

The arrival of the seed potatoes at my local garden centre in January still fills me with a frisson of excitement. I love delving into the boxes and sacks selecting tubers of just the right size, checking that each one is disease and blemish free. And of course to get the very best they must be grown in Scotland.

So what did I find when I arrived at the garden centre! Seed potatoes sourced from Lincolnshire!!! Where were the Genuine Scottish potatoes they had last year. And why did each paper sack have a ribbon of tartan embellishing the top. Me-thinks, rather superstitiously, that this is a bit of canny skulduggery. Not canny enough to fool me. A quick visit to the check out staff confirmed the potatoes were not raised in Scotland.



I was doubly mortified because the owner of the establishment had sought my advice in the past with regard to the best varieties to put on his shelves and where to source the best seed potatoes.

Suitably disgusted I made my way home, went online and ordered all my potatoes from JBA of Scotland.

### [On the Allotment](#)

I always try to make best use of the allotment. As I often mention, any competent gardener should

be able to pick some sort of brassica all year round. And there is nothing easier to grow than a row of dwarf kale. Mine is fully open to the elements and it will stand any amount of frost. The wind may push a few over if they aren't staked properly and pigeons like to nibble at the centres but apart from that are pretty trouble free.

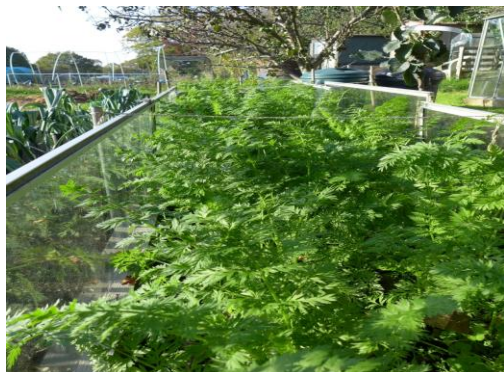
As I walk up the allotment path I am amazed how many people have nothing growing through the winter. Black plastic abounds. Now there is nothing wrong with covering some of the ground, it does suppress the weeds and warm the soil for the first planting.

I prefer to use a good load of dung to do that job and it feeds the soil.

I had a count up of our overwintering crops. There are leeks 'Blue Green Autumn Neptune' they were sown in late March and will provide us with a crop right through till May time.



Then we have carrots 'Extremo'. They have been ok but next year for an overwintering carrot I shall return to 'Autumn King', in my opinion they have a better flavour.



Then of course we have the Dwarf Kale.

There is still a plentiful supply of the sprout 'Cascade'. Other crops under way are broad beans 'Aquadulce Claudia', that featured in the last article and of course the 'Purple Wight' garlic, now enjoying some decent frosty conditions which hopefully will initiate clove set.

We also have 'Elephant Garlic'.

The sowings featured in the last article were all successful. The 'Nimbus' tomatoes gave us 100% germination. Those have now been potted on.



The Aubergines were equally successful, those were through in 7 days from sowing. All the young seedlings have been potted on into 3"

pots using Levingtons M2 compost with added vermiculite.



### Potatoes

I usually wait until mid February before planting my first indoor potatoes. This year to try for some really early ones I am going to plant up these 'Charlotte' that I saved from the ones I grew last year. Well rooted they should



get away very quickly in a warm greenhouse or conservatory. You can only do this if you have somewhere light and frost free in which to grow the plants.

They won't cost me much as the compost I use came from the exhibition potato bags from last year. I shall just invigorate the compost with a little Vitax Q4 fertiliser and Calcified Seaweed. Though any base fertiliser like fish, blood and bone will do. If space is a

premium they can be started off in a shed or garage until they sprout, then bring them into the light. With a little luck we should be harvesting new potatoes in early May.

Half fill a 10 litre pot and pop in the tuber.



Top up the pots and firm the compost gently by tapping the pot on the ground.

Mine will be started off in the conservatory. The pots are stood on a wooden board to insulate them from the cold floor. My conservatory is frost free because it abuts the house. Other than that there is no other source of heating.

I find that 10 litre pots are ideal for growing a single tuber. The 'Charlotte' planted on 28<sup>th</sup> January should be ready to begin harvesting in 10 to 12 weeks time. It all depends on the weather.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January I made a sowing of the leek 'Porbello'. These primarily will be used for show. The main sowing of my seed leeks for winter use will not be made until mid March. I have just received my leeks from Tozers. Once again I am growing the excellent 'Autumn Neptune' and also a new introduction from Tozers called 'Lancaster'. Going by its description it sounds a really good one. Plenty of time to order yours before sowing begins.



One last reminder. When you get your seed potatoes home, set them out with eyes uppermost. Make sure they are kept frost free and in a position that affords good light.

More from me in February.

John Trim