

## CORONA-YOUR-OWN

Helping you to get organic growing despite the disruption  
**e-Newsletter 12      26 June 2020**

### Welcome

Aargh! Scorching again, and not a thunderstorm in sight.

### Unusual veg update

#### **Stridolo/bladder campion**

Growing well, but it apparently needs the flower buds removing to avoid the leaves becoming bitter, so this is pretty much a daily job. Will sow some more.

#### **Salsola/agretti/monk's beard**

Growing well. I've only used it raw so far – not nearly as salty as samphire, but undeniably crunchy. Apparently, Italians eat it boiled to death, with lemon juice and olive oil. As it gets older, I will try blanching it or stir frying to cook it.

#### **Minutina/Buck's horn plantain**

Growing well, but it does not like the heat and relentless sunshine, and wilts. I've covered it with old pieces of hessian during the hottest part of the day. Only eaten this raw so far. Slightly salty, crunchy. This also probably would be better cooked as it gets older.

#### **Texsel greens/garlic kale**

Grew well until it got zapped by the hot weather and bolted. Nice mild garlic and kale taste, unsurprisingly. Will sow some more.

#### **Good King Henry**

Seed disappeared down a black hole, so I've just sown some more.

#### **Raab**

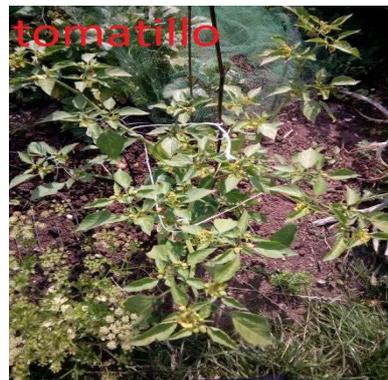
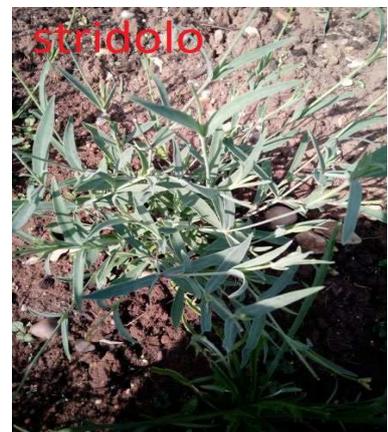
Apparently there are many varieties of this, often prefixed by the number of days from sowing to harvest. I sowed 60 day and did get usable greens within the time span, but didn't take a photo before I picked them.

#### **Crimson flowered broad beans**

These produce smaller pods than normal broad beans, but I like them better, and there is the benefit of the red flowers. They haven't liked the heat and I'm not entirely sure how many of the flowers have translated into bean pods.

#### **Tomatillo**

Growing well, lots of flowers, but no sign of fruit setting yet. Apparently, at least two plants are needed for pollination, and I have two.



## **Alpine strawberries – Yellow Wonder?**

Grown from seed many years ago – I think it was a James Wong seed called “pineapple strawberry”, but this is definitely not the white pineberry with red seeds. It is a cream/pale yellow alpine size strawberry which does taste of pineapple. Prolific, long season – keeps going until the weather gets cold.

## **Responses to Ann's multiple woes (featured in CY11)**

### **From Judy**

I don't have a solution to the pepper problem, but mine are still doing the same thing - including a rather expensive mild chilli called Trinidad Perfume that I was very keen to try. I expect Ann is well aware of this, but it might be worth repeating that F1 Hybrids don't come true from seed - they might be a roaring success or not very good at all.

Some of my brassica seedlings have taken ages to get going too, sitting looking miserable. I've been using New Horizon peat-free which has had some huge bits of grit in it (more weight and therefore more money for less cost, or is that just me being cynical?) and Durstons peat-free which comes from the milkman.

This happened both on the allotment in a polytunnel and at home in the greenhouse. In desperation my allotment buddy transplanted some of our languishing chillis into left-over ericaceous compost from her garden and they started romping away. I have bought some plain top soil and tried that neat and mixed with pure coir. Still not brilliant. Maybe the composts, in spite of being multi-purpose, are just too 'strong' for small seedlings - too much food too early? I felt somewhat comforted that it wasn't just me that had the problem.

Ref Susie's basil cuttings, I also found out that a friend has successfully used the water method with Vietnamese coriander. She has promised me a cutting and this time I'm hoping to taste it before I kill it!

As to the roots, less organic matter is supposed to be better. Could it be a trace element shortage I wonder? Sometimes I cover the drills with coir or compost, as then if the soil caps it's not a problem and it also helps to see where the rows are when you are hoeing. I can grow carrots at home but not at the allotment - mind you the badger has a good deal to do with that!  
Enjoying the newsletter!

### **From Barry**

I always used coir as seed compost, and had no problems until around half-a-dozen years ago, when exactly the same problem which Ann complained about happened. I waited and waited for my tomatoes to grow, nearly lost the season. The same thing happened the following year, and so I abandoned coir. I used to buy it from Chase in blocks, which one soaked to puff it up. I've used Melcourt ever since without problem. I accidentally discovered the reason the coir failed a couple of years ago, when I came across a conversation between some professionals who were talking about the year all their stuff failed. It turned out that coir is extremely acid, and has to be neutralised, and that this step was overlooked by the supplier. Melcourt uses wood bark, green waste, and coir. Perhaps a batch could have missed their full treatment; btw would anyone like some coir blocks?

## **From the BBC website**

### **Container enthusiasm: How to grow lockdown veg in a tiny space**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52844039>

## **POSTSCRIPT**

Feedback from our readers is important, so if you have ideas, news or tips you would like to share, please let us know.

If you have any questions related to organic growing which you think our members might be able to answer, let us know and we will try to include the questions and replies in our newsletters.

You can contact us at [enews@heog.org.uk](mailto:enews@heog.org.uk) .

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