

# Home Grown Revolution

## The Specialists in Raised Vegetable Beds

### Newsletter

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*Worst vegetable related  
joke found in a cracker  
(so far...)*

What did the alien say  
to the gardener?  
Take me to your  
weeder.  
AAAAARRRGH

Hello!

I hope that you had a lovely Christmas and a good New Year's Eve. Make any resolutions? I generally resolve not to make any because I'm rubbish at sticking to them, but one thing I have resolved upon is to get my hands dirtier in 2012.

I am a great one for suggesting to Sean what I'd like to grow and eat and then more or less sitting back and letting him get on with it. I do some weeding and watering every now and again, and of course am very hands on at all the shows we do. And that's pretty much it. But not this year... We want to up our production in all our beds at home, so it's only right that I do my fair share. And actually, whilst I'm happiest in the kitchen cooking what we've grown, I'm really looking forwards to not being rubbish at this particular resolution. We shall see. !



### January jobs

1) **Get going with sowing.** Many seeds will need to be sown indoors; it may be mild now, but if the weather changes for the colder you'll be scuppered if you're planting outdoors as your seeds will rot if put into cold and wet soil.

**What to sow indoors?** You can get going with lettuces, summer cabbage, cauliflowers, broad beans, and there are some gardeners who even begin to sow this years tomato plants indoors at this time. Germination is around 13 degrees C, so a windowsill will be fine, as long as it's not above a hot radiator. The seeds need somewhere bright and cool. Don't forget to mark them well so that you can easily identify the seedlings when they start to come.

**What to sow outdoors?** Onion sets can go straight into your beds at the end of the month, as well as any early carrots. In Sean's experience you have to risk losing a sowing as sometimes it's still too damp. But it's worth a try, as it's only a few seeds, and most plants will do better when sown straight into their final position. If you haven't already, **put your polycover on**, and you can probably sow some spinach, spring onions, rocket and lettuce in-situ in it's protective environment. Probably start some beetroot off as well, worth a go.

2) **Mulch your bare beds** with some of last years (2010) leaf mould (you did make some didn't you?..)

3) Still got kale and cabbages going? Don't forget your **netting covers** to protect from pigeons.

4) **If it snows** (far more likely in Jan and Feb than any other time) then don't forget to brush off any falls from your covers, as you won't want them to stretch out of shape and sag.

5) Now is a great time to look at any **hard landscaping** needs you've got. Want to pave around the beds? Or pull up paving and put down gravel? It's easier whilst the beds are bare. It's also the traditional season for **bare-root planting of hedgerows**, so if you've been considering putting in some windbreaks because your beds are a little exposed, then now's the time. Plenty of reputable suppliers to be found in the back of good gardening mags, or via your search engine.

## Fancy a Seedy Sunday?



I was thinking about what we're going to plant this year, January and early February being the traditional time to get to grips with seeds, and came across this organisation,

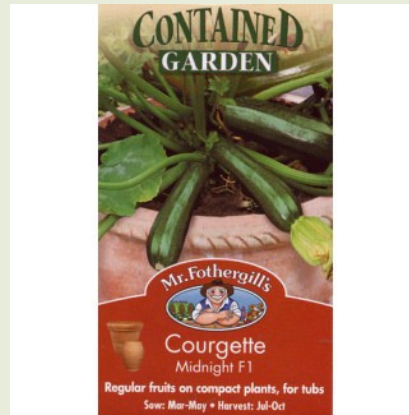
### **Seedy Sundays**

- the UK's biggest community seed swap. The flier here is for one in Bradford on Avon, but they happen all over the UK. Check out the link at the end of this article, or just type in 'seed swap 2012' and your location into your search engine to find your nearest event. They're a great idea.

Finding new and interesting vegetables is part and parcel of the fun of growing, and being able to get seeds for free, from people who know about them, who can tell you if the seed is well suited to your local growing conditions, and who can advise you in so many ways, is a fabulous resource.

But Seedy Sundays is so much more. It's also a campaign, to protect biodiversity and to protest against the increasing control of our seed supply by just a handful of large companies.

Know what an F1 seed is? You will have used them (like the rest of us) if you've bought seeds from your local garden centre, and for the most part they're very reliable. They're hybrid seeds and are the first generation of seeds created from two very specific parent plants. They generally produce bigger, faster growing, higher yielding plants, often with specific pest resistance properties. So far so good. But they're primarily created for large scale commercial



growers which means that uniformity of size and colour is often prized more highly than taste. They also tend to concentrate on a small number of varieties, with the result that many heirloom varieties are ignored, and may die out. In addition, and most importantly, the seeds these F1 plants produce are often sterile, making it essential to buy new seeds every year. Bit of a pain for us, but devastating for subsistence farmers across the world.

EU legislation makes it illegal to sell or buy seeds from varieties not officially registered (a prohibitively expensive undertaking) which means that the big seed companies have pretty much got their market sewn up (excuse the pun). But there's nothing to stop us from swapping, so if there's a Seedy Sunday happening near you, do go along and support it, and help protect and preserve the thousands of varieties of plants indigenous to the UK that otherwise are in danger of being lost. No Seedy Sunday in your area? Start one up! Their website is full of information and advice. Good luck.

Access Seedy Sundays website [HERE](#)

The Henry Doubleday Institute (GardenOrganic) also has really good information on heritage seeds, and they run a members seed swapping facility. Check them out [HERE](#)

## Shows we're at in 2012

Come and see us!

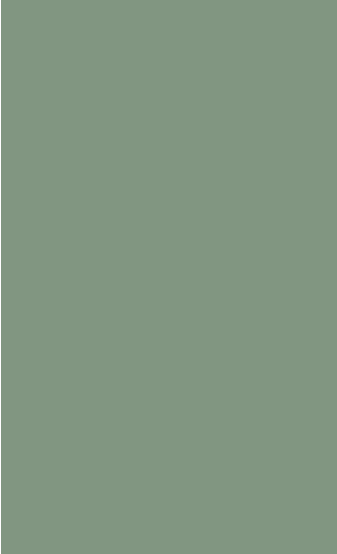
**April 20-22** Loseley Spring Gardening Show, Loseley Park, near Guildford, Surrey

**April 28-29** East Anglian Game and Country Fair, Norfolk Showground, Norwich

**May 6-7** Grow Your Own Show, Loseley Park, near Guildford, Surrey

**May 11-13** Norfolk Spring Garden Show, Norfolk Showground

**June 4** Surrey County Show, Guildford Showground



**June 15-17** The Garden Show, Stansted Park, Rowlands Castle, Hampshire

No doubt we'll be doing a few more besides these, and once they're confirmed we'll let you know where and when.

Good luck with your planting plans and your seed swapping.  
See you next month.

Very best wishes for 2012

Gaynor