

Terry's Sweet Pea Advice



Despite repeatedly emphasising that 'he is not an expert' Terry Miller demonstrated his gardening expertise three times one Sunday afternoon in early October.

With an audience of five per session, Terry demonstrated his technique of sowing sweet peas and talked through the key things to remember in order to successfully grow early blooms worthy of showing or cutting for the home.

Terry's tips

Sowing

1. Use general garden compost – water well the day before, it should be chunky composition.
2. Pots – Terry uses large black plastic bags, from Eagle Sweet Peas, for one seed each, pots can be used, sow more than one seed in larger pots.
3. Label – make sure to date and identify the flower.
4. Seeds – Terry orders from either Roger Parsons or Eagle Sweet Peas - no need to chit or soak.
5. Fragrance – Parsons and Eagle seeds are identified by number from non-fragrant to very fragrant.
6. Use your finger as a dibber – about to knuckle depth – (Terry has short fingers). Cover each seed with a fine layer of compost.
7. For early flowering do not sow later than October 9th.
8. Cover pots with newspaper and put in cold greenhouse or equivalent. **DO NOT MOVE THE PAPER, EVEN TO PEEK, FOR TWO WEEKS.**
9. Once the green shoots are showing remove the paper and keep pots in a cold light place.
10. There may be no need to water until end of March but this will depend on how warm the weather is. The soil may be a bit dry on top but it's more important to keep the lower roots moist.
11. Plant out end of March

Growing On

1. Once two sets of leaves have grown (6-8 weeks), pinch out the top. This will lead to two laterals. For showing you allow the strongest to grow, if cutting let both grow. It is your choice whether to cut back further laterals – depends on space etc.
2. Terry uses 8 ft canes and allows the plants to grow up to the top. Can consider layering (once plants get to the top they are undone from the cane and laid down along the ground to grow laterals upwards again).
3. Pick flowers regularly throughout the season – otherwise you will get seeds not flowers...

