



MAY MEETING 2025

Present: Val and John Ford, Alison Woolliscroft, Elizabeth Oaten, Ian Warden, Joy Collett, Pauline Thomas, Meryl Evans, Barbara Dugard-Craig, Gilly Salmon, Peter Salmon.

Apologies: Carelle Sherwood, Melanie Chappell, Jane Lacy, Ann Murrell, Sally Baume, Sue Cleaver, Leonie Oates, Lillian Marshall.



There being no matters arising from the previous meeting, the Chairman welcomed 5 new members to the Vegetable Group - Leonie Oates, Val and John Ford, Lilian Marshall and Carolyn Katan in addition to our President, Ian Warden.

FEEDBACK: SOWING AND PLANTING

Meryl had problems with woodland strawberries not fruiting. She is trying 3 new vegetable varieties this year amongst the 20 being grown, including a green cherry tomato which is available in garden centres.

Alison is growing potatoes, sweet potatoes, aubergines, tomatoes and courgettes in her polytunnel - all making good progress - and is trialling growing beetroot and cucumber in large plastic bags. Onions planted last October had not done well.

Joy has had a wonderful harvest of broad beans during the last month. This year's planting includes potatoes, tomatoes and round courgettes all of which are growing well. Leek plants and haricot vert seeds had just been bought for imminent planting. Raspberries and loganberries were all doing well, however, the bad news was that mice had eaten 3 rows of peas.

Liz's broad beans were smaller than expected. Mange-tout are now in flower - she reported that outside sown peas and beans always seem to get eaten and destroyed. Six different varieties of runner beans have been sown including Scarlet Emperor (which had been excellent when grown in the U.K.), Firestorm, Moonlight and White Lady. Smooth beans Mistica and Hunter are being grown because they don't need so much water and 2 varieties of sweetcorn.

Pauline had bought her plants from the local market and these included tomatoes, beans, aubergines, peppers, chilli, sweet potatoes and courgettes. Oregano and Verbena were also being grown.

Val and John described how they had built a lasagne pit consisting of layers of compost, cardboard and soil and it had been very successful. This year tomatoes, courgettes, runner and haricot beans together with peppers and chilli are being grown. The herbs that have been planted are all doing well. Val explained that she had been concentrating on producing bedding plants for the Open Garden scheme.

Barbara is growing courgettes, tomatoes, cucumber, Turks head, Charentais melon and sweet potatoes, raspberries and gooseberries which are progressing well. Peas and haricots are looking a bit feeble.

Peter and Gilly are growing potatoes, beetroot, onions, garlic, courgettes, cucumber and tomatoes. They had a reasonable broad bean harvest, although black fly didn't help.

COMPANION PLANTING

Barbara recommended 'The Organic Gardener' - 'a great book' which details those plants which support or suppress growth. Members all discussed examples such as planting basil amongst tomatoes and sage next to carrots to repel carrot fly. A table will be compiled and circulated to members. See attached.

NON-CHEMICAL PLANT FOODS USED.

Meryl said she had good results from using pelleted manure - Green Boots from Action. Peter agreed and has been using it for 2 years. Barbara preferred comfrey and nettle juice, which was also used by John.

Ian recommended seaweed extract and also mentioned the availability of compost from a local déchèterie at Calitom in Poullignac - Ian suggested that further details of this need to be researched.

There was discussion about Miracle Grow and that it was seen to be an effective product. Other members commented that we feed our gardens far too much!

POSSIBLE SUMMER PROBLEMS FOR THE POTAGER.

With summers seeming to be increasingly warm, watering was seen to be the main problem, particularly if gardeners are not always at home to water plants. There was discussion on using watering systems with a timer, particularly linked to a water storage system if possible.

Insects can give problems - vine weevil type bugs were mentioned specifically.

Tomato mildew has been experienced previously although not yet this year.

IDEAS FOR USING PRODUCE

Barbara offered 5 recipes for using produce, which will be circulated. Members mainly made soups (eg. Beetroot and Smoked bacon, sweetcorn and red pepper), fritters (courgette), salads and chutney and pickles.

John told us that in a previous year, his Butternut Squash plant produced 39 squashes the largest weighing in at 19lbs! (Yes - that's 19 pounds!)

TO DIG OR NOT TO DIG.

Four members belonged to the 'no dig' group and were happy with the results. It was commented that to follow the no dig approach, you do need a good supply of compost to be laid on the soil.

AOB

Carelle had asked whether anyone has grown Tenderstem Broccoli. Nobody in the group had grown this variety and it was believed that it needed a cooler climate than we have here to be successful.

NEXT MEETING

To be advised to members only