

Magazine Issue no. 3  
January 2026



Hello Fellow Allotmenters,

For the majority of people, January symbolizes new beginnings and a fresh start. For others, it's just another ordinary month!

If you were born in January, your birthstone is a **garnet**. Generally, January is the coldest month of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

In the **United Kingdom**, some people practice "Dry January." This is a movement to encourage people to quit drinking alcohol for the month in order to encourage public health.

January has two zodiac signs – Capricorn, which is until January 19, and **Aquarius**, which is for the rest of the month.

The *Dianthus caryophyllus* is the primary birth flower of January – more commonly known as the **carnation!** January's other birth flower is the humble snowdrop.

Thanks for reading,

Gareth Richards ( Treasurer )  
Elizabeth Flats Allotments, Plot 14

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## Your January Gardening Checklist

January may be chilly and frosty, but for allotment owners, it signals the start of a new growing year. Despite the cold, there are plenty of tasks to prepare your plot and plan for the months ahead.

January is often chilly, with short days and frosty ground, but for keen allotment owners, it also marks the start of a new and exciting growing year. While the cold might tempt you to stay indoors, there's plenty of jobs to do to prepare your plot and plan for the months ahead and get you out in the fresh air!

Here's a guide to keep you busy this January and ensure a successful growing season.

### General Garden Maintenance

**Tool Care:** Sharpen, clean, and oil cutting tools like secateurs and shears. Give spades, forks, and hoes a thorough clean, and treat wooden handles with linseed oil to extend their lifespan.

**Greenhouse & Cold Frame Maintenance:** Clean glass, plastic panels, and frames to allow better light

penetration and remove pests or fungi. Wash all pots and trays in preparation for early sowing.

**Shed Organisation:** Take stock of your gardening supplies. Repair or replace broken canes, nets, and other essentials. A thorough tidy-up might even reveal lost treasures!

**Plan Ahead:** Use gloomy days to browse seed catalogues and create a list of seeds, bulbs, and tubers for the year ahead. Now is also a great time to restock on labels and compost.

## **Jobs for the Vegetable Garden**

January is an ideal time to prepare for your vegetable patch. Some crops can even be started indoors or under cover:

**Onions & Leeks:** Sow seeds in trays or pots under cover to give them a head start. Varieties like 'Globo' for onions or 'Pandora' for leeks are ideal for early sowing.

**Early Potatoes:** If you have space, plant a few seed potatoes in large pots in a greenhouse or polytunnel for an early crop. Alternatively, start chitting seed potatoes in egg cartons on a bright, frost-free windowsill.

**Asparagus Beds:** Feed and mulch asparagus crowns if you missed this task in autumn. Use well-rotted manure or a balanced fertilizer to encourage vigorous spring growth.

**Dwarf French Beans:** If you have a slightly heated greenhouse, sow beans in pots now for an early crop. Varieties like 'Adoration' or 'Tender Green' work well for quick germination.

**Broad Beans:** In milder climates, sow broad bean seeds like 'Super Aquadulce' in pots or directly into well-drained soil for a robust spring harvest.

**Stored Crops:** Check stored vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and onions to ensure they remain in good condition. Remove any that show signs of rot to prevent it spreading.

**Forced Vegetables:** Start forcing chicory and seakale by covering crowns with pots or buckets and surrounding them with manure for warmth. This will produce tender, blanched shoots for early harvests.

**Carrots:** In a cold frame or polytunnel, sow early varieties such as 'Nelson, Nantes or Adelaide' for a spring crop. Use cloches to keep soil temperatures consistent.

**Spinach & Salad Leaves:** Sow hardy spinach, winter lettuce, or salad mixes under cover for fresh greens during the cold months. Varieties like 'Winter Density or

Winter King' lettuce and 'Perpetual Spinach' perform well in cooler weather.

### **Get ready for flowers**

Prepare now to ensure a colourful display in warmer months.

**Sweet Peas:** If you missed sowing sweet peas in autumn, now is the perfect time to start them in pots. For the best results, use deep-root trainers and place them in a cool, frost-free spot.

**Winter Bedding:** Continue deadheading winter bedding plants like pansies and violas to keep them looking good and to encourage more flowering.

**Geraniums & Dahlias:** Sow seeds indoors in trays with heat and light to give these beautiful flowers a head start. Keep them under grow lights or in a sunny windowsill.

**Delphiniums:** Start seeds now by chilling them in the fridge for three weeks, then move them to a warm propagator to germinate. This stratification encourages better germination rates.

Coleus: Perfect for beds and containers sow seeds in a warm propagator for colourful leaves later in the year.

Hardy Annuals: Hardy annuals like cornflowers, larkspur, and nigella can be grown in trays under cover. These will bloom early in the summer, brightening up your borders and attracting pollinators.

Snowdrops: Plant snowdrop bulbs "in the green" later this month if the ground is workable, ensuring they establish quickly for next year's blooms.

Cyclamen: Care for winter-flowering cyclamen by keeping the soil just moist and deadheading regularly to prolong their delicate blooms.

### **Fruit Garden Jobs**

January is a key month for pruning and protecting fruit plants:

Pruning: Complete pruning of fruit trees and bushes, ensuring trained forms like fans and cordons are tied in securely.

Rhubarb Forcing: Cover rhubarb crowns with forcing

pots or large buckets, adding manure around the base to encourage early shoots.

Protect Early Buds: Keep an eye on gooseberries and plums as their buds may begin to swell during mild spells—protect them from birds with netting if necessary.

## Greenhouse and Indoor Growing

Greenhouses, polytunnels, and windowsills can be busy places in January:

Ventilation: On mild days, ventilate greenhouses to reduce humidity and prevent fungal diseases. Remember to close them again in the afternoon to trap warmth.

Seed Sowing: Kick off the growing season with early indoor sowings of:

- Chillies:** Use a heated propagator set to 21°C, and consider grow lights to prevent leggy seedlings.
- Aubergines:** Start seeds in small pots, keeping temperatures warm.

January might be cold and quiet in the garden, but it's the perfect time to plan, prepare, and get ahead for a productive year. Whether you're sharpening tools, sowing seeds, or making plans for your vegetable patch, the work you do now will pay off come spring. Embrace the anticipation of a new growing season and enjoy the satisfaction of getting started.

# Puzzle Corner

## Disney Princesses

D	O	P	H	C	E	Y	R	L	W	H	C
A	G	H	C	A	L	L	I	U	M	E	I
M	E	R	I	D	A	U	S	E	R	T	N
P	U	O	Z	K	E	X	N	A	J	Z	D
O	A	L	G	A	U	R	O	R	A	R	E
T	M	O	A	N	A	P	W	G	S	A	R
I	U	E	R	N	O	S	W	O	M	Y	E
A	W	H	I	A	D	M	H	J	I	A	L
N	G	I	E	C	L	Z	I	A	N	E	L
A	B	E	L	L	E	T	T	I	E	Z	A
U	R	A	P	U	N	Z	E	L	I	L	M
M	C	P	O	C	A	H	O	N	T	A	S

JASMINE

MERIDA

ARIEL

CINDERELLA

RAPUNZEL

POCAHONTAS

TIANA

AURORA

BELLE

MULAN

SNOW WHITE

ELSA

ANNA

ASHA

MOANA

RAJA



# CATS

X	R	E	P	O	M	A	U	P	E	R	S	I	A	N	E	X	A
C	T	D	E	S	A	Q	V	N	H	A	N	E	B	D	P	X	U
P	H	U	R	O	S	I	A	M	E	S	E	I	Y	N	S	D	E
I	S	P	R	L	K	H	E	A	C	K	O	A	S	S	C	B	A
R	C	A	H	K	E	S	P	H	Y	N	X	Y	S	P	O	U	S
H	U	V	Y	N	I	A	X	K	A	I	S	V	I	L	T	O	A
R	E	S	U	E	X	S	N	B	I	R	M	A	N	Y	T	A	V
I	D	L	S	G	H	P	H	E	B	U	H	F	I	N	I	B	A
C	E	S	P	I	N	V	O	A	Y	X	N	Y	A	G	S	O	N
K	V	H	O	B	A	U	R	F	N	S	N	A	N	T	H	P	N
E	O	N	T	Y	X	N	I	R	A	G	D	O	L	L	F	U	A
C	N	R	O	B	O	M	B	A	Y	I	O	B	A	D	O	J	H
A	R	V	A	L	V	E	B	L	E	T	M	R	U	R	L	V	A
M	E	C	H	T	M	P	K	D	U	C	N	E	A	T	D	E	Y
Y	X	R	U	J	A	B	U	E	T	E	B	N	H	L	E	N	X
E	T	X	I	N	N	A	Y	L	B	Y	R	B	E	N	G	A	L
D	C	H	A	R	T	R	E	U	X	U	Y	P	V	O	A	N	E

PERSIAN

SIAMESE

BENGAL

RAGDOLL

SPHYNX

ABYSSINIAN

BIRMAN

SAVANNAH

CHARTREUX

KORAT

DEVON REX

SCOTTISH FOLD

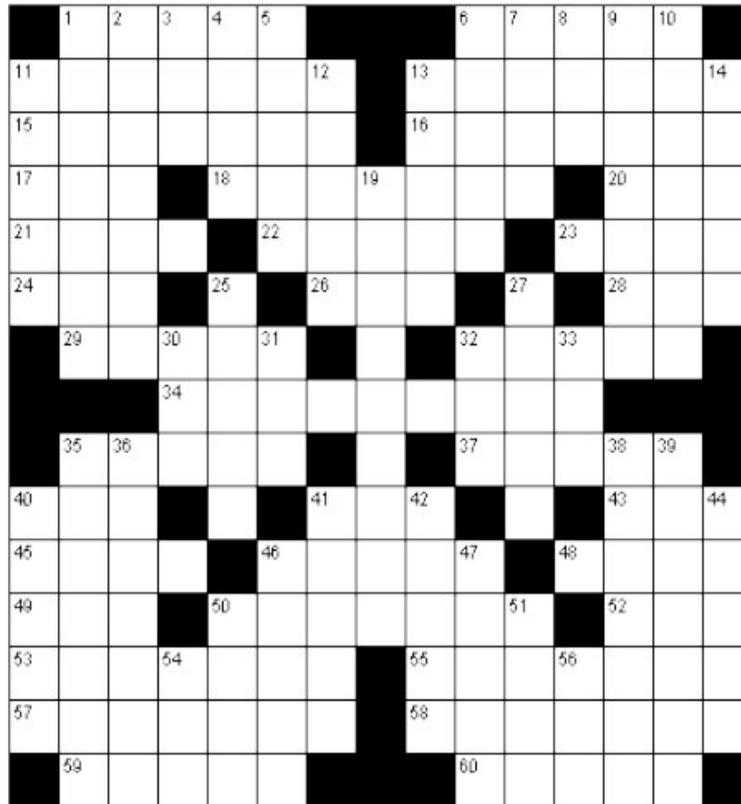
RUSSIAN BLUE

TURKISH ANGORA

BOMBAY



# Crossword no.1



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## ACROSS

1. Pierces
6. Falsified
11. Pair
13. Illegitimate
15. Oxygenates
16. God of the sea (Roman mythology)
17. Chinese revolutionary
18. Bothers
20. Advice columnist \_\_\_ Landers
21. Sea eagle
22. Gardening tools
23. Mid-month days
24. Collection or series
26. So far
28. Mineral-bearing rock
29. Round wooden rod
32. Fortune tellers
34. Restate
35. Arab country in northeast Africa
37. Jaunty rhythms
40. Glass container
41. A measure equal to 16 feet
43. Gremlin
45. Fertilizer ingredient
46. Anagram of "Noted"
48. Whirlpool
49. Anger
50. Argumentative
52. Prefix indicating recent or new
53. Bastion
55. Give forth
57. Foes
58. Fails to fulfill a promise
59. Coarsely ground hulled corn
60. Stitched

## DOWN

1. Uttered obscenities
2. A city in Ontario Canada
3. A king of Judah
4. The two of them
5. Smudge
6. Hurries away
7. Mountains in Europe
8. A set of tools
9. South American country
10. Main meals
11. Makes docile
12. An analytic literary composition
13. Cove
14. Taut or rigid
19. Body frames
25. Tearful
27. Abominable snowmen
30. Sardonic
31. Illuminated
32. Actor \_\_\_ Mineo
33. Snake-like fish
35. A piece of jewelry
36. One who welcomes
38. Adolescent
39. Precipitated as a mixture of rain and snow
40. Liquid from fruit
41. Boils
42. Dissuade
44. Flat masses of floating sea ice
46. Tall woody plants
47. 10 cent coins
50. Assemble or modify written material
51. Walking stick
54. French for "Friend"
56. Not old

## Link to Brimsmore Garden Centre

We have a Gold Club discount deal with Brimsmore Garden Centre.

They offer all member's 25% discount on Spring bulbs for sale in October and then again a second deal for anything at the Centre that is not on special offer which can be used as many times as you want during January and February.

I have used it for compost in the past and the savings are quite good on your pocket. You can have the items delivered which is free within the Yeovil area or you can pick your items up at the Garden Centre.

Brimsmore Garden Centre website address :

<https://store.thegardensgroup.co.uk>

Email : [brimsmore@thegardensgroup.co.uk](mailto:brimsmore@thegardensgroup.co.uk)

Telephone no. : 01935 411000

Address : Brimsmore Gardens  
Tintinhull Road  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA21 3NU

## Where we meet

Johnson Park, Coronation Avenue, Yeovil. BA21 3DX

as well as

Brimsmore Gardens, Tintinhull Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 3NU

We generally meet twice a month. The last Thursday of the month is reserved for a committee meeting. We discuss all things related to the Association and deal with any matters arising.

We meet at 8pm on these nights in the lounge bar at Johnson Park Sports and Social Club. They have a car park

Minutes are recorded by our Secretary. The Chairman opens the meeting and directs us through the running order and as well as site supervisor's input there is a monthly Treasurer's report.

The other meeting night is a more social event and this takes place on the 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month. We can invite a speaker, you can buy a drink at the bar and there is a raffle normally run by Phillip.

Three times a year on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month we meet at Brimsmore Garden Centre for our social. We meet in the Apple Tree restaurant at 6.30pm. Some tea and biscuits are available for free. We try to have a guest speaker at these events or a talk on a garden topic and a raffle run by Phillip's wife.

These three events replace our said Thursday social meetings at Johnson Park.

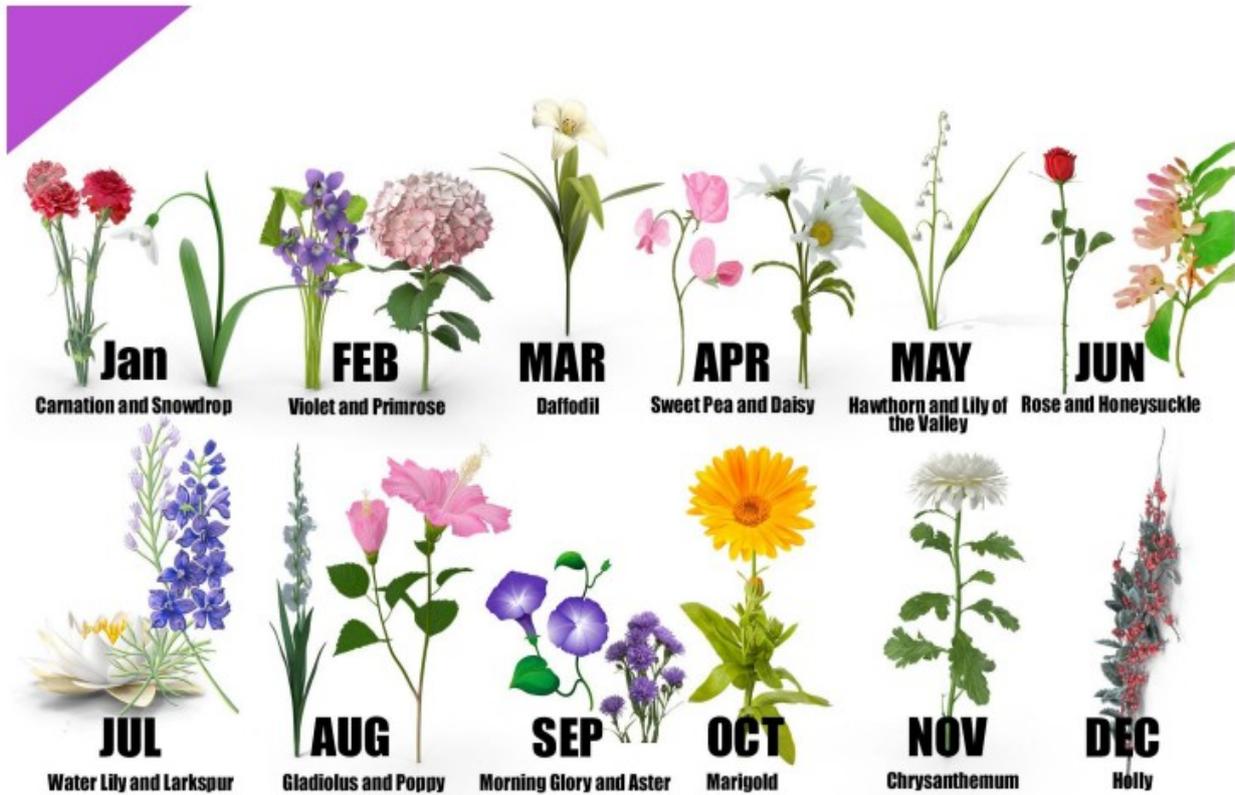
Your annual membership card gives you the time and dates of meetings for the year ahead. Our membership night for renewals is every March and again a discount night is offered for any garden centre items which are not on special offer.

## Kings Seeds - Top Tips for Seed Sowing

- **Use seed sowing compost, not multi-purpose.** Multi-purpose compost often contains too much feed which can damage or kill young seedlings before they grow.
- **Water with fresh tap water.** Avoid using saved rainwater for seeds and young seedlings, as pathogens can build up in water butts and containers which can affect germination. Rainwater is fine to use on established plants.
- **Maintain the correct temperature.** Ensure the seeds are kept at their ideal germination temperature.
- **Monitor the water levels.** Some composts may appear dry on the surface but are moist beneath. Certain seeds such as peas and beans tend to rot off if they are overwatered, yet if they are too dry, their seed coats may not break down properly, preventing germination.
- **Water the drill directly when sowing outside during a dry spell.** It is important when sowing seeds direct into the allotment soil when the soil is dry, to always water the seed drill first before sowing. Draw out the seed drill, then give a thorough watering so the base of the drill is really wet, then leave to drain for a few minutes before sowing the seed onto the wet soil. Once sown, the seed is then covered over with the dry soil, which traps the moisture below where the seeds need it to germinate. This is a far better method than constantly watering overhead with a rose on a can, which will evaporate with the sun or drying winds and put a hard cap over the soil, making it much harder for the seedlings to push through.

# Solution

	S	T	A	B	S			F	A	K	E	D		
T	W	O	S	O	M	E		I	L	L	I	C	I	T
A	E	R	A	T	E	S		N	E	P	T	U	N	E
M	A	O		H	A	S	S	L	E	S		A	N	N
E	R	N	E		R	A	K	E	S		I	D	E	S
S	E	T		W		Y	E	T		Y		O	R	E
	D	O	W	E	L		L		S	E	E	R	S	
				R	E	I	T	E	R	A	T	E		
	E	G	Y	P	T		T		L	I	L	T	S	
J	A	R		Y		R	O	D		S		E	L	F
U	R	E	A		T	O	N	E	D		W	E	E	L
I	R	E		E	R	I	S	T	I	C		N	E	O
C	I	T	A	D	E	L		E	M	A	N	A	T	E
E	N	E	M	I	E	S		R	E	N	E	G	E	S
	G	R	I	T	S				S	E	W	E	D	



## 12 Birth Month Flowers

The 12 Birth Month Flowers are something I have just found and I thought I would introduce it as a little homage to those associated to the birth of a baby.

The Birth Flowers for January are the Carnation and Snowdrop. Although most Allotmenters grow fruit and vegetables, some of you will grow flowers as well.



Carnation



Snowdrop

## **Dianthus caryophyllus**

border carnation

A perennial that will develop a woody base with age. Many old and modern carnations have been bred from this species. Single flowers are clove-scented and are variable in colour, appearing in various shades of pink and purple, held above grey-green foliage.

### **Botanical details**

#### **Family**

Caryophyllaceae

#### **Native to GB / Ireland**

No

#### **Foliage**

Evergreen

#### **Habit**

Bushy

### **Potentially harmful**

Humans/Pets: Skin allergen, wear gloves and other protective equipment when handling. For further information and contact numbers regarding pets, see the HTA guide to potentially harmful plants

## **Genus**

Dianthus can be annuals, evergreen perennials or subshrubs with narrow, often greyish leaves and showy flowers that are frequently fragrant

## **Name status**

Correct

## **How to grow**

### **Cultivation**

Grow in a well-drained soil in a sunny position

### **Propagation**

Propagate by softwood cuttings of non-flowering shoots in summer

### **Suggested planting locations and garden types**

- City and courtyard gardens
- Cottage and informal garden
- Gravel garden
- Mediterranean climate plants
- Patio and container plants
- Rock garden
- Cut flowers
- Flower borders and beds
- Wall side borders

## Pruning

Deadhead regularly to prolong flowering. Lightly trim after flowering or in spring

## Pests

May be susceptible to slugs and aphids

## Diseases

May be susceptible to powdery mildews, a rust, a virus and fusarium wilt.

## Snowdrops

Snowdrops (*Galanthus*) are among the first flowers to bloom in spring, often emerging through snow. They thrive in moist, well-drained soil and prefer partial shade, particularly under deciduous trees. These hardy bulbs can grow to about 12cm in height and are easy to cultivate. Snowdrops multiply and can be propagated by division or seed. They are susceptible to grey mould and other pests but are generally low maintenance. For more information on growing snowdrops, visit the RHS website.

Common name : Snowdrop

Botanical name : *Galanthus*

Group : Bulb

Flowering time : January-March

Planting time : Late April or May

Height and spread :12cm (5in) by 20cm (8in)

Aspect : Partial shade

Hardiness : Hardy

Difficulty : Easy to Moderate

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Any garden can accommodate snowdrops;

- Plant freshly-lifted snowdrops when the foliage is just dying back in late spring
- If it is not possible to plant in late spring, buying just after flowering when the leaves are still green, ('in the green') is the next best way of establishing snowdrops. These are available from nurseries by mail order in bundles, or in individual pots
- Snowdrop
- bulbs are very prone to drying out, so if sourcing bulbs from a nursery or Garden Centre is the only option, buy them as soon as they are available and plant immediately
- Plant snowdrops in a partly-shaded position in a moist, but well-drained soil with Leaf mold or garden compost incorporated. It is important that the soil does not dry out in summer

Pruning and training

There are no requirements to prune or train snowdrops. Simply allow the foliage to die back naturally.

## Propagating

There are four methods that can be used to propagate snowdrops.

### **Division**

Lift and divide clumps as the foliage turns yellow. Split the clumps into smaller pieces with as little disturbance as possible.

Bulbs can also be planted singly at the same depth as they were on the soil.

### **Seed**

Collect and sow seed as soon as they ripen. Germination should take place as the temperatures start to rise after winter.

### **Twin scaling**

This, more complex propagation method involves taking pairs of the scales (like layers of an onion) that make up the bulb and placing them in a damp environment to encourage each set of scales to make new bulbs.

1. Use surgical gloves or wash hands thoroughly and use a sterilised cutting board and tools
2. Remove outer brown scales (husk) and dead tissue and keep the basal plate intact. Slice off the nose of the bulb with a clean sharp knife

3. With the bulb upside down, cut it vertically into half, then quarters. Each section must have a piece of the basal plate attached.
4. Peel back pairs of scales from each piece, cutting them free at the base with a scalpel, again with a piece of basal plate attached.
5. Place in a plastic bag with a 50:50 mix of slightly damp peat-substitute and perlite
6. Shake the bag and fill with air before sealing and labelling.
7. Place in a warm (21°C/70°F), dark place for 12 weeks.
8. When bulblets appear at the base of the scales, pot them on individually, covered with their own depth of compost
9. If the scales have gone soft, remove them from the bulblets before potting on. If the scales are still firm, or have roots coming from their base, leave them attached to the bulblets.

## **Chipping**

Snowdrops can be propagated by chipping which produces flowering plants more quickly than twin scaling. However twin scaling produces many bulbs in a short amount of time.

## Problems

Squirrels digging up snowdrops planted as dry bulbs may be a problem.

Sometimes seedlings are lost through damping off which is caused by fungi and results in their collapse. Grey mould can affect snowdrops, especially in mild winters.

## New Outreach Project Update

I have been given another task when it comes to Promoting Allotment Life in Yeovil. My idea is to use an old colleague and close friend from my days at the Museum of South Somerset which was down by the Octagon Theatre.

My colleagues name is Toby Stok and he was the Museum Officer in charge of Schools outreach and any adult groups interested in reminiscence and also Museum exhibitions put on at the Museum.

I have asked him to join me on this project. He has all the skills and I have the energy to help co-ordinate and task him with a static display which he will put together with photos and articles etc., and if he can, present a static display for our Show in August.

Then once display is passed as ok, we can hopefully use it as advertising, around Yeovil places of interest and if allowed, visit Schools and clubs and set up the display and give a presentation about allotments in and around Yeovil.

It is only a seed at the moment but from “ little acorns, great oak trees grow. ”

Long term for our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our formation as an Association ( formed 2009), I would like to produce a small publication on our birth to a quarter of a century and hopefully sell it as a piece of local history in the book shop in town.

These sort of ideas have worked out in the past at the museum, so it's something worth pursuing.

## Spotlight on Fruit and Vegetables

On these next few pages I will be spotlighting fruit and vegetables and with this in mind I have chosen a vegetable. For this magazine issue, I have picked the Carrot.

It can be cooked or eaten raw and is sown as seeds at this time of year. Get it right and there will be no need to visit the shop as they can be harvested for most of the year.

Just to re-iterate all my work is taken off gardening websites and allotments magazines. I have only had an allotment for just over two years so bringing knowledge to the readers is wholly an exercise in already published work.

I have used a lot of the Gardener's World website and the RHS website and NAS magazines to bring all of their printed wisdom onto these pages.

The more experienced of you will probably already know the words written or will know their meaning in practice.

So let's start the ball rolling with the Carrot.

## The Definitive Guide to Carrots

Bright, sweet, and endlessly versatile, carrots are a kitchen garden staple for good reason. This guide dives deep into carrot cultivation, covering everything from soil prep to pest prevention, varieties, nutrition, and harvest timing.



Bright, sweet, and endlessly versatile, carrots (*Daucus carota subsp. sativus*) are a kitchen garden staple for good reason. Whether you're sowing your first vegetable patch or looking to perfect your crop rotation, carrots are rewarding, nutritious, and surprisingly adaptable when you understand their needs. This definitive guide dives deep into carrot cultivation, covering everything

from soil prep to pest prevention, varieties, nutrition, and harvest timing.

### Why Grow Your Own Carrots?

There's something deeply satisfying about pulling a fresh carrot from the earth—especially one you've grown yourself. While supermarket carrots are bred for uniformity and long shelf life, home-grown varieties offer an incredible depth of flavour, quirky shapes, and vibrant colours from white to deep purple. They're often sweeter and more tender than store-bought, and you get to choose cultivars that suit your soil, climate, and palate.

### When and Where to Grow Carrots

Carrots are cool-season crops that thrive in full sun and light, stone-free, well-drained soil. A sandy or loamy soil texture with minimal compaction is ideal.

#### **Sowing:**

Early sowing (under cloches): February–March

Main sowing period: April to July

Late sowing (for overwintering in mild areas): August–September

#### Maturity Times:

- Baby carrots: Ready in 4–6 weeks

- Early varieties: 8–10 weeks
- Maincrop varieties: 12–16 weeks

Soil pH:

- Ideal range: 6.0 to 6.8

Avoid fresh manure or high-nitrogen composts which can cause root forking.

### **Carrot Varieties to Try**

Different varieties suit different soils and seasons :

<b>Variety</b>	<b>Description</b>
Amsterdam Forcing	Fast-growing, sweet early crop ideal for baby carrots
Chantenay RedCored	Short, stump-rooted and great in heavy or shallow soils
Autumn King	Maincrop classic, large tapered roots, excellent winter storage
Paris Market	Small, round roots; great in containers and poor soils
Purple Haze	Beautiful bicolour, mildly spicy; rich in anthocyanins
Flyaway	Bred for resistance to carrot fly; sweet and crisp
Sugarsnax 54	High in beta-carotene, long slender roots; needs deep, loose soil

## ***Aphids***

Symptoms:

Curling foliage; sticky honeydew on leaves.

Prevention/Treatment:

Introduce natural predators (ladybirds, lacewings).

Spray with neem oil or soapy water.

Common Diseases:

### **•*Alternaria Leaf Blight***

Symptoms:

Brown-black lesions on leaves and stems.

Solution:

Improve air circulation, water at soil level, and rotate crops.

### **•*Powdery Mildew***

Symptoms:

White, powdery coating on foliage.

Solution:

Use a sulfur-based organic fungicide; plant in full sun with good spacing.

## Growing Tips for Straight, Sweet Carrots

### **Thin seedlings:**

Do this in stages once plants are 2–3 cm tall. Final spacing should be about 5 cm apart.

### **Mulch lightly:**

Helps conserve moisture and suppress weeds.

### **Water wisely:**

Keep soil moist, especially during germination. Avoid extremes—too dry = woody roots; too wet = rot.

### **Avoid high nitrogen:**

Encourages leafy tops and stunted roots.

## Troubleshooting Growth Problems

Symptom	Likely Cause	Solution
Forked or misshapen roots	Stony or compact soil	Fine tilth; grow stump varieties
Green shoulders	Exposure to sunlight	Hill up soil around tops
Cracked roots	Irregular watering	Maintain even moisture
Poor germination	Dry or crusty soil surface	Water gently; keep moist during germination (10–21 days)
Small, weak carrots	Overcrowding or low sunlight	Thin properly; full sun required

## Nutritional Benefits of Carrots

That old wife's tale about carrots helping you see in the dark isn't entirely off-target. Carrots are rich in beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A—essential for healthy eyesight.

### **Beta-carotene**

→ Converts to vitamin A (supports vision, immunity)

### **Vitamin K1**

→ Important for bone health

### **Potassium**

→ Regulates blood pressure

### **Fibre**

→ Supports digestive health

### **Antioxidants**

→ Lutein, zeaxanthin (protect eyes from oxidative stress)

## Harvesting and Preparing Carrots

When to Harvest:

**Baby carrots:** 4–6 weeks after sowing

**Maincrop:** 10–16 weeks; test-pull a few to check size

Use a hand fork to loosen soil before pulling to avoid breaking roots.

In the Kitchen:

**Young carrots:** Scrub and eat raw

Older carrots: Peel gently; nutrients are just beneath the skin

Culinary uses: Raw: Salads, coleslaws, crudités

Companion Plants for Carrots

Pairing carrots with the right plants can boost health and reduce pests:

**Onions & Leeks** - Deter carrot fly

**Tomatoes** - Shade soil, reduce weeds

**Basil & Rosemary** - Repel carrot pests

**Radishes** - Mark slow carrot rows, break soil crust

Avoid planting near dill or parsnips, which can attract similar pests or cross-pollinate.

From Soil to Supper

Once harvested, carrots shine in an extraordinary variety of dishes—moving effortlessly from savoury to sweet, rustic to refined. Their natural sweetness intensifies

when cooked, and their texture holds beautifully in everything from broths to bakes.

Try a classic roasted **carrot medley** : toss baby carrots or sliced roots with olive oil, thyme, garlic, and a splash of maple syrup, then roast until caramelised and tender. It's a simple side dish that elevates any meal.

For a hearty, comforting option, blend your harvest into a

spiced carrot and lentil soup with ginger, cumin, and a swirl of coconut milk. It's warming, nutritious, and freezes well for batch cooking.

Or bring a bit of sunshine to your table with a carrot and orange cake,

where grated carrots add moisture and depth, balanced by zesty citrus and a rich cream cheese frosting—a celebration of flavour and texture.

Whatever your culinary style, carrots adapt beautifully, proving that these humble roots are as at home on your plate as they are in the soil.

Carrot Top Pesto Recipe:

- 1 cup carrot tops (washed, thick stems removed)
- 1/2 cup fresh parsley or basil
- 1 garlic clove

- 1/4 cup nuts (pine nuts, walnuts or almonds work well)
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Juice of half a lemon
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: 2 tbsp grated parmesan (or nutritional yeast for a vegan version)

Blitz everything in a food processor until smooth. Add more oil or lemon to taste. Serve with pasta, spread on toast, or swirl into soups.

## What to Prune ?

Many garden plants benefit from pruning, but it's important to prune at the right time of year, in the right way. Winter pruning takes place in winter when plants are dormant.

The aim of winter pruning is to encourage vigour so that fruit trees are productive and shrubs don't outgrow their space. This is the time to prune your [roses](#), cut back [clematis](#) and reshape fruit bushes and [trees](#). Once the leaves have fallen it's easy to see a plant's framework, and with our guides to some of the key plants to prune, it's simple to get started. While plants are dormant, it's also a good time to carry out renovation pruning, to revive plants that can become large and unproductive, such as viburnum and mahonia.

'rod', or arm, that's trained out vertically along support wires.

### Autumn-fruiting raspberries

Cut all the canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries down to within 5cm of the ground every year, from autumn to late winter. This encourages them to send up fresh new stems that will bear fruit in the coming autumn.

### Group 3 clematis

Group 3 clematis flower in mid-late summer. Prune in

February by cutting the plant down to 10cm above the

ground to remove long, old growth and encourage

strong flowering shoots. Cut back Texensis and viticella

hybrids to ground level before new growth emerges.

Pruning in winter can also help control or prevent the spread of disease.

Not all plants are suitable for winter pruning. Some plants should be pruned in pruned in spring, while others are best left until summer or autumn.

### Grapevines

Grapevines are woody, deciduous plants, which ooze sap, or 'bleed' when they're pruned. If cut stems bleed it can weaken the plant, so it's important to prune them in mid-winter, when they're deeply dormant. Other plants that bleed when pruned include acers, birches and figs.

Prune in December or January, by cutting back to a main

Most other groups of clematis only need a light tidy up after flowering. Find out more about [clematis groups](#).

## Wisteria

Wisteria should be pruned twice a year, in December and again in summer, to keep it in check and promote flowering. In winter, prune all sideshoots back to three or four buds. Then after summer flowering, cut back all whippy shoots to 30cm.

## Fruit bushes

Fruit bushes, including blueberries and [blackcurrants](#), plus [gooseberries and redcurrants](#) should be pruned in winter. As a general rule, remove some old wood each year, creating a goblet shape, leaving healthy young branches that will produce large crops in years to come.

## Roses

Cut back bush and climbing roses hard in late winter to promote healthy growth, flowering shoots and plenty of blooms in the summer. Many types of rose can be pruned in winter, including floribundas, hybrid teas, [shrub roses](#) and [climbing roses](#). Rambling roses should be pruned in late summer, but can be renovated

in winter. As a general rule, cut back thin, weak stems the most, and thick, vigorous stems the least. Aim to leave plants anything from 15cm to 45cm tall, depending on the original size of the plant and your preference.

#### Apple and pear trees

Apples and pear trees should be pruned from November to mid-March to encourage fruiting. Pruning will help encourage a good crop by channelling energy into the remaining buds. Aim to create a wine-glass shape, with evenly spaced branches rising up from the trunk in a circle around a hollow centre. Cut off any shoots at the base and remove dead, diseased or crossing branches.

Do not prune stone fruits, such as cherries or plums, in winter as they risk being infected by a fungal disease called silver leaf.

Prune them in early or midsummer instead.

#### Deciduous ornamental trees

From November to March, remove smaller branches from ornamental trees to create a clean, bare stem at least 90-120cm tall. Remove branches that impede access or block mowing, but cut sensitively, thinning out rather than chopping back the whole canopy.

## Deciduous shrubs

Deciduous shrubs should be pruned in winter, particularly those that grow too big for their allocated space. Renovation pruning will revive plants that can become large and unproductive, such as [cotinus](#), [berberis](#) and [flowering currants](#).

## How to make Raspberry Jam

### Prepare

less than 30 mins

### Cook

10 to 30 mins

### Serve

Makes 3 jars of jam

Homemade raspberry jam is so delicious and so easy - you just need equal parts of raspberries and sugar and a watchful eye. You could use other soft fruit too, such as strawberries, blackcurrants or a mixture.

Equipment and preparation: You will need three clean 300ml/10fl oz jars with lids.

### Ingredients

- 450g/1lb **raspberries**, as fresh as possible
- 450g/1lb granulated **sugar**

## Method

1. To clean the jars, preheat the oven to 140C/275F/Gas Wash the jars well in warm soapy water then rinse thoroughly under running water. Leave the jars and lids to dry, upside down, in the oven. (Or you can clean the jars by putting them through the hot cycle of a dishwasher.)
2. Place a few saucers in the freezer to chill. These will be used to test if the cooked jam has reached setting point.
3. Place the raspberries and sugar into a wide-mouth preserving pan over a very low heat, stirring every so often until all the sugar has completely dissolved. It's important to have the heat low so the sugar dissolves rather than melting and sticking to the pan.
4. Bring the fruit mixture to a rapid, rolling boil (when the bubbles cannot be calmed down by stirring with a spoon). Cook for 3-5 minutes until the jam reaches setting point. As your jam approaches setting point, it will thicken and start to boil more slowly, with thicker, heavier bubbles.
5. To test if the jam has reached setting point, first remove the pan from the heat while you test the jam – this is very important. Spoon a little of the jam

6. onto a cold saucer, leave to cool for a few minutes, then push your finger into the jam. If it wrinkles, it is ready. If not, return the pan to the heat and cook the jam for a minute or two more and test again.
7. When the jam has reached setting point, carefully ladle it into the sterilised jars (a sterilised jam funnel is very useful) and twist the lids on while the jam is still hot. The jam will thicken up as it cools and the seal on the jars should dip. If a jar doesn't seal, store it in the fridge and use the jam within a couple of weeks.
8. Sealed jars can be kept in the cupboard for months, although after six months the flavour begins to deteriorate.

## How to sterilise jars

### **Skill level**

Easy

### **Equipment you will need for this technique**

Jars

Baking tray

Saucepan

Storing foods in jars is a great way to preserve fruits, pickles and jams. When pickling or preserving it is very important to sterilise jars properly to remove bacteria which could cause your preserved foods to spoil.

Remove the rubber seals from the jars and set aside.

Wash the jars and lids with hot soapy water and rinse well.

Place them onto a baking tray and into an oven

preheated to 140C/120C Fan/Gas 1 for 20 minutes.

For the rubber seals, place into a pan of boiling water and boil for 3 minutes to sterilise.

## How to Contact the Editor

If you have comments or you know I have given wrong advice then please contact me by email at:

[gareth.richards@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk](mailto:gareth.richards@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk)

If you have something to contribute or have a say on allotment life, then please use my email to send your contributions.

I am going to process the magazine issue once a month, so if there are comments you would like to make they can be answered in future editions.

I would like to add that most of the articles are taken off the web and some well known gardening and allotments magazines have been read in the making of our magazine content.

Happy Allotmenting and best wishes,

Gareth Richards  
Treasurer  
Eliz Flats, Plot 14









Editor : Gareth Richards - Treasurer

Yeovil Allotments Association