

## The FIRST UK allotment trial of Effective Micro-organisms

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# Going like a rocket

*Andrew Seall's army of microscopic helpers has started earning its keep on the EM trials plot.*



**E**vents seem to be conspiring to keep me off the allotment. The latest thing is I am now a burglary statistic – the thieves got away with my rotavator, amongst other things. So now I have got to play catch-up, and the first thing to do is to put up 'walls' to provide north-wind protection and, hopefully, a sun trap for my soft fruit bushes that looked to have come through the winter well.

Because I don't go to the allotment every day, some of my plant husbandry has to take on a semi-permanent look, like these soft fruit 'walls'. My soft fruit consists of gooseberry, redcurrant, blackcurrant and blackberry, in pairs, one of each treated with EM and the other untreated, so I can compare results. The same goes for two damsons. I have also treated the apple tree with EM, which should help it get established and fruiting early.

I am going to underplant the fruit trees and standards with salads next month. The planting I have done so far is looking good, lettuce and the like. So, as promised last month, here is my planting list to date. Carol, a dab hand in the greenhouse, has raised all the seedlings used so far: runner bean 'Scarlet Emperor', French bean 'Blue Lake', dwarf French bean 'Tendergreen', red cabbage 'Huzaro F1', squash 'Butternut',



**Treated with EM in November, the rocket powered ahead.**

broad beans 'Bunyards Exhibition', carrot 'Chantenay Red Cored 2', celery 'Giant Pascal', sweetcorn 'Mini Pop F1'.

All Carol's seedlings are grown in Jiffy pots because they are easier to carry over to the plot, their roots are more protected, especially earlier in the year, and there is no root disturbance when planting out.

Ron, my allotment neighbour, got my seed potatoes and some other vegetables for me, so when I prepared the ground with a good feed of muck I sprayed some areas with EM. The reason I did this was because EM is not a manure substitute, it is the means to get more out of your manure feed. Bulking up the soil with food for the plants is good only if the food can be transferred from the source to the plant roots. If the soil microbial structure is weak, then no matter how much nutrient mass you add the benefit to the plant will be disproportionate to the effort you have put in. EM is the transport mechanism to get the nutrient from its source directly to the roots.

I think the first results of the EM trial are very good. The garlic I planted on October 11, as shown in the pictures, are powering up, even though the ones in the terracotta



**Left: Untreated garlic and (below) treated garlic, planted at the same time.**



PICTURES: ANDREW SEALL

planted the garlic all from the same bulbs.

The second good results could be the rocket, which was sprayed with EM in November. Just look at these healthy plants – last year's were so puny compared to these – and they tasted as good as they looked, because soon after the picture was taken they were lunch. The wet warmish weather may have been a factor, but we had similar weather here last year, so I am encouraged by what I have seen so far using EM.

pot are showing some frost damage on the leaf. These were treated with EM and are way ahead of those in the black plastic pots. The question is why. Well, it must be the nutrient availability, because the soil and compost mix is the same and the location almost identical, only the pots are different, and that was because they were just there in front of me when I

But, there is a long way to go and I have the patience to wait until the end and see what the overall outcome is. I also want to see what effect EM has upon the companion planting, which I think is very important for good cropping. I sprayed EM in March and it is supposed to take effect in three months, so I will report back next month.

Bye for now.

Andrew

## A quick guide to EM

- EM stands for 'effective micro-organisms' and is a totally natural organic liquid feed, adding beneficial organisms to the soil.
- EM increases the micro-flora and fauna in the soil, which then makes more nutrient available to be taken up, which in turn makes the plants stronger and encourages better root development.
- More roots mean more food going into the plant, and that means a stronger, bigger plant.
- EM helps us get the best out of the manure and compost that we dress the ground with.
- You can make your own EM. A starter kit (fermenter and ingredients) are available to KG readers at the special price of **£29.99** inc p&p to anywhere on the UK mainland, saving £4.95 (regular price with p&p £34.94). Send a cheque, payable to Pillerton Designs, to: Pillerton Designs Ltd, PO BOX 6959, Wellingborough, NN29 7WY. Or visit [www.gardenyogurt.co.uk](http://www.gardenyogurt.co.uk)

