

Whilst most of us enjoy a bit of sunshine, when my water butts run dry its no joke.

The last dribble goes into the can. I prefer to do all my watering with natural rain water but with recent temperatures almost on a par with the baking summer of 1976, it looks like drought conditions are on the cards for the southern part of England.

Still that's not going to stop us keen gardeners. I have even been making plans for the late autumn and winter crops.



This weekend I shall make a last sowing of Broad Beans. Once again I shall use the variety **Di Monica**. If you read the sowing advice on the back of the packet you might believe it is too late to sow them now. Though if you live in the Southern part of the country they will be fine. If you are in an area of the country with danger of frost in early October then you may be pushing your luck a bit.



Another bean I like to sow late is the **Borlotti**. We use some of them raw in salads as they have a lovely nutty flavour.

Most of them are dried and used during the winter months. We grow enough to fill a large jar with the dried beans. Then to cook them it is just a matter of tossing a handful into salted boiling water for 15 minutes.



Perpetual Spinach seed



Ignore what the packet says, These can be harvested all through the winter.

Perpetual Spinach is a bit of a misnamed vegetable. First of all it is not perpetual, it is an annual and secondly it is not a spinach it is in fact a leaf beet. Have a look at the seed in the photo, it looks just like beetroot seed.



Putting that aside it is a wonderful vegetable to grow through the autumn and winter months. It is well known for its hardiness. The plants will be grown on in the tray for about three weeks before planting out about a foot apart. They prefer a fairly neutral soil around 6.5 to 6.8 on the pH scale.

Show Perfection peas coming into flower.

As I mentioned in my last article the peas are in fact setting their first flowers at a height of three foot. Now ideally I want to be picking peas for the New Forest Show on 24th July. So allowing 25 days from flower to full pod these will probably be too early and will be past their best come show time. Once the pods are full of peas the outside husk will only stay in good condition for a few days. Then the skin starts to lose its bloom and looks old and netted in appearance. If I get a good set of flowers I shall remove these early ones in a week or so.



Carmen Cucumbers

I often mention that well grown cucumbers take 12 weeks from sowing to picking. This year I cut my first fully mature cucumber at 11 weeks and 6 days from sowing. Now just a reminder,



put your feed into the top of the bottomless pots and provide the bulk of the water around the base of the pots. Continue using a high nitrogen soluble fertiliser like Chempak no 2 applied once per week. Remove all the side shoots and tendrils. I have saved several side shoots for cuttings. Root them in the usual way in a jar of clean water changed every three days. They will be rooted in ten days and can then be potted up in a seed compost.

My herb garden outside the kitchen door was getting a little out of hand.

The fennel had taken over the whole bed to the detriment of the rest of the herbs. In the past I have been successful taking cuttings of fennel and rooting them in seed compost. Though I find its easier if you do it by root division. I lifted the plant out of the bed, cleaned off the soil and chopped the root ball in half. I then placed the two halves in a bucket with a little water in the bottom. Once I see some new top growth I shall plant them up again. In the mean time it means my other herbs



can establish themselves without too much competition.

The Anglesey leeks.

A couple of these leeks have thrown side shoots. Now I think that's quite unusual for a seed grow leek.

I have removed the side shoots and hopefully this leek will behave itself from now on.

Actually this leek is another new introduction passed onto me by the Plumb family. It is actually making a very good size so I have collared some of them and I may well enter a few in the late RHS November show at Wisley.



Aquillon dwarf french beans

These were grown from seed from the Real Seed company. These have taken exactly 10 weeks from sowing to harvest.

Finally a look at the courgette trial. On the left is **Tuscany**. In the middle is **Black Forest** and the two on the right are **Defender**. From a poor start **Defender** is doing well and is the most productive courgette. **Black forest** is producing well and the worse performer to date is **Patio Star**. That one is producing quite a lot of what I call blown courgettes. They develop a swelling at one end.



Right that's it for this month. I am off to practice my rain dance.

I will be back in July.

John Trim