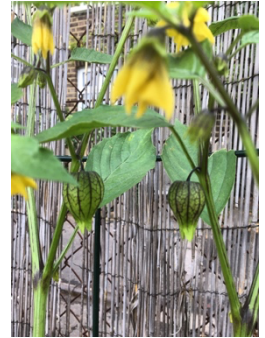


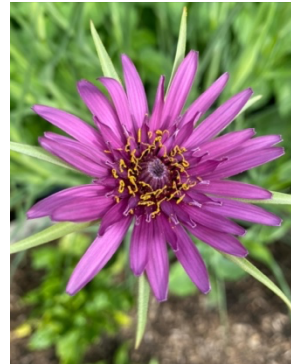
Weird Vegetables I've grown by Christine Chatfield

I first started growing Tomatillos a few years back for a friend. A Tomatillo looks like a cross between a green Tomato and a large Physalis. In Mexico they grow like weeds and are used to make green salsa. I don't particularly like salsa, so I didn't grow them again. My friend was happy with them though.



Then I grew some Cucamelons, everyone seemed to be growing them at the time. They are also known as mouse Melons! They are a cross between a Cucumber and a very small Melon. They grew like crazy, and I ended up giving them away. As although I didn't dislike them, I didn't like them that much either.

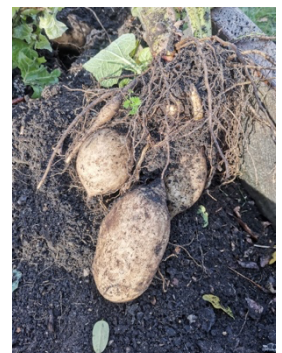
The Salsify I grew was from a free seed packet I acquired. I planted them next to my Parsnips a couple of years ago. Salsify are like Parsnips in that they are both root vegetables and grow and get harvested at the same time. One thing I didn't know about Salsify was that they are also grown for their flowers, as well as their oyster tasting roots. So, after a very disappointing harvest I decided to let a few flower and go to seed. The flowers are very interesting and quite beautiful. The seed heads however were like very big Dandelion clocks. Needless to say, I am still pulling up Salsify seedlings to this day!



A couple of years ago I grew some Oca, or New Zealand Yams, which is their other name. The first year I hadn't appreciated how much room they needed and didn't get much of a harvest. So, I took the ones I did get and replanted them last year in the ground and not the pots I had them in before. They are an extremely easy vegetable to grow and have very few problems with pests. They originated in the Andes and are cultivated for their edible tubers. They have a slightly lemony flavour and can be eaten raw or cooked. I quite like them, especially boiled and mashed with a bit of butter. I don't however like that fact that they are a bit of a pain to clean because of their knobby nature.

And this year I'm going to try some Yacon. I knew Yacon was a tuber of some sort, but I'd not eaten it before. That was until they were grown last year at the Vine Road growing project where I volunteer. All the volunteers were given the opportunity to have some of the tubers when they were harvested at the end of the season. I took some home to try, and I was blown away! It was so nice! It was almost like a fruit when you ate it raw. Raw, it was like a crispy, juicy Japanese Nashi Pear. Incredible!

I already have my Yacon plug plants waiting in the wings to go out when the risk of frost is over. I can't wait!



There are so many vegetables out there that you never see in the supermarkets. Why not try a bit of diversity and grow something unusual or exotic?