

The last time I grew **Winston** was back in 2016. The photo was taken on 27<sup>th</sup> June that year. This bag was lifted after 11 weeks and 4 days of growth to assess if the row was ready for harvest.

The bulging bag was a sure sign that we had potatoes but would they be of suitable show size and condition. To check I lifted this bag to test out the situation. When lifting a test bag for assessment don't choose one on the end of the row because that one will have had the better light and consequently the potatoes would have had the better growing conditions. Go for one in the middle of the row that will better reflect the overall performance of the whole row.



When I tipped out the bag I found that although I had a couple at the right size of 6 to 7 ounces in weight I also had many that were an ounce or two undersize. I decided to leave the row for another few days.

By keeping these yearly records I am able to assess where the show potatoes are in their development. This year even with watering every two days and foliar spraying with Maxicrop I can see that they are behind. At this juncture after 11 weeks and 4 days I am still waiting to see some visible evidence of tuber formation. So it's a matter of leaving them a little longer before I examine a test bag.

#### A little problem with the celery

The problem is celery blight. It is normally something that crops up later in the season and especially when it is wet. I noticed the blight a few days ago and immediately sprayed with the fungicide Dithane 945. You can still get the equivalent on the internet.

The puzzle to me was how did this occur so early in the season? We did have a potato blight warning for our area a few days ago but I didn't think there was any way this could have been connected.

I decided to do a little on line research. What I found was that the spores of the Septoria blight which effects celery are contained in the actual seed itself, embedded in the pericarp. Which makes it hard for any pre sowing treatment to be 100% effective. In fact one of the most effective treatments first tried in the 1960s was to immerse the seed in hot water for 30 minutes maintaining a temperature of 40c. That had to be done using only newly harvested seed. Apparently this procedure is actually carried out by some seed companies as well as trying other chemical concoctions.



My own remedy will be to spray the plants on a regular basis and to remove any of the diseased leaves. My celery is growing strongly so I don't think the loss of a few leaves will make too much difference.

## Blight on the Parsnip

A day later on my morning garden inspection I found that I now had early blight on the parsnips. I immediately removed all the infected leaves and sprayed with a fungicide.

Needless to say I am now paying extra special attention to the potatoes. Especially the main crop because they need a much longer season of growth. And to succumb to blight certainly won't help. Regular sprays will be the order of the day.

And I can report that three days after spraying there were no more blight infected leaves showing up on the parsnips.

## Then another little problem

I was hoping for a little more size on the exhibition shallots before I lifted them. Now I find that some of them are showing signs of going double.



A young shoot has formed between the second and third leaf on the right. The new growth should be coming from the centre. Once this happens all you can do is lift and hope for the best. I have several that have done the same thing. And we are still two weeks short of the longest day of the year, my normal lifting time. The only thing I can do is to protect the crop from rain. A deluge now would certainly not help the situation.

And what happened, on the 7<sup>th</sup> June it poured. Ah well! At least I have some pickling shallots that might make the show bench.

This year instead of raising my own, I decided to buy my cucumber plants at the NVS Hants D.A plant sale. There are usually plenty of the **Carmen** variety for sale. Of course true to form the best laid plans of mice and men often unravel, and of course there weren't any. But fortunately I was able to buy a couple of **Femspot F1** from our local market for £1.00 each. 'A bargain'. So far they are looking healthy. Grown my usual way in bottomless pots stood on fertile soil I feed once a week with a high nitrogen fertiliser. To avoid stem rot, water daily around the base of the pot and put the feed in the top but take care to keep it away from the stem. Young cucumbers are now setting. I shall remove those and let the first one set 18" above soil level.



### Zenith Exhibition Tomatoes

In the tomato house the trusses are filling out. There is one rather strange occurrence. The ones grown from seed have trusses with the tomatoes growing without touching each other.

Where as the ones grown from cuttings are close together.

The only difference is that the ones from seed are at the rear of the green house and therefore receive a bit less light. They are all being fed on high potash tomato feed and my home made comfrey tea.



### Show Perfection Peas

The peas are ready to be planted out. So that will be my allotment job for the weekend. I shall grow them on the cordon method. More of that in the next article.



### Hawkesbury Wonder French Beans

Sown 10 weeks from the show date. I am hedging my bets by growing a dozen in the green house border, whilst these will go into the polytunnel. They will stay in these 6" pots. They will root out into the soil below in next to no time.



### On the fruit front

#### Strawberry Florence

Strawberry picking commenced in earnest a week ago. I have also been busy thinning out the apple trees. Even after the June drop too many remain. I thin them down so that no one fruit is touching another.



I have put up codling moth traps and this weekend the fruit will get a spray of Calcium Nitrate as a preventative measure against bitter pit. That's a lot to get on with this weekend. Back again next week

John Trim