

Produce and Handicraft Show —Things for February

By Beston Wakeley— Vegetable, Fruit and Flowers and Plants Judge www.brinkworthflowershow.com

Winter is the time to look at the seed catalogues and plan for Spring planting. There are numerous jobs that can be done, albeit the garden is saturated at the moment. If you have a greenhouse, it needs cleaning out, pots and seed trays need cleaning and tools sharpening. Empty and clean out the waterbutt—remember never use water from the butt for seedlings or greenhouse plants. If you garden is small, carrots, salad greens, tomatoes, chillies, herbs and more can be successfully grown in pots and troughs.

Garden Centres sell seed potatoes from January. When you buy place them “eye up” in a seed tray or old egg box/tray and store in a light frosts free place. They will “chit” (shoot) om about six weeks but do not plant out before late March or early April. Plant tubers 12”/30cm apart with 24”/60cm between rows. Useful early varieties include Sutton Foremost, Pentland Javelin and Rocket. For Salad potatoes try Charlotte or Nadine.

Delay your planting until the soil warms up either naturally or by using cloches. 10 days before planting lightly fork over and rake in a handful of fish, blood & bone fertiliser. Pelleted chicken manure is an ideal and inexpensive fertiliser, six times richer than farmyard manure. Potash will promote the development and colour of blooms and improve fruit yields. Sulphate of Ammonia encourages rich green foliage—lettuce, brassicas, spinach, rhubarb and is a good accelerator for the compost heap/bin.

Slugs are a gardener’s nightmare—try crushing egg shells and scatter around vulnerable seedlings or plants. When cherry tomatoes start to form, nip off the end of the flowering truss to encourage larger fruits.

Here are some varieties for you to try:

Carrots—Flyaway F1, Resistatafly F1 both have some resistance to carrot fly. For containers try Cascadefi. St Valery introduced in 1880’s is still the exhibitor’s choice.

Beetroot—Boltardy a firm favourite and slow to bolt.

Broad Beans—The Sutton and Robin Hood are perfect for small gardens/tubs, very compact, heavy croppers and freeze well.

Runner Beans—Firestorm is stringless and self pollinating. Enorma is a good exhibition variety.

Gardening is all about finding out what grows best in your patch - look over the garden next door what grows well there will probably grow well in your garden. If in doubt ask— gardeners are always pleased to advise even share their plants.

I’ll be back later in the year with tips on preparing exhibits for the show bench. Until then happy gardening and aim to fill the tables with your exhibits at the September village show. For more info see www.brinkworthflowershow.com