

I have had a couple of difficult months that has interfered with my gardening. Now with the advent of better weather my mood has lightened and enthusiasm returned. Time to get going.

The first Hants D.A event of the year is Hampshire Potato Day held over the last weekend in January at Whitchurch in Hampshire. With upwards of a hundred varieties of potato on sale plus a plethora of other seeds not normally available under one roof this always proves to be a popular event. Visitors come from miles around and if you look to the right of the picture you can just see renowned champion exhibitor Jim Thompson, who travelled all the way from South Wales to select potatoes for an exhibit he is putting up at a show later this year.



Our stand is always popular with visitors buying plants and seed, or just stopping by for a chat about vegetables. Our expert members manning the stand can usually cope with any query a visitor might ask. Manning the stand I can see left to right, Bob Marsh, our chairman Jim Townsend and on the right our former chairman Ted Perren. All doing a sterling job for the society.



It's a great day out for any potatoholic. You can buy whole 2kilo bags or select individual tubers.



For my exhibition potatoes I buy in good quality fine grade sphagnum moss peat. This lot will be stored in the garage where I hope it will dry out a bit before it all goes through my garden shredder.



It is reputed that the first vegetable ever shown at an RHS show was the potato around the 1890s. At that time Cannell and Sons were a big seed and potato selling company.

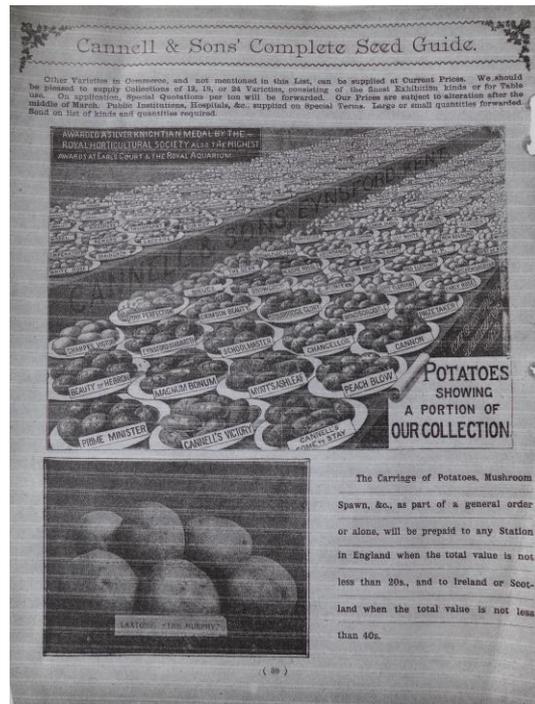
How about this for a potato display. I can see amongst them the famous Magnum Bonum which was bred by James Clark of Christchurch, Hampshire in 1876. Other varieties of his in the display are Early Rose, Victoria, Ninetyfold and Epicure which is still available today.

Back to the basics. My seed potatoes bought at the potato day have now been set up in seed trays in the conservatory. No heating, they are just kept in good light and frost free. I am also force chitting a tray of Charlotte in the warmth of our bedroom. They are in the semi dark under the bed. As soon as I see shoots appearing I will bring them out into the light. What I am aiming for is stubby strong shoots all ready to plant out in early March.

In the greenhouse I am growing a few extra early potatoes in buckets. I used a few of my in store Kestrel that had sprouted. From those we should get some to harvest in early May. They would have been earlier if I had used a first early potato like Charlotte.

On the Allotment

As I finish picking sprouts I pull up the stalks. I took this photo as proof that an application of 'Perlka' really does work against club root. No sign of it on these plants. And they were grown in club root infected soil.



Perlka is not a new product it was used extensively during WW11. It was only the cost which caused it to fall from grace. In essence it is a slow release nitrogen based fertiliser. It was reintroduced in 1996 as other nitrogen fertilisers such as urea became more expensive. Making **Perlka** more cost effective. **A Top tip.** Do not be tempted to overdose. All you need is 20 grams per square meter worked into the top soil two weeks before setting out the plants. Once the plants are well established you can work in another 20 grams later in the growing season.



This is my row of 'Lima' asparagus. I planted out one year old crowns on 8th May 2016 '[See my article for that month](#)' So this is their third year of growth which means we can soon start cropping. As you can see I have now raised the bed to get a good length of stalk for when cropping begins.

The Elephant garlic planted out in October is doing well. I am pleased that there are no misses in any row. We have had a reasonably cold January so I am hopeful that the garlic has had a decent period of vernalisation to initiate clove set.



Carrot, **Amsterdam 2 Maxi** sown in the green house border on 25th August 2017. We have been pulling these carrots since Christmas. The beauty of overwintered carrots is that they come up perfectly clean with no sign of the dreaded carrot fly damage. It is now time for me to make another carrot sowing in the polytunnel. If sowing outside make sure the soil temperature is above 8c and cover the row with a cloche or thick plastic over hoops.



Opposite the carrots on the other side of the allotment greenhouse are a few **'Marathon'** calabrese. The seed was sown last September and grown on in 3" pots until planted out in November. They will now have a balanced soluble feed. Any reputable make will do. In the greenhouse at home I have the next generation of **'Marathon'** calabrese coming along, plus a couple of varieties of cabbage.



On the NVS website recently one of our younger members mentioned how difficult it must have been back in the 1950s before any effective insecticides came about. Well I started work for Southampton Parks Dept in the 1960s and we had some pretty lethal stuff to take care of all the bugs. Unfortunately they were also likely to take care of you if you were a bit careless.

DDT was the most prominent and effective insecticide available to the gardener. And it is pretty lethal stuff. Believe it or not but it was only banned for use in the UK in 1984. And in India it is still being produced today. Its primary use is to control malarial mosquitoes.



On our allotment site it has been pretty quiet for a couple of months. I have been busy helping with the movement of sheds and greenhouses as plots have become vacant and new people move in.

Of course some of those that depart leave all their rubbish behind and it is left to a few of us to do the clearing up. At least the council provide us with heavy duty bags to put the rubbish in.

Plot 3 is being converted by a few of us for disabled person use. If we are lucky and obtain a grant from a local charity, the money will be spent on building solid raised beds using railway sleepers and hard paths between the beds to enabling access with a wheelchair. The beds will be at a height than can easily be worked from a wheelchair.

And that's about it for this article. I will try and not leave it so long before producing the next one.

John Trim

