

Nicole Macfarlane - First time exhibitor

Having taken part in this year's BDAC show, I was pleased to be asked to write about my experience. Initially, I took on a plot at Wyrley Birch allotments to grow flowers but ended up with two plots and so I encouraged my mum to take on one and help me grow fruit and vegetables. We decided on a no dig approach due to my mum's disabilities and we grow organically which is a challenge but worthwhile. On hearing about the BDAC show I immediately knew I wanted to enter some of my flowers and persuaded my mum to also take part. Having never shown before we reached out to previous participants and the support and encouragement received from other growers and members of the BDAC was amazing. We learnt so much and had great fun though never expected to actually win anything. On the day of the show, we were stood at the boot of our car cleaning the roots of cabbages as we weren't sure in advance on how to prepare them, but it was all very relaxed and everybody was lovely and helpful. In the show hall there were BDAC members on hand to offer advice and answer our questions so really, we needn't have felt as nervous as we did. The following day you return to see the results of the judging and to say we were shocked is an understatement! We had several 1st, 2nd and 3rd places and came 4th overall which we were delighted with and genuinely surprised as we did not expect to win anything having grown for eating and not for showing. A further bonus was the donation of many of the entries to a local food bank that we support, these were collected from the show and within days were distributed to those in need. Best of all is the knowledge we have learnt which will be put to good use for next year's show and we hope to encourage others who perhaps think their produce isn't good enough or that you need a special set up or years of experience to grow show produce, you don't! All you need is a love of growing and it's a great opportunity to show others what you are growing and to meet new, likeminded friends.