

Village Veg Project Questions and Answers generated via the on-line forum

Question 1

My Peach tree has suffered every year for 4/5 years leaf tree curl. I have bought some Bordeaux Powder. The buds are just appearing now; can I safely get away with spraying the tree?

Answers

1. I would think that by the time of bud formation it is too late for the copper wash to be effective. It should be applied several times through the winter. Sorry.
2. My advice would be that the fungal disease Taphrina is related to one that infects the betula genus species as well as your particular fruit tree and that spraying now is too late as the active ingredients are meant to work before any leaves or buds start to form. Judging by our recent mild spring, this may well be too late.

Question 2

Realistically, how many seed potatoes should go in the black tubs we were given? Should holes be put the tub for drainage?

Answers

1. 1 potato per pot and yes holes needed for drainage.
As the potatoes are a main crop and the soil has warmed up it would be better to plant straight in the ground now. These are really best used for an early crop
2. I'd drill drainage holes in the tub, several around 7mm diameter would do. And one spud per tub.
3. Just one per tub, I would put a couple of small holes in, and don't let the compost dry out.

Question 3

How tall do my runner bean seedlings need to be before I plant them out into the ground?

Answers

1. I would not focus on how tall they are but whether they will be killed by a frost. Personally, I would look out for the forecast from 3rd week of May and if no cold nights are expected within a few days plant them out. Many people will however have planted out their runner beans now and are likely to get away with it. An alternative is to plant out now if the plants have got leggy, but to sow another runner bean seed underneath ready to take over if the plants are killed by frost.
2. It's not down to how tall but weather conditions as they do not like frost.

3. No fixed rule, they need to be strong and healthy, especially as slugs and snails love them. It's still quite early to plant them out and they aren't frost-hardy so if the weather gets cold you may need frost protection.
4. From about 6 to 9 inches is fine, but more important is the weather, don't put them outside until all danger of frost has gone. They could of course go into a cold frame or other such protection if they are getting a bit tall in the greenhouse.
5. Once 2 proper leaves are fully opened they are big enough and should be 10 to 15 cm approx. It is a bit too early to put them outside unless you can cover them over at night if the temperature is forecast below 5 centigrade.
6. I would say as soon as possible in this current weather. You ideally want a plant which is approximately 4-6 inches in height with a good healthy root system.

Runner beans are a very hungry and thirsty plant. They need lots of organic matter incorporated into the soil prior to planting and need lots of moisture in the soil, plus a good sturdy support system to climb up.

Question 4

Why do my potatoes have little spots on them. They were grown in tubs.

Answers

1. Is it potato scab? Or is it just like little spots with no scab ? If it's potato scab see below....

To control common scab, do not allow the soil to become dry during tuber development. Raise organic matter levels to improve water retention. Water the developing crop if necessary, starting two to three weeks after plants emerge and continuing for about four weeks and applying 20 litres per sq m (four gallons per sq yd). Common scab is worse on alkaline soil, so liming the soil to prevent club root of brassicas will predispose to common scab in potatoes. So apply lime after the potato course of the rotation.

Choose resistant cultivars: Accent, Arran Pilot, Juliette, Golden Wonder, King Edward, Pentland Crown and Pentland Javelin show some resistance to common scab. Desiree, Hermes, King Edward, Pixie and Sante show some resistance to powdery scab.

However, if it's tiny spots it could be lenticels. These are breathing pores on the stem and as the potato is a stem tuber it would fit.

2. It is most likely to be scab which is only skin deep and not harmful to eat. Light dry soil or too much lime in the soil causes it.