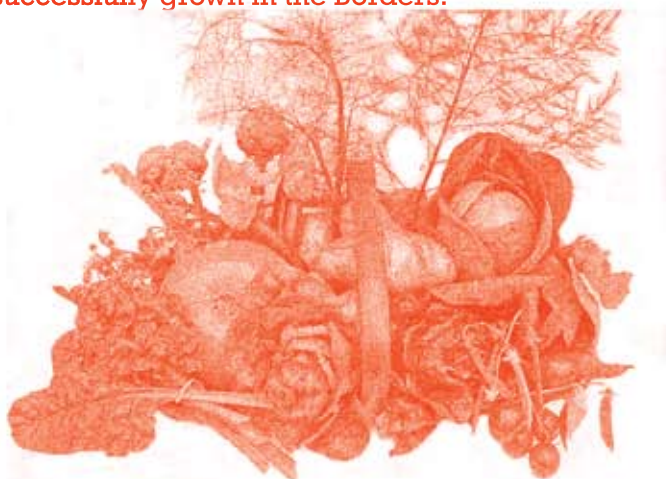


In the Borders the traditional time for putting out all the tender stuff has been the Hawick Common Riding weekend. What global warming is doing to this regime is not clear: some years we can now get away with advancing the planting by a week or even two but very often the weather is cold and wet and you will lose fewer plants if you wait until it improves. Always be guided by the weather rather than the calendar. All the tender stuff can be grown, all the time, in a greenhouse or polytunnel. If you garden at high altitudes or your garden is very windswept this might be a safer option. You will also be able to keep them cropping longer in the Autumn. In any case be prepared to give these vegetables extra protection from cold and wind when newly planted. Fleece or Enviromesh draped over cloche hoops are the easiest method. With just a little extra care all these delicious vegetables can be successfully grown in the Borders.

Enjoy!



To see examples of all these techniques and a wide range of organically grown plants visit

#### **the ASK Organic Garden**

a half acre garden within Woodside Walled Garden, situated 4 miles north of Jedburgh, east of the A68 on the B6400.

The ASK Organic Garden is open 7 days a week March to October 10am to 5pm. Someone from ASK is usually on hand to answer questions on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays between 11am and 4pm.

Produced for the ASK Organic Garden Club by ASK Organic, Wolfhopelee, Bonchester Bridge, Hawick. TD9 9TP. Telephone 01450 860291 and 860778. email [da@askorganic.co.uk](mailto:da@askorganic.co.uk).

[www.askorganic.co.uk](http://www.askorganic.co.uk)

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# HOME GROWN:

*the organic way*



## Planting Tender Veg

As the risk of late frosts recedes, we can now safely plant out our more delicate vegetables. The plants may be ones you have bought or swapped or grown yourself in a greenhouse. All these varieties need to grow fast to produce a crop in our short summer so they should be grown on a good bed of compost or muck.



## **COURGETTES AND SQUASHES**

These do take up space, certainly 1m<sup>2</sup> so usually we grow them individually which makes it easy to grow them in a large container or raised bed. Alternatively, if you have a lot of space and enjoy a courgette glut or want plenty of squashes to store for the winter, plant them in a row 1m wide and of whatever length you want, remembering to plant them 1m apart. Dig a trench 2 spits deep [2 spades down], piling the soil to one side. Courgettes like to grow on a 'hot bed', providing extra warmth for the roots. This is best achieved by putting a spadeful of fresh horse muck in the trench or planting hole. Failing that, fill with a mix of roughish compost and fresh grass clippings. (Grass clippings give off lots of heat). Place all the soil on top of this, so you have a small mound, or ridge in the case of a row. Level out the top to a saucer shape. You then want to cover the mound with black plastic, cutting a square at the top where you can plant the courgette. The plastic eliminates weeds and keeps the moisture in. This is important as courgettes need a lot of water. Soak the newly planted courgette and, if possible, cover the plant with 2 cloche hoops covered by Enviromesh. This will give the young plants some protection and help them to grow more quickly. Remove the Enviromesh once the weather turns warmer.

Squashes do not need a hotbed but try to take up even more space. Nevertheless they will need compost or muck digging into the soil and they, too, need lots of watering.

## **DWARF FRENCH BEANS**

They are a rewarding crop that will fit any space, including pots. You do get best results when the plants are grown under protection since the pods tend to curl round when they are cold. For good cropping, soil should be enriched with good home made compost, dug in at the rate of 1 spadeful per metre. To cut down on weeding and conserve moisture you should have a mulch of some kind, either lay black plastic before planting and cut holes for each bean or spread a layer of grass clippings once planted, making sure the fresh grass does not touch the stems which it could burn. Plant the beans and provide support for them, either branches like short Christmas tree fans or a low frame supporting square net with a wide enough mesh to let your hand through for harvesting.

## **CLIMBING FRENCH BEANS AND RUNNERS**

These beans are a little hardier and will crop more reliably in a poor summer than French Beans do outside. They can be supported in a number of ways - see the methods used in the Organic Garden - and remember the soil should have compost dug in and does need a mulch as it'll be impossible to weed inside the frames once the plants are growing strongly.

## **TOMATOES**

These can be planted outside provided your garden isn't higher than 500'. Otherwise, in a greenhouse or on a window sill. Many people use growbags which will provide enough nutrients to take the plants through to the flowering stage. If using a growbag, be sure the moisture is getting everywhere in the bag, as your plants could suffer from blossom end rot if the roots are at all dry. Otherwise use a mix in the open ground of 1 part home made compost: 2 parts soil, digging a bed to accomplish this. In a raised bed or container, the mix should be: 1 part soil: 2 parts compost. In all cases, even with bush tomatoes, you will need a wall, strings, sticks or frame to support the growing plant. Your plant will grow more quickly in the early stages if covered with Enviromesh overnight, and it will need daily watering. On non bush tomatoes be careful to look out for side shoots and nip them out.

If using a Growbag, be prepared to give the tomatoes lots of liquid feed once fruits start to set. Those grown in pots or containers will also need feed once the first truss has set.

## **CUCUMBERS**

They need less direct sun than tomatoes and need more humidity, so a partially shaded site is best though they must be kept warm; they are very susceptible to stem rots if they get cold. They too need a lot of feed and watering.

## **SWEET CORN**

It produces cobs that are delicious harvested fresh. Seedlings can now be planted out, 60cm apart in all directions, and they are best planted in blocks to aid pollination. Good compost should be dug in at the rate of 1 barrowful per 10<sup>2</sup>m. As with all these plants, a mulch will conserve moisture and eliminate weeding.