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how to plant out broad beans

I'm going to put the broad beans in here, where the mizuna has been, and you can see the mizuna has started to bolt now, but I wanted to leave it for a little bit because it's just covered in honeybees, and these brassicas are really so good for the honeybees so I wanted to leave it, but now I need the space for the broad beans so it's got to go, and the other thing is as you get into April, you'll see lots of little shiny beetles on your mizuna, which are beetles but they hop like a flea and are called flea beetle and they're the thing that peppers any brassica, whether it be rocket or mizuna or any of the mustards with lots of tiny holes and you'll see it's just beginning and that's why it's also a good time to take this out now because I don't want to encourage that to build up in the garden, and as I remove a plant, you want to really make sure you don't take any of the soil

with you when you go to the compost heap, and any of the worms, like there's a worm there that I've just got out because you want to leave all that organic matter and the life that improves it in the soil.

So I'm just going to briefly fork this over, because we've got very heavy clay soil here, and just break that up a bit, it just gets very compacted. Now, with no dig, you wouldn't do this at all, you would just put compost over the top, but I do find here, just if I just do the surface and break it up a bit and try not to destroy the worms, it just stops the compaction. There's a lovely big worm there which I'm concentrating on not stabbing, and there's a lovely big self-sown poppy there, I'll definitely leave that to edge the path, great.

And then, we're on a slope here, but it's still worth trying to get your lines straight. I find if I do it by eye I go all over the shop, and there's quite a nifty knot which I use a lot, which is a clove hitch, and you do forward loop, forward loop, and tuck two behind one and that then goes over the cane, and it's a brilliant knot for staking, I use it every day in the garden, and I use it on the vegetable garden as well. So this end I'm just going to leave it loose because I might well untie that and use the string again, this lovely old hock vine, and there I've got my line.

So all these broad beans, they need to be 20cm apart, and I know that's the exact span of my hands, so I'm alternating them either side of the string, 20cm apart all the way up the row. Label. That's one row done.

So these broad beans are in, but I've got Florence Fennel here, which because we've had such a mild winter it's survived fine and we're eating it every day it's absolutely delicious, but because we're eating it, this will have gone within a month, so what I'm going to do is sow another successional row of broad beans just direct into the soil today to try and elongate the time between this lot which will be cropping in hopefully about 8 weeks' time, and that lot less, six weeks' time, and then this lot, hopefully 12 or 14 weeks' time so I've got this really good succession between those lot that I put out three weeks ago, these lot going out today and these lot sowing today.

This broad bean is called 'Stereo', and it's the most delicious broad bean ever because I think it's got a little bit of pea genetics bred into it so it doesn't form that leathery skin in the bean inside the pod so you never have to do that double shelling thing which chefs love to do, but it's quite time consuming, and so with 'Stereo' they stay smaller and the skins never get really tough.

So what I'm doing is I'm just digging them a shallow hole, about 5cm deep I guess, 20cm apart the span of your hand apart, and I'm just dropping them into the holes, before I cover the whole lot, I always sow like that so I remember where I've been. When I get to the end of a row, either end, I'll always do a clutch of 6 or 7 seeds, spaced about a few cm apart, and that's just in case any of mine fail, I've then got transplants to take from there. One, two, I'll do 6 I think, three, four, five, six, and these go back in the pack, so be sown either in 2-3 weeks' time, or next year, and I'll store them cool and dry, and they'll be fine for 2 or 3 years and will still germinate. So these are planted and these are sown, and now, unless it rains tonight, I'll water.

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