

With just a week to go to the show things are getting a little tense. I have a whole row of **Raleigh** cauliflowers standing ready. The unfortunate thing about those is that the mole did its best to remove their roots in the search for lunch. Consequently they are not going to make the size or quality that I was hoping for.

Courgettes

The chairman's challenge class at the show this year is for five courgettes. Now courgettes are easy to grow but you need at least two or three plants of the same variety if you are to harvest the five on the same day. At most I want to harvest them over two days. In my polytunnel the courgettes grow at the rate of an inch a day. So it's quite easy for me to work out when they will be up to size. Going by the judge's guide the fruits should be approximately 150mm or 6" long in old money. These days, courgettes can be shown with or without flowers attached. Which makes life a lot easier for the exhibitor. Cut the stalks as long as you can because you will want to trim them all to the same size at the show.



This all adds to the presentation and as this class is sure to be hotly contested every little attention to detail will help to make your exhibit stand out.



It wasn't that long ago that the courgettes had to be shown with flowers on. I must admit when the flowers are this fresh they do set the exhibit off a treat. So if you can get yours onto the bench with flowers attached they will be sure to catch the judge's eye. I would ideally like mine to be at this stage of development two days before the show. As each one is cut it is handled very carefully to avoid marking the skins. I immediately wrap each one in tissue paper then store in a dark cool place. Be careful when wrapping that you don't dislodge the flower. Even if you end up not showing them with the flowers on, it is best

to try and retain them as long as possible because it keeps the ends fresh. The judge will look at the end of the courgette to see if it has turned brown. Indicating an older fruit.

Runner Beans

I like my beans to be approximately 1 or 2 inches long 14 days prior to the show. This means that I tend to start picking about 3 days before the show. The first near perfect bean I pick is the master. That one will be used to select the others for the exhibit as they come up to size. That way you should get the best uniformity.

One inch long beans. The end of the stalk is nipped off with the flowers. Only three beans on each stalk will be grown on to full size and if any bean is mal formed it is nipped off. Don't neglect the watering.



In the recent heat wave I have been watering at least once per day making sure the water has gone right down to the roots.

French Dwarf Beans



Hawkesbury Wonder

This is currently the top show winner amongst Dwarf French Beans.

This is how easy it is to get a reasonable dish for the local show. The beans on the right are around 8" in length. I sorted these out after doing a picking for dinner one evening. For a top show aim for 9" long. The faster they grow the better. That's why my best beans come from the warmth of the polytunnel.



Zenith Tomatoes

I am very pleased with the **Zenith** tomatoes. I have been feeding them with my homemade Comfrey tea and Maxicrop. This has given them a really good flavour. It would be interesting to know how Zenith rates on the Brix test for sweetness. I think it is a superb tomato in every way, 'not just for show'. **Zenith** was originally introduced by Medwyn Williams. It did disappear for a year or two before Medwyn managed to get it reintroduced in 2015. Still available from Medwyn Seeds.



Raleigh Cauliflowers

The caulies on the allotment might not be doing too well but these in my polytunnel are looking really good. They are just turning in. Which means the central leaves are forming a spiral to protect the developing curd. The unfortunate thing is I only have three like this. They won't make the show but we shall enjoy eating them.



Around the Garden

On the pepper front I have grown a variety new to me, **Red King**. I have some in the greenhouse border and this one growing in a 10" pot in the greenhouse. They are not a tall grower. Also once I have picked the ones on the plant I can't see them producing many more. Though I may be wrong. For next year I may well go back to growing **Gogorez**. That one never stopped.



Carrots for the Autumn and Winter

Whilst I wait for a suitable raised bed to become available, I like to sow carrot seed in these 40 litre barrels using compost from the exhibition potato bags. Later on I shall move them into the polytunnel. This is an easy and productive way to grow carrots. Here I have used **Sweet Candle** and **Charisma**. I will do another sowing in August using the variety **Autumn King**.



Brassicas

Even though I have plenty of cauliflowers coming in, I don't neglect the other kinds of brassica. This is calabrese **Iron Man**. It's a good one for sowing at this time of year. I wouldn't grow them in the open on the allotment as the birds would soon strip the leaves. In the kitchen garden I just need to inspect them every three days for butterfly eggs.



Lettuce

I must admit that I don't take the best of care when it comes to raising lettuce. Normally I sprinkle a mix of seed between other plants in the polytunnel and transplant to a spare bed once they are large enough to handle. And they seem to do quite well. At this time of year you need to raise the seed somewhere cool. Lettuce don't like excessive heat. That's why I think they do well in the shade of other plants.



More French Beans

My favourite, **Aquilon**. A pencil podded variety that every one should give a try.

Stocksbridge Arrow Rhubarb

The rhubarb doesn't often feature but it deserves a mention. In all grow four different varieties. The top rated one for taste is, **Strawberry Surprise**. Unfortunately it can be a difficult one to grow. Then I also have **Timperly Early** and **Suttons Victoria**. Against all the rules I have never lifted and divided the **Suttons Victoria** in 40 years, though it does get plenty of manure at the end of the season.



That ends my round up for this week. Next week, lifting for the show. 'A sneak preview'.

John Trim