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OBSERVER ORGANIC ALLOTMENT BLOG



Crop lifting

Caroline Foley offers expert advice on how to make the most of mid summer



There is still time to plant peas. It's mid June and mid summer, and our first crops are being harvested, so we have asked allotment writer [Caroline Foley](#), to share some more of her expert tips on 'minding the gaps'. Now over to Caroline:

'In June usually a few patches of bare soil appear where crops have been harvested and others between slow growing vegetables. Take advantage of these gaps with a spot of 'catch cropping'. When you have dug up your 'first early' potatoes this month, there will be room for a crop of quick growing [peas](#) like 'Early Onward' or 'Kelvedon Wonder' to harvest in September. Protect against mice, as they like to run away with the seeds, and pigeons, as they pull young plants straight out of the ground.'

'[Carrots](#) 'Early Nantes' and 'Amsterdam Forcing' are great for successional sowing. You will get 'baby' carrots in 10 weeks. As the dreaded carrot fly always travels low and in straight lines so you can coolly outwit it by erecting a barrier about 75cm (2ft 6ins) high around the carrot patch.'

'Another quick gap filler is 'baby' beet (8 - 10 weeks). Try 'Pronto' and 'Kestrel' F1. There is time for another crop of dwarf French beans (10 - 12 weeks). Lettuces enjoy growing under the light shade cast by sweet corn in summer.'

'If you are quick, you can get in another crop of rocket (6 weeks). Stop in August as it bolts in the heat. Try 'Sprint!'

'I usually grow cut-and-come-again salad mixes in containers with new compost. This cuts out any danger of finding weeds in your salad. An additional bonus is that you can defeat lurking slugs and snails by greasing the outside of the container with Vaseline. A smear of Vicks on the rim is the final touch to put them off completely.'

Our thanks to Caroline, and if anyone else has any news, advice, thoughts, photos, to share, we would be very happy to post them on the blog. Anyone can email me at

allan.jenkins@observer.co.uk...

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15 June 2007 4:50PM

Can I sow climbing french again. Two attempts have failed - Cobra and another variety. I wonder whether a squirrel may be responsible.

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**dalesfire**

18 June 2007 7:58AM

I sow all my french and runner beans in large pots in the greenhouse at home after many failures outdoors. Living in the north it's also a way of getting a head start - the ground is much too cold in early April. Once they've germinated they go into the cold frame and then after the last frost I divide them up and plant them out. If you have to sow seeds straight in the ground I've found putting them in individually dibbed holes is safer than digging out a trench, the mice seem to give up hunting for them!

[Recommend \(0\)](#)[Responses \(0\)](#)[Report](#)[Share](#)**IanTucker**

19 June 2007 5:42PM

'Cobra' should be fine to sow now. If you sow the seed this month (no later), the beans will be ready by October. If nothing has come up at all, it could be because you are sowing too deep (two and a half times the size of the seed is usually about right) or because the seed is no longer viable. The most likely cause though is that mice are making off with the seeds. If you don't fancy laying traps, try starting the seed off at home as the previous reader suggests. To save time, you could buy one of the small ready-to-grow-on plants to be found in garden centres and markets, though you are likely to find they are selling the dwarf bush types rather than the good old-fashioned climbers -

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Caroline Foley

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