

What to do this month at your plot - April

By April spring should be well and truly underway, the soil warming up nicely and everything growing away. Don't be complacent though, it's been known for a cold snap with snow to strike even in the sunny south of England. Keep an eye on the weather forecasts and a hand on the horticultural fleece and insulation materials.

Sowing & Planting in April on the Vegetable Plot

If March has been difficult and you've not managed to get much done, you're going to have a busy April. With onions you're really pushing it so if they're not planted make it one of the first jobs of the month

Things to Sow in April

- Beetroot
- Peas
- Broad Beans
- Broccoli
- Brussels Sprouts
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Kale
- Chard
- Kohl Rabi
- Leeks
- Spinach
- Rocket
- Lettuce
- Radish

Covering your carrots with a fleece and ensuring the edges are buried will stop the carrot root fly from gaining entry to lay eggs by your carrots. The eggs hatch into larvae that burrow into the carrot root, killing the plant or at least ruining the crop.

Plant Outdoors

- Onion & Shallot Sets
- Globe Artichokes
- Jerusalem Artichokes
- Asparagus.

Easter, a variable feast that usually falls in early April is the traditional potato planting time. If you have a comfrey bed and it has sprung back, the first cut laid in the trench under the potatoes will provide nutrition to get them off to a good start.

On the subject of comfrey, if you make a comfrey tea it will help you to a great crop when you use it on your potatoes. Many novice growers wonder why they have small crops of potatoes and most often this is just down to lack of food for this hungry crop. See feeding potatoes

Under Cover in Greenhouse, Coldframe and Polytunnel

Aubergine (but a bit late)
Celery
Outdoor Cucumbers
Tomatoes (outdoor varieties)

A good tip in a windowsill is to stick some silver cooking foil onto cardboard and place on the inside to reflect light back onto the seedlings. This will help prevent the seedlings being drawn.

Sow Outdoors Under Cloche
French beans
Lettuce
Sweetcorn
Alternative Method for Growing Sweetcorn

Many of the crops you can sow directly will also benefit from cloching, especially as you move northwards or started off in modules in a cool greenhouse or coldframe and then planted out later.

Fruit

Strawberries can be planted out now, it's best to remove flowers in the first year as you conserve strength for growth and gain larger crops in subsequent years. An easy way to gain strawberry plants is to plant the runners into pots and when rooted cut the runner. The plants don't last forever so you need to rotate them every three to five years.

Hand pollinate peaches and nectarines. Tickle the flowers with a small paint brush to spread the pollen. Cover if a cold spell threatens.

A good layer of compost around the base of fruit trees will ensure they have the nutrition to provide another good crop for you.

Harvest

We're in the 'Hungry Gap' between the last of the winter crops and start of the early crops but there are still a few things available, late sprouting and chards for example plus you may have some early salad crops like radishes and fast lettuces from the greenhouse border.

Spring cabbage, broccoli, very early peas, greenhouse potatoes are all possible for experienced growers. Outdoors salads that may be around: claytonia and corn salad.

Check Stored Potatoes

Do re-check your stored crops. On a fine day, empty out the potato sacks and check for any rotten potatoes. If you've strung onions, watch out for the odd rotten one and remove it before it spreads.