

WALTHAM GARDENERS' SOCIETY

FOR WALTHAM AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES

Growing and Showing Sweet Peas **by Philip Johnson - 21st February 2017**

Philip has been growing Sweet Peas for over 35 years so there is nothing he does not know on growing this wonderful flower.

Philip illustrated his talk with a slide show with pictures of every step along the way Lathyrus Odoratus sweet peas range from the old fashioned perennial Lathyrus Latifolius with plain petals, no frills and intense scent through to Spencer hybrids with large showy blooms.

Philip recommended sowing in October which produce better plants although sowing in February/March is fine producing flowers in August.

His method is to sow in 5" pots in John Innes No. 1 compost 6 or 7 seeds per pot. Soak the seeds on damp kitchen paper first, better than soaking by immersion and sow 1cm deep.

Once germinated move them to a cold frame or unheated greenhouse, they are hardy. Pinch the tips out once tall enough to encourage side shoots.

Sweet Peas like a rich root run so incorporate plenty of compost or manure in the final flowering position and add fish blood and bone fertilizer and some wood ash if you have some.

If you sow in October overwinter in an open cold frame and only cover if there is lots of rain or frost.

You can plant out in the final flowering position anytime from 1st week of March. If you wish to grow show class blooms select a single stem and train this up a bamboo pole and limit the number of flowers otherwise allow a number of stems and feed well with liquid fertilizer during the growing period.

Philip also suggested we might like to try Lathyrus Vernus a compact variety that flowers from April/May or Grandiflora a deep pink which flowers end May and early June.