

ANDREW TOKELY

From previous page

LEEKs – what the judge is looking for

With **pot leeks** the Judge is looking for firm, solid heavy leeks with unbroken, clean skins that show no blemishes and the blanch should be no greater than 15cm (6in) to the tight button. The leeks must be of a uniform size and the foliage clean with no sign of disease or damage.

Blanched leeks must be of a good uniform length and the blanched barrel stems must be clean straight and parallel, not bent. The skins should be smooth and not ribbed and the foliage clean and fresh with no signs of pest or disease damage.

The first thing the judge usually checks for is how firm and solid the blanched barrels are, making sure they are of good condition. An

easy test is to press with your thumb at the point where the blanch ends and the foliage starts (the tight button). It should be solid and firm and not spongy.

Why bother checking if your leeks look spectacular? Well rest assured the judge always does, and so should you, especially if you want another prize card or trophy to add to your collection.

RHS points for Blanched leeks

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Condition | 6 points |
| Size & shape | 6 points |
| Colour | 3 points |
| Uniformity | 5 points |
| Total | 20 points |

RHS points for Pot Leeks

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Condition | 6 points |
| Size & shape | 6 points |
| Colour/blanch | 3 points |
| Uniformity | 5 points |
| Total | 20 points |

ANDREW'S CHOICE OF LEEKS

■ **From seed** **Mammoth Blanched** Robinson's **Mammoth Pot Leek** Robinson's

■ **From pips (bulbils)** **Blanched Leek Welsh Seedling (P Holden selection)** Medwyn's **Blanched Leek Welsh Seedling Ivor Mace strain** Ivor Mace, 2 Mace Lane, Ynyswen, Treorchy Rhondda CF42 6DS, tel 01443 775531.

Pot Leek The Cumbrian Medwyn's **Other strains of pips** are often listed mail order in gardening magazines from November onwards in.

■ **Contact Robinson's and Medwyn's – page 68**

■ *Next month: Showing shallots.*

The first UK allotment trial of **Effective Micro-organisms**



*with
Andrew
Seall*

Roots of success

The first success of the trial, in proving that EM – or 'effective micro-organisms' – really does improve root growth and therefore the plant, has been seen on my EM trial plot. Plants that would normally be about 1m (3ft) tall are well over 1.8m (6ft) and flowering abundantly. The stems are sturdy and well formed with no signs of bolting. All in all they are fantastic specimens compared to what we would normally expect. Trouble is – they are giant weeds, almost obscuring the view of my shed.

It all started back in the autumn. I had some EM left over in the sprayer and, rather than flush it down the drain, I sprayed it on an area of the verge adjacent to the allotment. The cow parsley – keck, as we call it – further down the lane is normal size, as it has been for years, but it has gone mad where I sprayed the dregs. So although I may not want giant cow parsley, I can't escape the fact that EM has made a big difference, albeit accidentally.

Let me just remind you of what I intended to do with this trial. I wanted to see if the claims made for EM are true. One claim is that it makes plants grow more vigorously and the cow parsley is the first example of that claim being true. Obviously the EM can't distinguish between plants I do and don't want to grow, so I must be more careful in future, but if these results are to be seen with the vegetables, wow, we are in for some surprises.

Effective micro-organisms, EM for short, is a natural, organic plant food and soil improver, that's applied to the ground by watering

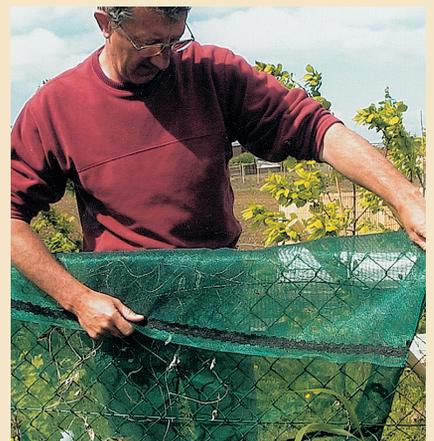
can or sprayer several times a year. The liquid maximises the benefits of organisms and wakes up those already in the soil.

The mixture contains Photosynthetic bacteria, which contribute to a better use of photosynthesis and act as nitrogen binders; lactic acid bacteria that suppress harmful micro-organisms and encourage breakdown of organic substances; actinomycetes, yeasts and fungi.

The symbiotic and synergetic nature of EM is what is claimed makes the difference. The liquid can be made at home very easily and is safe for children, pets and wildlife.

Further signs of EM success can be seen in the amazing root systems of the treated runner beans, which my wife Carol sowed in Rootainers. We've often started them this way, but they have never before grown so vigorously. Carol mixed a cap full of EM into the watering can when watering them.

And the broad beans, too, where treated with EM, clearly show an increase in root mass and



Securing the windbreak fabric