

SAGS AGM 2007 morning talk

### **Prize plots. How do you do it?**

This session is given from the viewpoint of a judge and my plot would like to aspire to the winners rostrum but it complains that the plot holders spends too much time away from the soil.

Make no mistake it is not easy to produce a prize winning plot, as any job well done a lot of hard work goes into a prize winning plot.

As part of a judging panel we have four main criteria and one extra.

**Visual appearance/cleanliness:**

**Quality of planting and diversity of use**

**Imaginative Layout/Crop rotation**

**Green issues:**

And **Notable feature** Something different

**Visual appearance/cleanliness:**

One of the main problems is not the plot itself but the effect on the eye of plots surrounding, which by definition are not in the same league as the prize winner. There are several ways plot holders get round this, brightly painted re-cycled pallets can form a picket fence. Neat hedging gives a good background. Climbing plants on frame work, the whole idea being to concentrate the eye on the plot under scrutiny

The overall appearance of the plot should be neat and pleasing to the eye. Litter free another reason to have a fence around your plot. Waste disposed of by composting and keeping spare equipment tidy. It goes without saying that paths, walls, seating areas should be well maintained.

**Imaginative Layout/Crop rotation**

Skill and originality evident in the layout and planting, this probably one of the most important aspects. Straight lines for me are out. Paths can be grass, bark, flag stones, but I do like curves which bring me to other areas of the plot. Height, runner beans, sweet peas. One plot which impressed had a arbour walk with sweet peas up one side and runner beans on the other, another had clematis on a back wall.

Not all plots are on level land and ingenuity shown in overcoming local problems can win points, terracing being the classic.

The entire plot should under cultivation, if not then harvesting should be evident or at least under green manure

Evidence of planting for a rotation of crops, we are not looking for the one year wonder so brassicas should be together separate from leguminous. We are looking for the plot holder who improving the soil and environment.

**Quality of planting and diversity of use**

Quality of plants (variety, health, and quality of the vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs).

Stocking (any unplanted areas should be where crops have just been harvested, or about to be planted up and should be clean and free from weeds).

Range of plants used

**Green issues:**

- Organic methods. Intelligent use of organic methods of pest control, such as the pinching out of broad bean tips to inhibit black-fly, or the use of barriers against carrot fly, will be given credit. Companion planting.
- Sustainable practises (eg water butts, recycling, green manure)
- Shelter and feeding for wildlife (nest boxes, log piles, stones, hedges)
- Good composting techniques

Use of plants, which will attract wildlife (including trees and hedges).

**Notable feature**

Something different.