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## **Beetroot**

Beetroot grows well in salty conditions, but as we can't all live by the sea we have to help nature a little. I prepare my ground by digging in good, well-rotted manure. Supplement this with some blood, fish and bone plus calcified seaweed at 3 ounces per square yard raked into the top few inches.

The day before sowing the seed, soak them in a solution of Maxicrop (one teaspoon per litre of water). Take out a seed drill 1 inch deep, sowing as thinly as possible, cover and tamp down gently.

When the seedlings are through thin out to 2 inches apart, keeping them well watered.

One week before showing, water every other day with a solution of one tablespoon of salt to 2 gallons of water. This should ensure that when the beetroot is cut it will show a deep red flesh.

Tie the tops tightly with raffia 3 inches from the bulb, trimming off the excess. Do not take off the tap root.

The variety I grow is RED ACE F1.

## Carrots

My method for growing long or short-rooted carrots is similar to that used for parsnips.

Obtain a 45-gallon drum with small drainage holes in the bottom. Place it on firm ground, fill with clean builders sand and leave to settle for two days.

The medium for growing is proportioned as follows: to 25 litres of John Innes number 3 compost add 16 ounces of silver sand, 8 ounces of medium vermiculite, 8 ounces of calcified seaweed and finally 4 ounces of lime. Mix thoroughly, any lumps will cause deformed carrots. If the mixture is not to be used immediately cover it with damp sacking.

Next make tapered holes in the sand using an iron bar. Aim for a 3-inch diameter at the top. When you are satisfied the tapered hole is smooth and straight, carefully fill it with your prepared mixture. Ensure that there are no air gaps. Start another tapered hole spacing at 6 inches and follow the same procedure filling the hole before commencing another. Complete as many holes as space will allow.

In each hole sow 4 or 5 seeds about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch deep, when seedlings show remove all but the strongest. Keep the medium moist at all times. Support top growth with small canes to prevent damage. I sow my seeds in early February, covering with fleece to warm up the medium thus helping with slow germination. Keep the tops covered to prevent discolouration.

To put on the show bench remove very carefully from the medium ensuing no damage occurs to the tap root. Wash, dry and dust with talcum powder. Using raffia tie foliage 4 inches from the crown. Keep covered to prevent greening.

The long variety I grow is NEW RED INTERMEDIATE JAVELOT. For short-rooted varieties a smaller container can be used but the proportions of the growing medium and method still apply.

The short variety I grow is CHANTENEY RED CORED.

## **Cauliflowers**

Prepare a trench in the autumn at least 12 inches deep. Dig into the bottom well-rotted horse manure; if not to hand use Groworganic. Leave the trench open to the weather. After 12 weeks lime the soil thrown up from the trench; test its pH aiming for 6 to 8. In mid-April sow 5 seeds per sterilised pot; from the resultant seedlings let the strongest one grow on without forcing.

Fill in the trench, raking in to the top at 2 ounces to the square yard a high-nitrogen fertiliser such as Nitram, Sulphate of Ammonia or Nitrochalk.

Plant seedlings a minimum of 18 inches apart being careful not to disturb the roots.

Keep well watered and feed weekly with pelleted chicken manure, a handful to 2 gallons of water. One week before cutting feed with double strength Phostrogen which will harden the curds.

The varieties I use are LATEMAN or AMERIGO. From sowing to harvesting will be 13 to 14 weeks.

## Heavy Onions

As soon as the onion bed is clear of the previous season's crop and debris, turn the soil over to a depth of 12 to 15 inches by double digging. Using 1 part Armillatox to 100 parts water sterilise the growing area. For onions I prefer to manure with Groworganic. Leave the bed until December when it's time to analyse your soil. A pH of 6.5 to 7 is required. Ground limestone can be added in late January and February, fork into the top 6 inches.

In early December I soak the seed in a very weak solution of Maxicrop the night before sowing. Seed trays are filled with Shamrock Seed and Modular Compost and soaked with Maxicrop. Seeds are sown 1 inch apart, covering with a thin layer of 50:50 peat and sand mixture. Place in a propagator set to 65°F. At the crooked stage prick out the seedlings and pot on to 3-inch pots, again using Shamrock medium as before.

Grow under artificial lights for 6 weeks, 24 hours a day. Cut the light down to 12 hours a day for the next 2 to 3 weeks. At this time, approximately mid-February, the light can be cut off completely. When the 3-inch pots appear to be full of roots pot on to 5-inch using Shamrock coarse potting compost, but to each 80-litre bag I add one shovel of coarse Perlite, one shovel of coarse grit and 4 ounces of Vitax Q4. Mix thoroughly and spread out to facilitate soaking with Armillatox at 2 ml per gallon of water. Leave for 3 days before potting up the strongest plants into the 5 inch pots. Water regularly with half-strength Maxicrop.

Prior to planting on the prepared bed I lay a trickle porous pipe. Using an empty 5-inch pot make holes 22-24 inches apart. Cover the bed with black polythene, peg it down securely, feeling for the holes cut and tuck back the polythene. Transfer carefully the plants from their pots and firm them into the prepared holes. Do not over-water.

Four weeks prior to the show carefully remove each onion from the bed and wash the root. Peel the top layer of skin off, put in a cool dry place and allow to "golden up". Before tying neck with raffia dampen around the neck with water, this will stop the skin from splitting.

HYFAM is a small globe variety ideal for the 3-inch class. For large onions I grow Keith Foster's AILSEA.

## **Parsnips**

The procedure for growing parsnips is similar to that outlined for carrots, i.e. 45-gallon drum with drainage holes. Fill with builders sand etc...

The growing medium is: 75 litres sieved John Innes no. 3, 4 ounces bonemeal, 7 ounces calcified seaweed, 4 ounces sulphate of potash, 4 ounces garden lime, 7 ounces superphosphate, and if possible 3 ounces Dolomite lime. The amounts can be scaled down to suit your needs. Mix the ingredients thoroughly and cover with damp sacking until ready to use.

Repeat the procedure for making long smooth holes in the sand and fill using the mixture. Plant seeds, selecting the strongest to grow on. Cover with fleece for faster germination. During the growing time keep the tops covered by the soil.

After approximately 28 weeks the parsnips can be removed carefully taking care not to damage the tap root. For showing, wash carefully so as not to damage the skin, dry and dust with talcum. Tie tops with raffia 3 inches from the crown, trim off excess. Wrap in tissue paper to exclude the light. Do not be tempted to use newspaper, the print will transfer on to the parsnips.

The seed I favour is JAVELIN F1.

## Potatoes

Use a container of proportions 20x16x13 inches deep with drainage holes. Dig over the the ground the container is to stand on, fork in potato fertiliser at 3 to 4 ounces per square yard.

Dig out a trench 3 inches deep to suit the container base, set the container in the trench and spread around a few slug pellets. Mix thoroughly Shamrock Peat granulated compost (75 litres) to which 16 ounces of both potato fertiliser and calcified seaweed have been added. Fill the container to a depth of 3 to 4 inches and place, equally spaced, 3 potato sets about the size of duck eggs. The sets should have no more than 3 to 4 shoots, rub off any excess shoots. Fill container to within 1 inch of the rim.

Once the potatoes show strong growth feed weekly with Maxicrop. Water if necessary between feeds if signs of drying out appear.

Spray with Dithane 945 against blight.

Introduce 4-foot canes adjacent to the container to tie haulms to. At 14 to 16 weeks after planting cut the haulms down to ground level and leave for 10 days for skins to harden. Remove potatoes carefully from the soil taking care not to damage skin. Grade for size, wash in cold water, rinse in milk and cold water, dry.

Wrap in tissue paper and store ready for the show.

Alternatively why not grow a single potato in a 12-inch square polythene bag? Same procedure as described, don't forget the drainage hole, sink into ground 3 inches.

All ingredients mentioned are available at the trading sheds.

The varieties best for showing are WINSTON, KESTREL, MALIN and AMOUR.

## **Runner Beans**

Start in the early autumn by digging a trench 24 inches wide by 18 inches deep. Fork over the trench bottom, covering with a good layer of well-rotted manure; if not available household waste will do. Leave the trench open to the weather, but add lime to the earth removed from the trench. In March/April time as a bonus thickly cover the trench with mustard seed. When this has grown to about 8 inches fill the trench with your limed earth.

Just prior to erecting the support canes, 9 inches apart, rake in to the top sulphate of ammonia at 2 ounces per square yard. Sow the seed about the third week of May. A lavender bush nearby would attract the bees helping pollination (now he tells us!). Keep the soil moist, feeding the plants weekly with diluted chicken manure, one handful to 2 gallons.

For showing, cut your beans, with stalk, the night before the show. Wrap them in a cloth singly, tightly and straight. Hold the parcel together with elastic bands. Soak with water and leave on a flat surface. Check you have the correct number according to the show schedule, incorrect quantities will earn you disqualification.

Varieties I would recommend are LIBERTY and STENNER.