

Mid July. In our area in the South of England we have had daily temperatures approaching 30c and on occasions above.

The hot weather has had a bad effect on the scarlet flowered type of runner bean. Ideally they need the overnight temperature to be no more than 10c to initiate pollen set. If you are growing white or bi coloured beans you will still get a crop as those are self pollinators. Scarlet runners don't have that facility. The only thing you can do is to hose the beans down with cold water in the evening to try to reduce the overnight temperature.

Pigeon damage.

I uncovered a row of caulis as a cabbage white butterfly had got underneath the netting. By the following day the pigeons had dropped in and decimated the whole row.

Fortunately the growing point is still intact so there is a chance that we may still get a curd.



Rats

The scourge of any vegetable garden has to be the rat. I have been plagued with them this year the downside of having an allotment close to a farm. Unfortunately they have targeted my exhibition potatoes.

Each morning I find bags tunnelled with holes and tubers scattered on the ground. I have located their nest and steps have been taken to cut short their nefarious activities.

Andrew's Allotment 36a



Four plots up from my allotment is Andrew.

Primarily Andrew is a fruit grower.

The hot summer has certainly benefited his melons.

If all goes well this is what they should look like at maturity. But I gave a warning to Andrew, 'watch out for those rats'.



Andrew is also growing water melons. Something he tells me is quite a tricky undertaking.



There are a number of vegetables that benefit from a hot summer. Here are my 'Swift' sweet corn. My neighbour Ann gave me the plants and to her chagrin mine are doing better than hers. 'Just'.



Mini Cob Sweetcorn

Julie, another allotment neighbour had a word with me about her mini cob sweetcorn.

The plants had grown enormous but she was concerned that there were no cobs or even a seed head 'tassel'. Where as all of us growing regular sweetcorn had plenty of cobs well under way.



As I had never grown mini cob before I consulted the internet and drew a blank. Even knowledgeable friends were perplexed. Could it be that they had just gone blind? Then a couple of days later I was up feeding the pigs when I noticed on Mikes plot, 'He is right at the top of our allotment site', that he too had the self same variety and none of his were in flower either.

A day later I had a closer inspection of Julie's plants. And there after gently teasing the foliage apart was an emerging seed head or 'tassel' as it's called. So it seems that mini cob sweetcorn are just late developers. I now await the development of the cobs. But it is amazing that the plants are so big and the cobs will be so small. Personally I shall stick to the regular varieties. I reckon you would have to grow a field of these mini cob things to even provide for a decent meal or two.



And talking of pigs this is 'Buster' the boar. He might look a bit tatty, that's because he has been in the mud wallow. That's to protect his skin from sunburn. His lady friends have now been separated from him as their piglets are due in week or so.



Stephanie plucks the asparagus beetles off her plants. An important job as the beetles strip the foliage.



Perfection Peas

'Well some might think they are perfection'. This pod should have contained 12 peas. But as you can see it is falling a little short of perfection. It's not looking too good for the show!!!



8th July. The Hants D.A open garden visit at Broughton. Courtesy of Ann & Bob Brown and Betty & Chris Hewlett.

The Potato Weigh in.

Nigel Gould, Ted Perren and Alison Clarke do the honours. The eventual winner was Ted. His bag grown from a single tuber of the variety **Vita Bella** weighed just over 7lbs. **Vita Bella** is a first early. It has very good resistance to blight and on top of that it is very tasty and does not fall apart on boiling. Certainly one I shall grow again. It is also a very clean potato and quite shapely. Although it was grown in a variety of composts, 'home made and bought in', there was no common scab evident. I think it has show potential and could do well on the show bench of smaller shows.



Vita Bella. It looks rather like **Charlotte** in shape

Christmas Potatoes.

I have two varieties of potato that I shall be growing for Christmas. Now you could spend as much as £3.00 to buy in 5 tubers, or you could save your own. The way to do it is to reserve some of your own first earlies that you purchased earlier in the year. Pop them into a paper bag and store them in the crisper section of your fridge. I have now brought all the potatoes out into the light to green up the shoots. They will be planted up singly in 10 litre pots using the compost that my exhibition potatoes grew in. All I do is add a sprinkle of Vitax Q4 to each pot. A couple of ounces per bag is sufficient. Initially during this hot weather the bags will be kept alongside a wall on the North side of the house. That will slow their progress a little and cut down on the amount of watering you will need to do. Once the shoots show through they will be moved into full light. More on Christmas potatoes in a later article.



Carmen Cucumbers

The hot weather is making it difficult for the cucumbers. You can see the leaves wilting in the heat. In these conditions make sure the plants are kept as cool as possible and well watered.



But be careful you don't wet the stems at soil level. These plants have collars round the base to protect them.

Black Forest Courgettes

These are cropping heavy now. One more straight one and I would fancy these getting a prize at the show.



Talking of the show my Gogorez peppers are coming along nicely. I am pleased with them but I am sure there will be some bigger ones around. 'We shall see'.



Even our squirrels have taken up gardening. It looks like they are trying to raise their own peanuts.



More from me in two weeks time.

John Trim