

The season of mellow fruitfulness

There is definitely a touch of autumn in the air. This morning I noticed several leaves on the back lawn. Over at dock head on Southampton water I hear the fog horn bellowing its mournful song.

Mind you work goes on unabated in the vegetable garden. At this time of year it might not be quite so hectic but the winter jobs beckon.

I have emptied my leaf cage and spread the fine leaf mould on one of the deep beds. In the bottom of the cage I placed the foliage of a row of runner beans I had taken down. This year's autumn leaves will go on top.

My runner beans are grown up 8' bamboo canes. I am always very careful when removing the foliage from the canes. First of all I go along the row with secateurs and cut through the plants at soil level. Then I cut the strings securing the canes to the top wire. Then wearing a tough pair of gloves I take hold of the bottom of the cane and slide the foliage off. Always wear gloves; there is nothing worse than a bamboo splinter in your hand.



The 'Hawkesbury Wonder' dwarf French beans are coming along. These are the ones that hopefully will provide us with fresh beans on Christmas Day. I may make one more sowing, just to make

sure. I will probably grow a few on in 2 litre pots in the warm greenhouse. In the polytunnel the beans sometimes suffer with botrytis.

It is never a good idea to soak runner bean seed before sowing as this could induce the disease 'Halo Blight'. But in the case of broad beans and peas it is a benefit. These are seed of the broad bean 'Aquadulce Claudia' that I saved earlier this year. These will be sown in 3" pots and then planted out when large enough to overwinter in the polytunnel, giving us a really early crop. The next sowing of broad beans will be made in January. These will once again be raised in pots and then planted out on the allotment.



The onion sets 'Red Winter & Troy' were planted up in plugs on 1st Oct. They will be planted out once they have all rooted through the bottom of the plugs. Don't stand the trays direct on the soil, or they will root into it. I find the best way is to place the trays on old compost sacks.



The next job is to get the garlic planted out. Don't forget if planting directly into the soil spread potash at 4oz per square yard & hoe it in. Plant the garlic cloves so that the tips are 2" below soil level & spaced 9" apart in the row. I normally like to start mine off in 3" pots and plant out when they have a good root system.



This is my heated greenhouse. It is in constant year round use. I have just removed a row of tomatoes from the front of the house and the glass has been washed down with 'Flash' disinfectant.



I have a wooden removable bench that only takes a few minutes to screw back into position. This will soon fill up with all manner of plants. At the moment this is mainly young leeks growing on in plugs and seed trays.

At the back of the house there is a row of 'Cedrico' tomatoes. This is the 2nd crop on this plant as it has been cut down and a side shoot taken up to produce another crop. (A method I described in an earlier article.)



I am also taking more cuttings to keep the strain going through the winter. Make sure you use disease free plant material. There is a lot of late blight around and it is easily carried into the greenhouse.

Last thought, I have just had a bonfire on the allotment burning all the rubbish. Do it today, it may be raining tomorrow.

John Trim