



## The NVS

*The views and opinions in this article are purely my own and not necessarily that of the NVS*

I got my first allotment approx. ten years ago. The thought of growing my own veg and then eating it really appealed to me. However, in just my second or third year I was starting to lose interest. I was putting a lot of time and effort and of course money in, yet I was not reaping the rewards I had hoped. In fact, I was a really rubbish grower who couldn't grow anything successful. The old boys on my allotment wouldn't share anything with me as it was all so very top secret. I use to think these people must be so knowledgeable that their advice must be so rare that it had to be kept a secret.

I was on the verge of giving everything up, then my wife and I decided to go to the New Forest Show in Brockenhurst, Hampshire. On our way around, popping in and out of the marquees, we came across the Vegetable Marquee. Wow, I was taken aback by the huge Celery up on the boards, the Giant Onions, Long Carrots and Parsnips. I just thought to myself that I'd never in a million years be able to grow anything like that. I went to the end of the marquee where there was a stand with some people stood behind it and started talking to them. Their passion and excitement for the hobby kick started my excitement for the hobby and before I knew it I had joined the NVS.

A few months down the road I plucked up the courage to attend my local District Association Garden Club. It wasn't what I expected at all. I was recognised as a new comer and was greeted straight away and made very welcome. Everybody there just couldn't wait to talk to me and share their knowledge which I found very alien as I thought it was all top secret. Within a matter of a few months I had picked up so much basic tips which had an immediate impact on the quality of what I was growing. Simple things like 'if it's above ground feed it Nitrogen, if below Potash' I had never even heard of these things before let alone what to use and how. That season I had Cauliflowers like footballs, Carrots which actually looked like carrots and not the miniature type. I had instantly become the envy of the allotment site.

One man in particular, Bob Brown, took me straight in under his wing, invited me around to see his garden and got me hooked on Long Carrots. At the time I had also just visited the local allotment show and instantly got hooked, as I saw it as a hobby within a hobby and I have always had a competitive side. So, with Bob's and all the other members' advice I started to grow for the next allotment show. I listened intensely to everything I was being told and followed the advice to the letter. Well by the time the show had come about, not only did I win everything I entered, as well as most points in the Veg section, most points in the overall show and best in show, Bob also convinced me to enter my Long Carrots in the Southern Branch National Championships to which I did and won in my very first attempt. I literally went from a rubbish grower to National Shower overnight and it felt great.

### So who are the NVS ?

The NVS are the National Vegetable Society. Whereas you have the RHS for all general horticultural, you have the NVS who specifically specialise in just Vegetables and are the leading society in the field, with some of the best growers and exhibitors in the Country.

The aim of the NVS is ***“to advance the education of the public in the cultivation and improvement of vegetables and to advance knowledge of and further public interest in vegetables by the publication of information, by exhibition, by stimulating research and experiment and by awarding prizes open to public competition”***

There is a general perception that the NVS is purely about exhibition and “you can’t eat what you grow”. Many growers seem to be put off or intimidated by this. Whereas in fact this couldn’t be further from the truth. Yes, the NVS stage the National Vegetable Championships but think of it like a clothes designer with a cat walk show, then Marks & Spencers having a similar line and style clothing. The NVS are setting the precedent for the standard of vegetables for which is deemed to be the optimum quality and condition via good growing techniques. Everything that is exhibited can and is normally consumed. The exhibitors have merely identified and chosen a variety of vegetable which is best deemed to be the optimum size, shape and colour for the item of veg. For example ‘Sweet Candle’ is a standard variety of stump carrot. However, it has been identified to be naturally a good colour and a straight growing carrot with a good stump end, so this was adopted by exhibitors and is now currently the most popular stump carrot on the exhibition bench.

### **Why join the NVS?**

The first thing I would ask, is why not? If you are a keen veg gardener of any kind, be it on an allotment, in the back garden or growing in tubs on the patio, why would you not want join the only National Vegetable Society in the Country.

People join the RHS and the National Allotment Association. The RHS will cost £58 single and £78 joint per year or £40.50 & £58.50 if you agree to an annual direct debit which ties you in. The main benefit is that you can enter their gardens for free and you get a free monthly magazine which isn’t really anything different from Gardeners World Magazine.

The National Allotment Society will cost you £23 per year. The main benefits are allotment insurance and legal advice but to be honest, how many times have you ever needed that? They also do a discount on Kings Seeds but which local allotment society doesn’t?

The NVS will only cost you £17 for a single and £19 for a joint but if you join half way through the year, you don’t get penalised. To join halfway through the year, it is only £23.50 single and £26.50 joint but this will not only take you to the end of the current year, it will also take you up to the end of the following year. The benefits you will receive are in my opinion far greater than any of the other organisations, as you receive the following:

1. A quarterly magazine which is unlike any of the commercial garden magazines as it is real life current news, tips and advice from the top growers in the Country. Also, in my opinion the magazine alone is worth the annual membership fee.
2. Free entry to any of the local District Association garden meetings where all the locals meet to discuss what’s going on, drink tea, eat cake and oh yeah, get to hear some of the top speakers in the Country come to give their talks.
3. Great advice and encouragement from all members of all levels. Even the top growers in the Country will speak with you and share their advice.
4. Free entry to any of the National Exhibition Shows, of which there is five Branch Nationals and a Main National.
5. A fantastic website which is very informative and immediate access to a wide range of knowledge, garden tips, educational merchandise, a member’s forum where you can discuss issues with other members online and get solutions to your problems in no time.

**So don’t waste any more time and join the NVS NOW!**