

The Alternative Kitchen Garden

Episode 69 transcript



Hello, and welcome to episode 69 of the Alternative Kitchen Garden. I'm Emma, and today I am outside in the Grow Dome – we're going to have a bit of a catch up episode about what's going on in here and outside in the garden. It was raining last night, and in fact it was a bit showery this morning, and it's much cooler. Today is the first day in quite a long time that none of the vents on the Grow Dome are open, the sun hasn't come out enough to heat it up particularly in here. It's a nice comfortable temperature for me, certainly.

My new pond plants arrived, maybe a week ago now, and they're settling in nicely and seem to be showing signs of growing. The pond water is still a bit murky though. The nectarine tree is looking very good, the nectarines are still swelling nicely, so that looks good.

Mostly, though, the Grow Dome has been taken over by tomatoes – it's officially The Year of the Tomato in here, which was somewhat unplanned, but I'm taking part in a couple of experiments with tomatoes so we've got far too many tomatoes growing in here. I've got some little bush cherry tomatoes, that make small plants. I've got two of those – that's Whippersnapper and Gartenperle. Gartenperle I've grown before; Whippersnapper is a new one on me. And they're interspersed with marigolds to keep the whitefly away.

In the main bed I've got cordon tomatoes, for the first time ever. I used to think that cordon tomatoes would be too much effort, what with all the training and the side shooting and stuff like that. But when I did my first lot of side shooting, a week or so ago, I thought it was pretty easy. But then I spent another day training them and tying them in and cutting off some side shoots that had very much overgrown and it was very hot in here and that wasn't as much fun at all. But they are doing very nicely and the flowers are opening on those. The cherry tomatoes are starting to fruit now, they're older plants, but these cordon tomatoes are just starting to flower so I've got some hope for those fruiting very soon.

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I've got one calabrese plant left, of the three. The first one actually bolted, and got fed to the chickens, and at that point I harvested the second one. It wasn't very big, so we need to do some work on our calabrese growing skills here, and the third one isn't very big either, but it was very tasty – so not bad for a first effort.

Actually, now that I say that, I have a first tomato swelling on one of the cordon plants. And that's a Yellow Submarine. I can't remember whether that's the heritage variety or the modern variety, but certainly it seems to be the first to fruit.

I've got a patch of carrots that are doing very nicely there. We've pulled up a few of those and had some baby carrots, thinning them out a bit so the rest get a bit bigger, and some pepper plants growing reasonably well. There's a Dedo de Mocha at the back there, which is a sweet chilli pepper – so it's in the chilli family but it's not hot – and that's just starting to fruit now, I can see. And the lettuce are doing very well as well.

I have had a lot of problems with slugs, in the last couple of weeks when it has been wet. The slugs have discovered the Grow Dome, so unfortunately I've had to resort to my environmentally-friendly slug pellets. They're not the evil chemical ones, but they're still a last resort. They seem to be doing their job and protecting everything now from the slugs.

The goldenberries are looking pretty good now too – I've just potted them up. They got a bit munched by the slugs, but they are getting over that. The slugs, however, have been at the Mexican gherkins, and the tomatillos, and the kiwanos, so I need to pot those on and take some precautions for those. The watercress is coming on nicely.

The big disappointment this year is that my soya bean seeds didn't germinate at all. The ones in here didn't germinate at all; I did a germination test in a jar in the house and they didn't germinate at all either. So that must be a problem with the seed, and that serves me right because I bought them right at the end of last year in a sale at the garden centre, and they must have been stored in dodgy conditions – so that's very disappointing. The soya bean project is cancelled until next year when I can get some fresh seed.

However, I have just noticed that my eddoes are starting to germinate now, so that's quite exciting. Those are some little tubers that I bought from Tesco. I think they're taro, and also called Elephant's Ears. They're a tropical plant that will have to grow indoors. I think it will survive the winter, I think it will die down and come back and it will be a couple of years before I get a harvest from those in this climate. But they're making a good start.

And I keep forgetting that the first of my French beans are just growing little beans now as well, so there will be a harvest from the French beans. And I think that's the Hutterite Soup, although having said that it has turned into a climbing bean (which I wasn't quite expecting, I thought they were all dwarf ones) so I will have to check that one out.

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And my purple sprouting broccoli plants have been potted up and are in here at the moment until I can find somewhere outside to put them where I can put a net over them to keep the Cabbage White butterflies off them – because I don't really fancy picking caterpillars off them all summer.

I've planted out a lot of my peppers in here as well, they've all got little planting holes. I've still got a far few (far too many, actually) that I need to be doing something with, especially since they now need a drink. I'll have to come back out and do some watering.

So there are some challenges. I've got far too many plants at the moment, and nowhere to put them. I've been doing some work outside in the garden – let's go out there and have a look at that.

Now I'm outside and looking at the goji berries. They've been munched, probably by slugs, so I've put some slug pellets around those as well. Although having said that it does look as though they've washed off a bit, so I might need to do that again. One of them is looking very sad, the other two are doing OK, but there's been some slug damage to the gojis.

The potatoes, though, are looking very good. They're flowering now, and as soon as the flowers start to die back then it will be time to have a bit of an exploratory dig around and see what's under there. Hopefully we've got some nice new potatoes that we can dig out; they've certainly got some mint to go with them as well, so that will be cool.

And here outside I have been planting out my squash. I've got two different types of summer squash this year. I've got Tromba d'Albenga, which is kind of an odd shaped courgette, and Sunburst F1 which is a yellow patty pan squash. Same family as courgettes, but slightly different. I've planted them all out. The Sunburst is still under a cloche, which was its head start against the world; the other two are out and about and doing fine. The Sunburst is surrounded by strawberry spinach, which I tried a couple of years ago and didn't have much success with. I never got as far as this, but I've got some nice seedlings which looks like they've settled in and are doing very well.

Ooh, there's some broad bean pods on my broad beans, which I wasn't expecting. They're very good at hiding, those broad bean pods, and to be fair the broad beans have been another thing that has been attacked quite badly by slugs – so I wasn't expecting much of a harvest from those, but that looks alright.

And the bees are going nuts, as usual, for the flowers on the Welsh onions. I'm going to have to cut those down soon, because they're starting to seed and I don't want them seeding all over the garden, but for the meantime the bees are enjoying those.

And the achocha is going absolutely rampant, as you would expect. The achocha is now planted in tubs at the bottom of the trellis, and is rapidly climbing its way up the



trellis. It has a tendency to grow straight up if it can do, so it's doing that at the moment. It looks pretty good, it's happy now that there's been some rain.

The blueberries look like they've got a reasonable crop on them, so I really must get around to netting those before the birds take them all. The same goes for the raspberries, in fact, it's one of the jobs on my To Do list.

And I've got some strawberries in containers from past years that have been rather neglected, but I've moved them onto the patio and onto some concrete blocks that just happened to be there – so they're raised off the ground and away from the slugs and it actually looks like there's going to be quite a good harvest. It's not a lot of strawberries, but it's more that we've had in the past so they look quite good too. Once they've fruited I'll have to split those up and plant them out and do various things to them that I should have done years ago.

The Jerusalem artichokes are looking very good as well. They're about 3 feet tall now, and they do look like sunflowers at the moment. One of them has been munched by the snails, and in fact it has split so that it doesn't have a main stem anymore – it's going to be a bushy one. It's a bit smaller than the others, but it's doing alright, so it will be interesting to see what difference that makes in the end.

That's everything that's happening in the garden at the moment. I've had to make some temporary raised beds for the squashes, and I've still got lots of things that I need to pot up and plant out – so it's going to be a very busy time in the garden for me. But it's all looking rather wonderful, especially since the pot marigolds have come out, and they're in two different shades of orange. There's a very yellowy orange and very, very bright orange. Gorgeous, actually, when the sun hits them – you couldn't want for a better colour. It's all looking very jolly.

Anyway, do let me know what's going on in your garden. You can, of course, send me an email to akgpodcast@gmail.com. You can leave me a comment on the show home page, which is <http://coopette.com/akg>, or you can join in one of the discussions on the Facebook group. I'd love to see pictures of your garden, find out how you're getting on. If you've got any hints and tips for our other listeners then do send them in. In the meantime, have a great week in your garden. Goodbye!

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