

It is not a good idea to take a holiday just when the vegetables are putting on a burst of growth brought about by the summer sunshine. Unfortunately this is what I did, leaving my wife to deal with the extra demands of a rampant garden whilst I was off on an enjoyable walking holiday.

Of course this is another excuse as to why there have been no articles from me during this period. So apologies to Emily, our patient webmaster and this is my attempt to catch up.

For me June is the month when we really start to enjoy the early harvest. The early courgettes sown on 17 March were producing abundant fruits from the beginning of this month.

I don't rely on just the one sowing to provide for the whole year. On the 26 May I sowed more 'Sylvana' courgette seed. I am quite impressed with this one, in the catalogue it was described as being suitable for cooler areas, I choose it because it looked good. So far it is proving a good choice.



Repeat sowing to make sure you have continuous cropping throughout the year seems to be one area that quite a few novice gardeners fall down on. Very often I

see on the allotments someone will harvest their early potatoes and then the earth is left bare.

As soon as my first earlies are lifted, the ground is given a sprinkle of base fertilizer at 4oz per square yard, then a good handful of ground limestone per square yard and planted up with sprouts and other brassicas that have been waiting patiently to be planted out.



Don't crowd the sprouts, give them at least 2' 6" between each one, they are gross feeders and need room to develop. Make sure they are planted firmly and pop a good strong stake in alongside each one. As the plants grow tie in to the stakes. One reason for blown and undersize sprouts is caused by wind rock. This breaks the little feeder roots. So make sure the plants are well supported. The variety I am growing is my favourite, 'Cascade'. They will start to produce at the end of September and go on right through until March next year. A really worth while vegetable to grow.

My cucumbers are bursting with fruits, during June from just four plants we have picked over 40 mature fruits. The variety is 'Carmen', these were sown on 17 March. A well grown



cucumber, given the right conditions of a little shade, warmth and high humidity will start to produce mature fruits in approximately 12 weeks from sowing. Continue to feed weekly with a high nitrogen soluble fertiliser.

To continue the production I have been taking cuttings to grow on to replace the old plants. I am not tempted to do this too quickly as the original first sowing will continue to produce for another 6 weeks or so. What I tend to do is bring on a couple of cuttings and replace the plants at intervals a week apart so that I have a continuity of cropping.

By growing in bottomless pots on well manured soil you will avoid the fatal disease of stem rot. Hose down the floor & walls each morning to maintain high humidity. I know of one family who carpet the floor of their cucumber house so that it will retain more moisture which evaporates during the day. 'What a good idea'.

In the tomato house it is also time to take more cuttings. I find at this time of year it is better to raise the cuttings in compost, I use Levington's F2S with added fine vermiculite or sharp sand. My normal method of starting tomato cuttings in a jar of water does not seem to work so well in the warmer weather. Strangely enough the cucumber cuttings still take in water, as long as the jar is not in direct sunlight.

The ice cream tubs are to retain a little water around the base of the pots. Don't let the pots dry out. Watch for roots appearing out of the bottom of the pots. Then pot on or plant out.



Sowings for this month

I am already looking towards winter and which crops I can sow for the cooler months.



Here we have cauliflower 'Graffiti', lovely purple heads and very tasty. There is also a sowing of Tenderstem Broccoli, from Marshalls Seeds and a tray of dwarf kale. The kale will stand through the winter making sure we always have a brassica to pick from. These seedlings will be potted on in a week or so and then planted out under netting on the allotment. We shall catch up with these next month.

Another job completed this month was the planting out of the blanch leeks raised from seed in the greenhouse border. Now the size of a pencil in thickness they were set out in holes dibbered 9" deep and 9" apart. A dribble of water in each hole sets a little soil around the roots. No need to fill in the holes. Once again these were covered with mesh. Main reason for this is to protect from the leek moth and the attention of pigeons.

In mid March I sowed a whole bed of beetroot. "F1 Kestrel" was the variety. After 12 weeks they were up to usable baby beet golf ball size. I find beetroot quite an easy crop to grow. Keep them well watered and give an occasional feed with Epsom Salts and they will be quite happy. In early June it was time to make an additional sowing. This time I used 'F1 Pablo' a fine dark skinned variety that finds favour with the judges. I sow the seed direct into a well prepared deep bed. Each seed is set 3" apart. Once they attain golf ball size they are thinned to 6" apart. The small beet can be stored in layers of sand until required. The later sown beetroot are lifted in the autumn, the foliage removed by twisting it off & then stored in boxes of sand to be used through the winter. They keep very well this way.

We are now entering the glut period. In our house to use up all the excess veg we can't eat immediately, we shall shortly be busy making and freezing loads of ratatouille. This is great for the months when there is less choice of veg in the garden. In winter we can delve into the freezer and bring out the taste of summer.



Earlier in June I lifted the 'Radar' onion sets. These onions from an October planting are reliable and early. The onions in the picture were grown from seed sown in January. The varieties are 'Vento', 'Tasco'

& 'Takmark'. Some are grown for their show quality in the small onion classes. They also have the advantage of being good keeping onions. Even in June we still have a few of these onions in store harvested last year.

On 28 June I picked the first of the runner beans, 'Stenner' variety. On the 21 June I made another sowing of 'Stenner'. This will keep the beans coming well into September.

The first of the dwarf French beans have finished cropping 'Prince' variety and the following sowings of 'Prince & Hawkesbury Wonder' are now in flower. Today the 30 June I shall now make another sowing.



Dwarf beans are so useful as they continue cropping well into the cooler months, especially if you can grow a few under cover. This is because they are self fertile and don't have to rely on insects for their pollination.

On the allotment I shall shortly be lifting the 2nd early potato 'Charlotte'. This is lifted in the green, which means the foliage has not died down. The problem on my plot is that if left in the ground the keeled slugs would have a field day. That's why all my main crop potatoes are grown in our kitchen garden at home. The difference when harvesting the main croppers is that the foliage is allowed to die down so that the tubers go into a natural dormancy, lasting longer in store before sprouting.

One last job for June is to lift the shallots and spread them out to dry. I still go by the old maxim of planting on the shortest day of the year and lifting on the longest. If you leave them

in the ground too long the shallots will start to go double. The variety in the picture below are 'Hative de Niort' - very expensive to buy but very tasty in the kitchen and just about the best shallot for show purposes. The other variety I grow is the chef's favourite 'Jermore'.



Once perfectly dry and the foliage has shrivelled down, they can be trimmed and put into store. More of that in the July article.

John Trim