

Rainy days makes for bumper shellfish crop

THE oyster season has begun with a helping hand from Mother Nature.

West Mersea cultivator David Gladwell, who harvests oysters every year with his wife and two daughters, said rain in the spring and early summer had made for a plentiful haul this year.

He said: "We've got a really good quality this year. We had quite a bit of rain before July, and the mixture of rain and sea water makes for better breeding.

"The marshland is like a sponge, and when it rains, it produces really good nutrients for the oysters.

"In other years, there has been no rain at all, but we have gotten by."

Mr Gladwell, 41, who has been in business for more than 20 years, dredges oysters from the River Blackwater and lays them in creeks for "fattening" in March.

By September 1, they are ready for harvesting and are collected by the Gladwell family who trawl through their oyster bays in their boat, Boy Steven II, and collect the shellfish.

They are then purified and shipped off across the UK, and end up on plates at some of London's top restaurants.



■ Plentiful haul – David Gladwell sorts through oysters on board his boat, Boy Steven II