

Gardening with my Old Grand Daddy

Growing Fabulous Pole Beans by Frank Graves

Now is the time to prepare your plot for a bumper crop of pole beans, runner beans, or string beans, whatever you want to call them, in 2014. Pole beans are hungry feeders and love to grow in a deep rich soil. This is the way my old granddaddy did it, and I still do it the same way 70 years later. Dig a trench in the soil where you intend to grow the beans, make the trench a spade depth deep, line it with several sheets of news paper, cardboard bot- tom and sides, and begin to fill it with vegetable waste and garden waste.

My granddaddy would throw any thing into the trench, old boots, wellies, dead cats, rats, etc. He always told me that the best cuttings grew on the carcass of a donkey. How he knew this I was never too sure.

Next, throw in the occasional handful of lime. When the trench is full pull back the soil and dig in your posts. When the soil warms up plant your beans; one to the north, one to the south, one to the east, and one to the west.

As your crop grows keep the soil moist but not wet. When the plants begin to flower spray the foliage top to bot- tom, this will help to prevent blossom drop. Throw a hand- ful of lime into your watering can once in a while. Keep harvesting the plants as needed and you should have beans floor to ceiling. Now you have it as per my old Granddaddy, God bless him!

Growing Carrots by Frank Graves

A question was raised on the techniques of growing carrots, which is an easy crop to grow providing certain precau- tions are taken. I will explain how I grow them as my old granddaddy trained me.

Carrots do not like stony or heavy clay soils, although they do grow well in containers.

The best time to sow is be- tween March and July. Avoid sowing too early, while the soil is below 45o F or if conditions are very wet; the seed will just rot or germination will be poor. Later sowings have a habit of catching up anyway.

Carrots are not hungry feeders. I have found it best if you sow them in a bed which had spuds or brassicas the previous year. If the soil is too rich you will have forking and top growth and poor quality carrots,

Rake the bed down to a fine filth as possible. At this point my old granddaddy would scatter wood ash over the bed. However in the absence of wood ash I use sulphate of potash for root growth.

I like to sow in stations, 3 seeds every 3 inches apart, the width of 3 fingers. Make the drills half inch deep and line the drill with a sprinkling of leaf mould. In dry weather water the base of the drill prior to sowing and cover the seeds with dry soil.

Cover early sowings with some protection like remay cloth to maintain a slightly warmer temperature. The remay can stay in place for the life of the crop to protect it from carrot rust fly.

Sow as thinly as possible to avoid the need for thinning out later on as the thinning could attract carrot rust fly. If thinning is required thin to the width of 3 closed fingers. Do this early in the morning or in the cool of the evening to discourage the carrot rust fly and

aphids. At the same time remove any weeds, water the row, and replace the remay cloth. Dispose any remnants from the crop well away from the rows. Carrots are very easy to care for, just maintain even watering during dry periods because if the roots get dry and then suddenly have a great infusion of water they may split and be susceptible to diseases.

Carrots do grow well in containers. For best results seeds should be sown thinly to allow plants to develop. As the plants grow thin them and use the young carrots in salads or eat them raw.

Maintain even watering throughout the life of the crop and you should have fresh carrots through out the season.

Gardening with my old Grand Daddy

by Frank Graves

At this time of year my thoughts often return to the war time years I spent working with my dear old Grand Daddy. I must have been 8 years old in 1942 when I was recruited to his allotment, and I worked with him and the other 'allotmentees' throughout my younger days.

On a typical Saturday and Sunday morning, after breakfast, we would tie garden forks, hoes, and spades to the cross bars on our bikes, (it al- ways reminded me of the knights of old) and start the long 6 mile trip to the plot. On occasion there would be a sack of horse manure picked up at the coal yard close by, where my Grand Daddy would rent a horse and dray for a couple of days. After our long bike ride to the allotment one of my first duties was to build a fire, put the billy (metal tea pot) on and make a cup of well earned tea. In the mean time Grand Daddy would throw a piece of cast iron onto the hottest part of the fire, and throw a shovelful of leaf mould on it to sterilize. He would use this for seedlings or cuttings the following day, after the contents had cooled down. I tried this once myself and, since the city had banned open fires, I used the oven. Needless to say it didn't work very well, stunk up the house for a whole week, and Anne was not happy! My Grand Daddy liked to invite his friends to share a cup of tea , and chew the fat as he used to say. Perhaps that's why I always invite people to the garden for tea as well. When the tea was ready, it was my job to go and fetch his friends, and their biscuits. I remember them well and some of the conversations.

There were Paddy, Taffy, and Knobby Clarke. God have mercy on the first male born to a Clark family, who must go through life with the nickname of Knobby. I never did know his first name, but I do remember one very interesting conversation around a couple cups of tea.

A new product had been introduced by the government of that day, I believe it was Sulphate of Ammonia. It was a wartime invention produced to increase productivity in the agriculture and gardening world. It was up to the farmers and gardeners to stave off starvation by increasing production in England.

Taffy was quite proud that someone had nominated him to try this new nitrogen on his plants. He in- tended to try it on his tomatoes, much to the displeasure of the other two gardeners. They were quite sure the stuff would kill the soil and the plants. It was supposed to add nitrogen and other good stuff, to which my Old Grand Dad had an answer he felt would save the government money. In his opinion all we had to do to add

nitrogen, was to piss on them. Grand Daddy believed that chemicals would never build good productive soil, and of course the years and science have proved him right. In some respects I believe that this was my first introduction to organic gardening, although at the time we never knew of the word.