

The FIRST UK allotment trial of Effective Micro-organisms

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EM... what on earth?



Healthier plants, bigger yields and all by harnessing natural bacteria. That's the claim, but will it work? Andrew Seall intends to find out in this new series.

It is a tad cold on my allotment at the moment, and probably is on yours as well, but at least I can comfort myself in the knowledge that many summer pests are being killed off. I am up here to start to plan where to feed my soil with EM without promoting too many pests and weeds along the way.

'EM...what's that?' I hear you say. It stands for *effective micro-organisms* and is used all over the rest of the world, with claims of great beneficial effects upon plants and vegetable growth and cropping. All over



PICTURES: ANDREW SEALL

the world, that is, except in the UK, and so this treatment of the soil with EM – and the results – are what I am going to be writing about for the next 12 months. Let's just see if it can give us the excellent results seen elsewhere.

All we need know at the moment is that EM is a liquid mixture of safe, natural bacteria with their own support systems designed to promote vigorous root growth. I will give you more details next month when I have had time to get my head around it. The trials I am going to run will concentrate on the claims made for EM, and not on the cropping levels this year compared to last because they can vary every year depending upon the weather.

Why am I doing this and not a university or horticultural college? To put it simply, I am going to publish the results whatever they are, good or bad, because I am not indebted to a research grant. The only place you will find the first reported results will be here in *KG*.

My experience in such matters is not extensive or

The plot before Andrew started clearing it.

Right: Getting to grips with a mass of roots.



academic, I think it is best described as the common sense school of thought. I am an independent designer of working micro bacteria and flora environments in water, and these trials will enable me to transfer some of my skills to land-based designs.

I am going to adopt basic scientific criteria of checks and balances to give some credibility to the results, but I am not going to get hung up about them. I want to view things from a practical perspective, because I hope the result of all this work will be the addition of another weapon in our growing armoury of soil and plant enhancers. Let's face it we all want to get more for less, and if harnessing nature will help us towards that goal, I think it can only be a good thing.

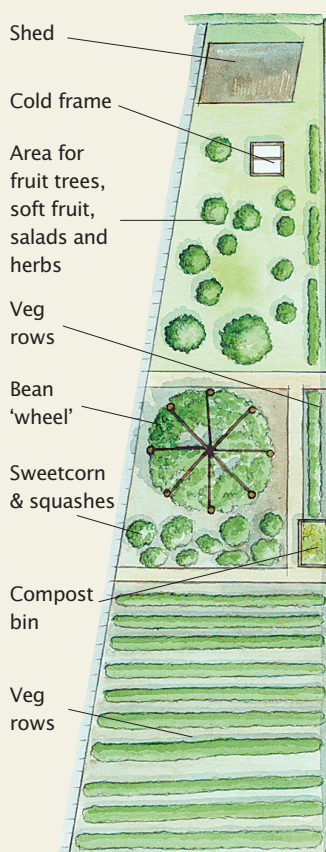
One of the 'checks and

balances' growing trials, to act as a yard stick for the claims of EM, will be using what I call traditional manuring methods. I know there are some drawbacks to manure and you do have to be a bit careful, but you have to be careful and exercise your own judgement on everything you do on the allotment.

So I am not going into this particular trial with preconceived ideas. I am going to deal with issues as they arise and get advice when needed. Anyway, one thing I have already exercised my judgement on is that I will not be using any chemicals as a comparison growing trial. All growth

promoters, pest controls and disease limiters will be what I describe as 'organic' simply because I can't think of a better catch-all word to use. Some of my

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Layout of the plot.

ROBIN GRIGGS