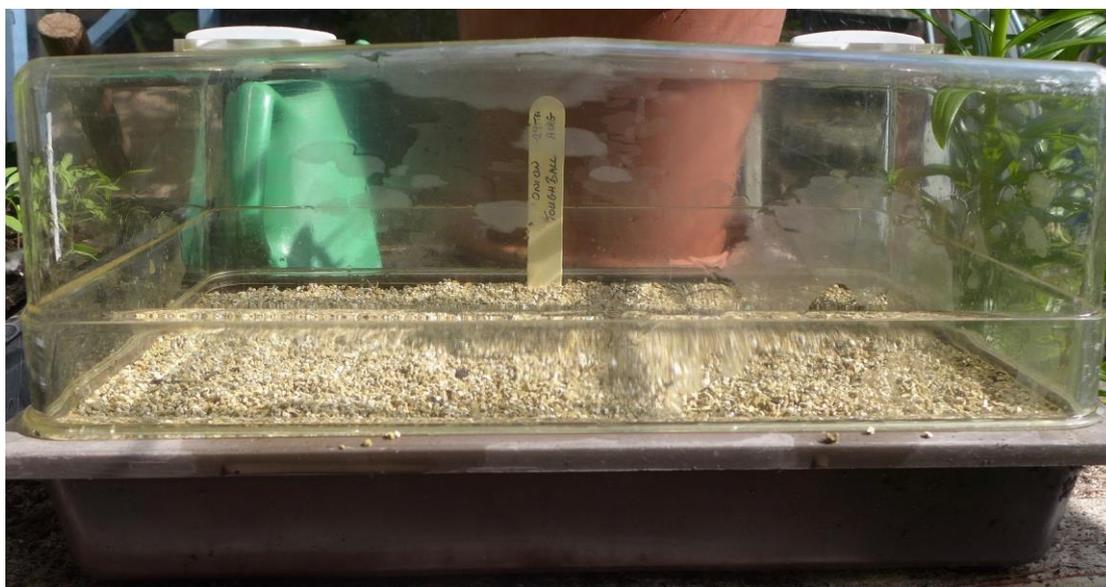
I will give them a spray against leek rust but I don't expect a problem as my leeks this year have been very clean. Hopefully I can keep the heads on the stalks until Oct. More on the leeks in a later article.

### Looking ahead to next year

I can well remember growing **Toughball** back in the 1980s. The recommended sowing date was 28<sup>th</sup> August in order to get them up to a decent size for them to overwinter. Well you will have to blame Medwyn's because my seed arrived on 29<sup>th</sup> August so that's when it got sowed. In the scale of things I don't think its going to make a world of difference.



But the way you sow them might. Fortunately Medwyn's seed was uncoated which has several benefits. Number one it is quite easy to germinate. And also being uncoated the seed will last for several years, correctly stored. Coated seed must be used up in the year it is produced. The seed this year was sown in Levingtons F2s seed compost. Moisten well with warm water and scatter the seed over the surface. Cover the seed with a sprinkle of vermiculite and then pop under a cover. There is plenty of warmth in my greenhouse to germinate the seed so I don't need to provide any extra. In seven to ten days the seed will be through.



### Moonlight Runner beans

For my last sowing of runner beans I have switched to the white flowered variety **Moonlight**.

These deal with the lack of pollinating insects much better than the scarlet runner varieties. They are not self fertile like French Beans but they are self pollinators which means when the flowers close up at night the anthers brush against the stigma and partial pollination occurs.



I have planted some out in our kitchen garden and also a double row on the allotment. There will also be a few planted out in the polytunnel. Now don't forget the slug pellets. I lost two plants on the first night because I forgot to apply them. Fortunately I had spare plants with which to fill the gaps.



## Onions

Well I know all the exhibition ones were lifted ages ago but these are for eating.



And in order for them to last the winter we leave them to go into a natural dormancy.

And the way to do that is to wait for the top foliage to flop over. That is the moment when the onion is fully mature and will stay dormant until the Spring depending on variety. I think it always looks very tidy to see a row of maturing onions with all the foliage

bent over and arranged in order on the ground.

## Brassicas

This is the variety of calabrese **Iron Man**. That one was sown on 8<sup>th</sup> April so you can see that you need to keep the monthly sowings going to have them producing all year round. And remember my tip. As a tray is planted out, sow another.



Another good overwintering plant is **Perpetual spinach**. I started those off by broadcasting the seed on a full size seed tray. They will be pricked out into small pots before planting out on the allotment.

Most recently I have made another sowing of calabrese, cabbage, cauliflower and French beans.

They will be grow under cover

The last cuttings of tomatoes and cucumbers have been planted out in the polytunnel.

And finally the late sowing of broad beans have had the tops pinched out.

And now I must thank a few friends in the NVS who have stood in for me in my period of recent illness. Thank you to Ian Clemens, David Shergold and Peter Rogers. Friends indeed.

John Trim