**Notes of Handy tips from John Branham's talk to Aston Clinton, Buckland & Drayton Beauchamp Horticultural Society on 10th April 2013**

**Seeds**:

Planting

Use 'plug trays' or small seed trays (4 fit a standard try) and stagger planting for succession of crops.

Standard compost often has lumps in it so sieve before filling trays (No need for special equipment: John uses blue mushroom trays cadged from the market)

Don't press the compost down, it compacts it. Plant seeds on top & sieve a little more compost to cover. Use vermiculite on top of compost for parsley, celeriac, tomatoes. Do not water from the top: stand tray in water until it permeates through compost to top & then remove.

Shelf-life of untreated seeds up to 5 years, treated seeds only 1-2.

Potting on

The type of 'plug' tray with a hole at the bottom makes it easier to pot on & doesn't wreck the tray or disturb the seedling. Only problem is they don't fit into normal seed or watering trays.

Don't 'over-pot (i.e. don't use large pot for small seedling).

John uses different coloured pots for different varieties of one veg - therefore only needs one label for each colour.

Pot on when seedling has two leaves.

Sow peas three diagonally across a square pot, makes it easy to plant out close together in a straight line.

Planting out

Enviromesh will protect crops from most pests but do not allow it to touch the plant. Use 'fleece' to protect from frost but not as a permanent fixture.

**Miscellaneous**

Tomatoes - If you grow on your tomatoes in a pot with soil-based compost, do not transfer them to a Growbag containing a large percentage of peat as they will not thrive. Always use the medium they are used to growing in.

If you take the side shoots from a tomato plant & put them in water they will root. The resulting plants will have trusses lower down the stem so are suitable for smaller greenhouses. John's favourites are Bambino and Shirley.

Beans - Broad beans will cross-pollinate. French beans will not.

Plant runner beans with the two 'nobs' downwards (see diagram). They will cross pollinate.

Potatoes - take the crown & side shoots out, leaving only one or two to grow. This will give a better crop. John's favourites are Lady Christl (Early) and Kestrel (Second Early).

Leeks - Rust, if spotted early enough, can be contained by smearing the spot with vaseline.

AE 11/4/13