

What's for Dinner?
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French fillet beans, Nickel and Soleil varieties, produce abundantly in my *potager* every year; a happy ending in a vegetable garden that has its share of tragedies. So that's what's for dinner. Nothing pleases me more than eating straight from the garden. However, I'm temperamentally suited to what is easy. So the intense effort to produce produce reliably often results in successes and failures in equal measure. It's an annual experiment with many uncontrolled variables.

Successes. Vegetables that graced my table early this season were lettuces (Blushed Butter, Little Gem, Red Sails), chard (Bright Lights), peapods (Oregon Sugar Pod II), and spinach (Olympia). All except the chard were still producing until two weeks ago from my initial April 18th planting. Credit a cool, cloudy, wet spring for that. Right now I could make a second planting of these for fall and winter grazing if I wanted to water them. Spinach's natural proclivity is to grow in fall and winter anyway, so why not go with that? Broccoli varieties Umpqua and Belstar look pickable and yummy right now. Brassicas of all sorts thrive in our maritime climate. However, my brussel sprouts (var. Franklin) and cabbage varieties Derby Day and Stein's Late Flat Dutch still have not headed up. My attitude is to have patients and blame the weather. Beets and carrots look and taste fine this year.

On the down side, only an Indian Summer will ripen even my cherry tomatoes this year. Last year plenty of all varieties ripened, enough to freeze several quarts for winter soup and sauce. Cucumber variety Fountain that usually does well flower but set no fruit. My planting of Waltham butternut squash performs likewise. A few Cinderella pumpkins did OK but not like 2008 when they were abundant. Heat-lovers need lots of special assistance to do well reliably in our climate. Mine get no such treatment, so some years my yearning for a vine ripe tomato never gets satisfied. Finally, an unidentified something munched my Super Sugar snap peas to the ground this year and last. Bummer.

I thought if I created a vegetable garden, beautiful in the French style, where I could sit under an arbor, in a loveseat, with an artisan fence surrounding vegetables mixed with flowers for cutting that every season would be successful. And it is.