

YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN

Having been taken to task for recommending the use of onion sets rather than growing from seed, I must admit that my aim in vegetable growing is to grow the maximum amount of high quality vegetables with the minimum possible effort. Previous attempts at rearing from seed, without starting under glass, have yielded plenty of thinnings for salads but few large sound onions. In another attempt to spread the work load I have planted potatoes with a trowel into ground which had been dug and rotavated long before it was warm enough for sowing. The saving in planting time was so considerable that if subsequent yields are normal my days of dragging in potatoes are over.

Planting out of leeks and the brassica family takes place in May and June. Leeks are just dropped into a hole made with dibber or trowel and then watered until a mud bath fit for any hippopotamus is produced. For the brassicas make a shallow trench and if the soil is dry, flood the trench, tread the soil down firmly and make holes with a dibber of such a depth that the lowest true leaves will be just above the soil surface. Finally firm the soil around the roots and water regularly for the next week. Overcome the temptation to plant out too closely; broccoli and sprouts require at least 2½ feet each way if they are not to stunt each other's growth.

Marrows, courgettes and ridge cucumbers can all be sown directly into the ground. Sow pairs of seeds at a depth of 1 inch in well composted or manured soil. Uprturned jam jars will both warm the soil and protect the seedlings from frost. If both seedlings appear remove the weaker one. Provided they receive a regular supply of water the marrow family are prolific and great fun to grow.

French and runner beans, beetroot, swede, turnips and sweet corn can all be sown directly into the ground as can further sowings of salad vegetables, carrots, broad beans and peas.