

FILL 'ER UP! Fergus Dowding's hopes for a bountiful garden



Tall pea variety Alderman can be grown up a wigwam. We plant three butternut squash plants at the base in May which begin to climb the string-wound wigwam as the peas finish their job, from August to October the large leaves and hanging fruits a spectacle to behold

Hello everyone, fill 'er up! Almost every bed in your garden should now be sown with seeds and little plants showing promise of rich yields.

As always, crops sown at the right time do best and overtake crops sown too early for their own good. At last in May you can sow your French and runner beans as both days and nights should be warm enough for them. We start them indoors for greater strength and there is still a possibility of a late frost. If sowing or planting outdoors covering with fleece is a big help for beans and courgettes for a short while.

Keeping your beds busy at all times is both more productive and good for your soil, so we try at all times to have seedlings growing in module trays to transplant after the first crops finish. Most of our winter brassica crops—winter cabbage, sprouts, kale etc—will get transplanted in June and July.

The theory is so easy yet there are endless hurdles to jump in the face of a cavalcade of predators. Keeping all watered and growing robustly enough to withstand them is key.

Keeping your beds busy at all times is both more productive and good for your soil

An example is slug holes in lettuce leaves. Healthy salads are fast growing. Slugs are at all times rasping your leaves but it takes a while for them to chew all the way through and make a hole. So pick your salads regularly, twice a week is best.

Moist soil helps as it gives slugs enough to eat below ground without coming above to eat a whole row of germinating carrots.

Crops needing rain/watering most are new sowings, leaf crops and crops in flower to produce fruit—beans, peas and courgettes. The big hope is for rain at night and sun by day. And what herb makes a garden look well? A lot of thyme.