



Magazine Issue no. 2  
December 2025

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Hello Fellow Allotmenters,

Cold short days and long cold nights can make finding time to get the plot more difficult. However, it is a good idea to try and keep ahead of winter jobs, especially the winter digging. If the soil is neither frozen nor wet enough to stick to the boots, digging can continue.

Small, regular bursts of activity at the allotment are much better than prolonged irregular sessions. Keep an eye out for slightly tender crops such as celery. If they are still in the ground, they might benefit from protection, such as a covering of straw to prevent too much damage.

Alternatively, crops such as swedes and parsnips benefit from a few hard frosts to convert starches into sugars, thus sweetening them, it is generally good practice to have a few lifted and dry stored in case the ground becomes too frozen to be able to lift as required.

Use the time to get on with jobs that we generally don't get time for through the rest of the year- turn compost heaps, move manure into heaps about the plot ready for digging in, clean out water barrels or collect pea-sticks and such.

Thanks for reading,

Gareth Richards ( Treasurer )

Elizabeth Flats Allotments, Plot 14

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## Allotment Tasks for December

Now is a good time to think about a planting plan for next season. Root crops don't like ground that has been recently manured, or they will split or fork. Any beds earmarked for carrots and parsnips should be given a year off manuring.

December is one of the quietest months of the allotment calendar. As well as planning, it's a good time to browse the exciting range of new **vegetable seeds** for next year. There's nothing nicer than sitting next to a fire thumbing through seed catalogues and making plans. Merry Christmas!

### Allotment flowers in December

- Scatter hardy flower seeds that are about to go out of date around the plot. They'll germinate in spring and surprise you with their random colour.
- Sow **Geranium F2 'Super Hybrid Mix' seeds** under glass. They need a long season to give their best and, if you can provide frost-free conditions, they can be sown now. A minimum temperature of 18C is needed to ensure germination. Geraniums work well in mixed beds interspersed with vegetables.

- I sow **sweet pea seeds** on a warm windowsill in December for growing on in my cold greenhouse. Keep them a little on the dry side over winter and pinch out the middles to encourage more flowers when they start getting too tall.
- Despite the recent cold snap, there are still a few straggly and tired roses trying to bloom. They will benefit from a winter prune (depending on the variety).
- Provided the soil isn't waterlogged, winter is a great time to establish a **new hedge**. Thorny shrubs such as pyracantha or rosa rugosa form a living security hedge which, when established, can deter thefts.
- Hardy cyclamen come to the fore this month and look lovely in shady locations. They take up very little room, even in full flower.
- There's still time to plant last-minute **tulip bulbs** in the ground or containers.

#### Allotment vegetables in December

- I enjoy growing **Pea 'Anubis'** indoors on a bright windowsill. Harvest the pea shoots using a pair of scissors in just three weeks and a second crop should follow soon afterwards. Use a shallow seed tray with good drainage, half filled with damp compost.

- **Mushroom kits** can be a great way to get an indoor winter crop, too. They also make a great Christmas gift!
- A thriving allotment can produce an impressive range of vegetables for Christmas lunch! Last year I contributed homegrown cabbage, cauliflower, garlic, Jerusalem artichokes, leeks, onions, parsnips, potatoes, swede and of course the inevitable sprouts. Christmas Day sprouts are the only ones my eldest daughter will eat!
- **Wild Rocket Dragons Tongue** can be sown all year round and this cut-and-come-again crop can be very successful from winter sowings. Grow on a bright windowsill (without too much direct heat from a radiator) and your rocket will be ready to harvest within 4-6 weeks.
- Continue to make successional sowings of overwintering broad beans either in a cold greenhouse or cold frame. '**Aquadulce Claudia**' is one of my favourite varieties and it hasn't let me down in 10 years. Try '**Luz de Otono**' for beds and '**The Sutton**' for containers.
- Make sure that all brassicas have a net over them to protect them from attack by pigeons.
- Start off your exhibition **onion seeds** using a heated propagator to speed up germination. Show varieties need a long growing season to swell to huge proportions.

#### Allotment fruit in December

- Bare rooted fruit bushes can be planted out this month as long as the ground isn't waterlogged or frozen.

- Create a new **strawberry** bed this month. Buy bare root plants now or use rooted runners from your own plants.
- Plant bare root **plum** and **damson** trees, adding plenty of mulch made from rotted manure or organic matter.
- There's still time to divide large clumps of rhubarb and replant, or give some away to gardening friends or fellow plot holders.
- The dormant winter period is ideal for tackling old and neglected fruit trees that you may have inherited when taking on a new plot. Winter prune your **apple** and **pear trees** by removing dead branches and crossing growth. The aim is to open up the centre to create a good airflow.
- Avoid the temptation to prune plum trees over winter. This will encourage the destructive and damaging silver leaf disease.
- Blackcurrant bushes should be pruned to ensure a regular supply of new wood and maintain cropping. Cut a third of the older, darker wood close to the base during the dormant months between November and February. This is a great job to do when the soil is too wet to work!
- Cut back autumn-fruiting raspberries to ground level.
- Fruit cages come in different shapes and sizes and you can even build your own. They're very useful, and this is the ideal time to purchase one, especially if you're planning a new fruit garden on your plot.

#### Crops to harvest in December

- If you've grown potatoes for Christmas, harvest them as soon as possible unless they're in pots or under cover.

- Your autumn and winter **cabbages** should be ready to harvest this month.
- **Brussels sprouts**, leeks, **Jerusalem artichokes** and **swedes** should be ready to harvest too.
- Keep picking kale.
- Harvest your **late season potatoes** and remember to save a few for Christmas dinner!
- Pull **parsnips** as you need them – they should be lovely and sweet now!

#### General December allotment jobs

- Keep off beds this month to avoid compacting the ground when it's wet. Use planks to spread your weight if you need access.
- Take hardwood cuttings to propagate woody perennials like **roses** or herbs like **rosemary**. Cut a finger-long length of stem just below a pair of buds. Bury the cutting up to two thirds of its height in a pot to root.
- December is a great time to do big jobs like maintaining or installing paths, building **raised beds** and changing your plot layout.
- If you're looking for an allotment hedging plant, **Pyracantha 'Red Star'** is a great choice. With bright red berries that last well into winter, this variety has less thorns than some and is great for the birds.
- Turn compost over regularly to deter rodents.
- Dig over your soil on a dry day. This improves the structure and allows larger clods to break down in winter frost.

- Check your shed and greenhouse for damage, clean the windows and tidy inside. Apply a wood preservative while there's no greenery in the way.
- Look after your tools. Sharpen and oil secateurs to keep rust at bay.
- If you've taken on a new plot, carefully plan the space. Start with where you want your shed, **compost bins**, and long term crops like **asparagus** and **fruit trees** to go.

### Planning ahead

- Place your seed order for the coming year to make sure you get exactly what you want before stocks get low.
- Family asking you for Christmas present ideas? A **heated propagator** and some seeds from your newly made wish-list might fill your stocking rather nicely!

# BASEBALL

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

BAT  
GLOVE  
BALL  
HELMET

CAP  
BASE  
BULLPEN  
DUGOUT

SCOREBOARD  
CLEATS  
ACE  
OUTFIELDER



# BASKETBALL

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

HOOP  
COURT  
BALL  
SHOOT

SCORE  
REBOUND  
LAYUP  
DUNK

DRIBBLE  
PASS  
FOUL  
TEAM



# Crossword no.36

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14					15					16			
17					18					19			
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23	24	25	26					27					
28						29	30	31					
32						33				34	35	36	
37						38				39			
40					41					42			
				43					44				
45	46	47						48					
49						50	51	52					
53					54	55				56	57	58	59
60					61					62			
63					64					65			

## ACROSS

1. Heroic tales
6. Sun-dried brick
11. Doctrine
14. Insolence
15. A radioactive gaseous element
16. Twosome
17. Captivity
19. 3 in Roman numerals
20. Anagram of "Wanes"
21. Violent disturbances
23. Goddess of the moon (Greek mythology)
27. Head protector
28. Manifesting partiality
32. Angry
33. Intend to express or convey
34. Hyrax
37. Not a victory
38. Microbes
39. Net
40. Before
41. Strainer
42. A strong lightweight wood
43. Held in contempt
45. Express dissent
48. Conceive or envisage

## 49. A loud resonant

- noise
50. Stitched
53. Faucet
54. Germ killer
60. Earned Run Average
61. Not silently
62. Connecting points
63. 10
64. Abominable snowmen
65. Objectives

## DOWN

1. South southeast
2. Advice columnist \_\_\_\_
- Landers
3. Petrol
4. American Sign Language
5. A native tribe of the Tennessee River
6. District
7. Expletive
8. Lyric poems
9. French for "Good"
10. Beseech
11. Regional jargon
12. A series of connected rooms
13. Damp
18. Swerve
22. Sick
23. A structural support
24. Mistake
25. Rental agreement
26. Newts
27. Ancient units of Hebrew liquid measure
29. Chieftain
30. Neuron
31. Makes docile
34. 4th letter of the Greek alphabet
35. A useful or valuable quality
36. Shelter from sunlight
38. The central meaning or theme
39. A ceremonial staff

41. Medical center on a ship
42. Sheets and blankets
43. Lair
44. Wharf
45. Group of 8
46. Make a loud noise
47. Land of the Rising Sun
50. An inhabitant of northern Great Britain
51. Pocketbook
52. Marries
55. Beer
56. Speak lovingly
57. A mountain on Crete
58. Delete (abbrev.)
59. S

## 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.

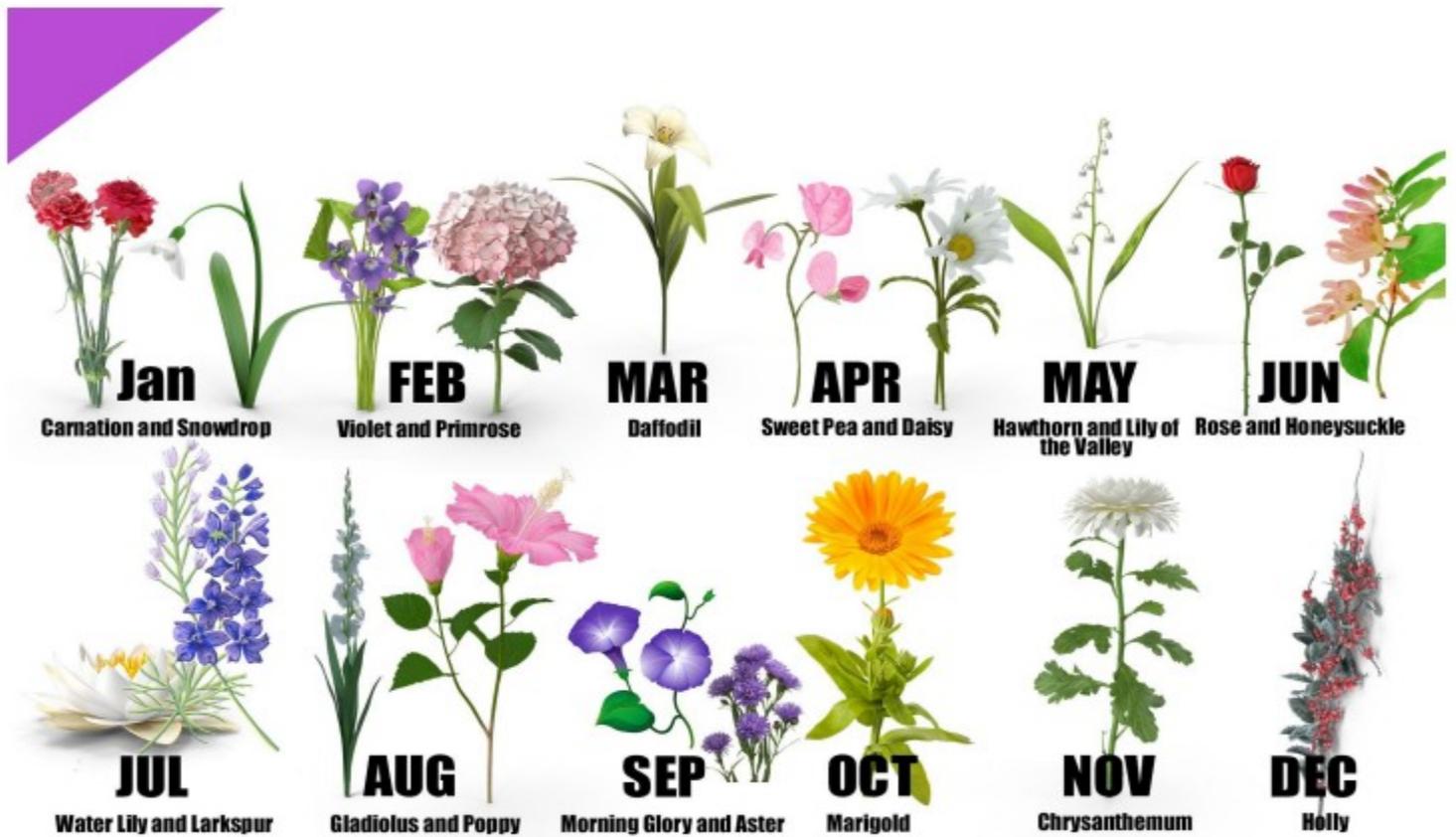
Your annual membership card gives you the time and dates of meetings for the year ahead. Our membership night for renewals is every March and again a discount night is offered for any garden centre items which are not on special offer.

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



## 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.

There are two Birth Flowers for December, Holly and Paper White Narcissus. Although most Allotmenters grow fruit and vegetables, some of you will grow flowers as well.



Holly



Paper White Narcissus

# Holly

It's that red berry time of year, and with bunches of fresh holly leaves or branches of winterberries going for \$5 to \$10 apiece, it only makes sense to try growing these winter beauties at home! Here's what to know about these easy-to-grow shrubs.

## Growing Winterberry

Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) is one of several native North American hollies. It grows 5 to 15 feet tall depending on the cultivar and, unlike some other hollies, is deciduous, meaning that it loses its leaves in autumn. Although it does have colorful fall foliage, it is grown mainly for its bright berries.

Winterberry is very cold hardy and will thrive in a wet location, so they can be planted along the edge of a damp woods or streamside. They will grow in part shade but will produce more berries the more sun they get. Most varieties bear red berries, but a few have yellow.

They are excellent for cutting and making holiday decorations. Just a few sprigs of winterberry make the transition from fall to holiday decorating.

## Growing English Holly

If you like the evergreen look of classic English holly, there are many cultivars to choose from. The *Ilex* genus is a large one, with over 400 species native to North America, China, Japan, Europe, and North Africa, and there are thousands of hybrids. They range in size from tiny shrubs to 50-foot-tall, pyramid-shaped trees. They may have glossy leaves in colors such as blue-green, dark green, and even variegated with white or yellow edges.

## Great for Birds

Both deciduous and evergreen hollies offer wildlife habitat and are an important source of winter food for birds. Deer also find holly to be a tasty treat and can destroy an evergreen shrub in no time if they are hungry enough.

## It Takes Two

Hollies have small greenish-white flowers and the plants are dioecious, meaning that a male and female plant must be present for fruiting to occur. They are pollinated by insects so they need to be within sight of each other and also need to bloom at the same time of year. A good ratio is one male plant for every six females. Only the female plants will have berries.

Plant your holly bushes in fertile, slightly acidic soil. Evergreen varieties like it moist but well-draining, while winterberry can be planted in swampy areas that are under water for part of the year. Holly roots are close to the surface, so mulch them to keep them cool and moist.

## Holly Through the Ages

The use of holly in holiday celebrations began long ago.

- Ancient Romans gave holly to their friends during Saturnalia, a late December harvest festival. It was hung in their homes as a charm to protect them against evil spirits.
- In Great Britain the druids decorated their homes at the winter solstice with holly as a symbol of the renewal of life and light.
- Walking sticks made of holly wood were popular into the 19th century as protection against mad dogs and wild animals.

- It was also believed that the planting of holly next to the house would not only ward off evil spirits but protect against lightning bolts!

There are many reasons to place holly high on your wishlist of plants for next season.

Happy Holly Days!

## How to Grow Paperwhite Narcissus Indoors: Easy Winter Blooms



### How to Grow Paperwhites

1. Put a 2 to 3-inch layer of pea stone, marbles, or decorative stones in a shallow, watertight container. A clear glass one will give you a good view of the roots' development. If using soil, fill a pot 1/2 full of potting soil or a soil-less mix.
2. Place bulbs in pointy-end up. They can be close together, almost touching. No more than 1 inch apart is best.
3. Anchor the bulbs with soil or more pebbles, exposing the top third of the bulbs.

1. Water those in the soil thoroughly to settle them in and then about once a week after that or as needed to keep them evenly moist. For the pebble-planted ones, add water to the container until it is just below the bottom of the bulbs. If they sit in water, they will rot. Add more water as needed.
2. Place them in a dark, cool location, around 50 to 60°F. If kept too warm, they may not flower well, producing spindly plants.
3. Watch for rooting. This is easier to see in the pebble-planted ones, especially those in a clear glass container. In the soil-planted pots, look for roots poking out of the pot's drainage holes. It takes about three weeks after planting for roots to form.
4. Move the pots of rooted bulbs to a sunny, bright spot with relatively cool temperatures (60-65°F). They should start to bloom 3 to 4 weeks later. If they don't get enough light as they grow, the plants will be leggy and have difficulty holding up their blossoms. As the plants grow, turn the pot every few days to keep the foliage growing straight. Give them some sticks for support.
5. Researchers at Cornell University have found that a little alcohol helps keep stems and leaves short but does not harm the flowers.

### **How Long Do Paperwhites Bloom For?**

Paperwhites will bloom for about 14 days and perhaps longer if conditions are favorable. As discussed above, they need bright light but don't like direct light, which will cause them to burn or dry up. Water only when the top 1 inch of their soil feels dry to your touch. Do not fertilize paperwhites. Remove faded flowers, including the petals and swollen seedpod at the base of each flower.

## What to Do With Paperwhites After They Bloom

Paperwhites are considered annuals indoors. They are only considered perennials when grown outdoors in Southern California and parts of Texas.

Since these bulbs have given their all to produce the blossoms you just enjoyed, it is recommended that you throw them out or compost them when they are done blooming.

If you live in frost-free zones 9 to 11, you could plant them outside, and, fingers crossed, they might bloom again in a few years, after they have regained their strength.

Indoors, if you plant a few bulbs each month, you'll enjoy fresh flowers all winter!

## 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 Parsnip and the Brussel Sprout.

Just to re-iterate all my work is taken off gardening websites and allotments magazines. I have only had an allotment for three and a bit 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 Parsnip and the Brussel Sprout.

## Parsnips

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sow			S	S	S							
Harvest									H	H	H	H

No Christmas dinner would be complete without a side order of parsnips. The flavoursome roots are delicious roasted but can also be added to soups and stews. They're easy to grow although they take a long time to mature – seeds sown in spring won't yield roots until autumn.

Parsnips are a rich source of vitamin C, which helps to maintain healthy teeth and gums. They're high in dietary fibre to reduce cholesterol and aid digestion.

### How to grow parsnips

Sow parsnip seed direct in the soil in spring in well-prepared, weed-free soil. Keep young seedlings watered in dry conditions and weed the area regularly. Parsnips are ready to harvest from autumn. For the sweetest parsnips, don't harvest until after the first frosts. They can be kept in the ground until you're ready to eat them.

Parsnips do best in an open sunny site with free-draining, well-worked soil with no stones. Overly fertile soil can cause the roots to fork, so sow them where you haven't dug in any compost or manure in the last year.

Sow seeds directly into the soil from mid-spring, after the soil has warmed up. Parsnip seed can be tricky to germinate. Always use fresh seed and be patient – they can take up to three weeks to sprout.

### Caring for parsnip plants

Parsnips have a very long growing season. However, once the plants have established, they more or less look after themselves. They don't need extra watering, except in really dry conditions – a good watering every two-three weeks should be fine. They don't need feeding. Keep the area around them weed free to prevent seedlings being smothered. In early summer, plants may be given a boost by mulching between the rows with compost.

### Harvesting parsnips

The roots will reach full size by autumn, so you can start pulling up fresh parsnips as required from September onwards. Loosen the soil around the roots before lifting. Parsnips taste sweeter the longer they're left in the ground, particularly after a hard frost.

### Storing parsnips

The best way to store parsnips is to leave them in the ground until you want to eat them. However they can also be kept in a [clamp](#) of sand for up to four months. Alternative, chop, par-boil and freeze them.

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## Growing parsnips - problem-solving

The biggest enemy of parsnips is the [carrot fly](#). The larvae of these small, black flies feed on the developing parsnip roots. Prevention is the best method of dealing with this pest. Put up 60cm barriers around your bed of parsnips, or cover your crop with horticultural fleece. Also, avoid crushing any foliage when you're thinning out, as the scent will attract flies.

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## Organic tip

Try sowing parsnip seeds mixed with annual flowers, which can help to deter carrot fly.

## Parsnip varieties to grow

'Albion' RHS AGM – a canker-resistant variety, producing long, smooth, white-skinned, roots with sweet flavour and good texture. The roots store well

- 'White Gem' – a reliable, sweet-flavoured variety with good canker resistance
- 'Archer' RHS AGM – good yields and flavour, this is a good canker resistant variety
- '[Palace](#)' RHS AGM – another high yielding variety, with good canker resistance
- 'Gladiator' RHS AGM – good flavour and especially suited to heavy soils

## Brussel Sprout

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Sow			S	S	S							
Plant					P	P						
Harvest	H	H	H					H	H	H	H	H

Brussels sprouts are a popular vegetable in the cabbage (Brassica) family, and a staple part of the traditional Christmas lunch. Named after their popularity in Belgium, they are an excellent source of vitamins C and D, along with folic acid and dietary fibre. The vegetable also contains anti-cancer compounds called glucosinolates, which makes them a 'super food'.

Brussels sprouts are slow-growing, and can take up to 31 weeks to produce a crop. However, they crop from autumn through to spring, providing a valuable source of food in winter, when little else is available.

## How to grow Brussels sprouts

Sow seeds in spring and plant out into fertile soil after all risk of frost has passed. Water regularly, feed with an organic nitrogen-rich fertiliser and stake in autumn to prevent wind rock. Harvest the sprouts as and when they are produced.

## Where to grow Brussels sprouts

Brussels sprouts do best in moist but well-drained, fertile soil, ideally which has been enhanced with well-rotted manure or compost. Grow in full sun for best results.

## How to plant Brussels sprouts

For a successive harvest, sow seeds every fortnight from March to May, in pots or modular seed trays – one seed per module or small pot – and keep them in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame. After around four weeks (or when seedlings are large enough to handle), transplant them into individual pots of peat-free compost. Then, from May onwards, when plants are 10-15cm tall, harden them off before planting out into well-prepared soil enriched with well-rotted horse manure. Space plants 60cm apart with 75cm between rows. Firm the soil around the plants thoroughly, as Brussels sprouts do best in firm soil. Water well and continue to water throughout the growing season, particularly in periods of drought. If cabbage

root fly is a problem in your area, fix cabbage collars around the base of the stems.

## How to care for Brussels sprouts

Feed fortnightly with an organic nitrogen-rich fertiliser. Prevent weeds from competing with the plants by hoeing regularly. Stake plants in autumn and earth up around the roots to prevent them rocking in high winds. Remove any yellowing leaves from the plants as they can harbour disease.

## Growing Brussels sprouts: pests and diseases

**Blueish leaves that wilt in sunlight:** are likely to be cabbage root fly. Look out for white maggots around the roots. Use cabbage collars around the base of the stems to prevent further attack.

**Caterpillars eating the leaves:** these are most likely the larvae of the large and small white butterfly (known as cabbage white butterflies). Gently transfer caterpillars to a sacrificial crop of nasturtiums, which are in the same family and will be readily eaten by both butterfly species.

**Stunted growth:** this is most likely caused by clubroot, a fungal disease that thrives in acid soil and can remain in the soil for several years, reinfecting newly planted plants. Adding ground limestone or calcified seaweed can help prevent its spread,

however if you do find clubroot in your garden or allotment it's best to avoid growing brassicas for up to nine years.

**Blown sprouts:** these are open sprouts as opposed to the tight 'buttons' you expect. Causes include poor and infirm soil.

### How to harvest Brussels sprouts

Brussels sprouts ripen from the base of the stalk, so harvest them from the bottom as and when they are ready to pick. You can also cut the whole stalk as this will ensure the sprouts will keep for longer.

### Advice on buying Brussels sprouts

- There's a huge variety of Brussels sprouts to choose from, with early varieties ready from August and later varieties cropping until March
- Ensure you have the right growing conditions for the plants, and remember they need rich, fertile soil to grow well

### Varieties of Brussels sprout to grow

Brussels Sprout 'Brodie' F1 Hybrid - the supermarket Brussels sprout, with no bitterness. **Height x Spread:** 75cm x 50cm

Brussels Sprout 'Brilliant' F1 Hybrid - firm buttons cropping from early autumn. **H x S:** 75cm x 50cm

Brussels Sprout 'Bedford Fillbasket' - bears large, firm sprouts with a good flavour. **H x S:** 75cm x 50cm

# The Ultimate Guide to Mulching & Why Your Garden Loves It!



## What is Mulching?

**Mulching refers to placing a protective and potentially nutritional barrier around your plants to improve health and the garden's appearance.** Compost, pebbles, manure or fabric is 'mulch'.

You don't have to mulch, but you'll be surprised at what a difference it can make, particularly if you use bio-degradable mulch that feeds the plants as it protects them.

There are many types of mulch that can be used to protect the plants and soil in your garden. It has few drawbacks and can really improve the look both in terms of tidiness and how your plants fare. It's one of the best things you can do to help your plants, along with watering and **dealing with pests**.



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## What Can You Use?

**Mulches are available in two types.** They are *bio-degradable* and *non bio-degradable*. All of them protect the soil from excess rain, drying out, pest damage, and weed growth.

The benefits of bio-degradable mulch:

These types of mulch slowly break down and release nutrients into the soil. They need replacing once the layer has rotted down, but as a form of slow release food it can't be beaten.

Your options are:

- **Mushroom compost** is a magnificent feast of nutrients, and you may get stray edible mushroom popping up.
- **Wood chippings** are one of the smartest to look at and slowest to decay.
- **Rotted manure** is another great source of food, but make sure it's well-rotted.
- **Straw** can blow away but it rots down slowly and improves soil structure.
- **Seaweed** is another great food source.
- **Grass clippings** can work but only if you haven't used **weed-killer** and keep the layer shallow so it doesn't go rotten or slimy.

The benefits of non-biodegradable mulch:

These types don't add anything in terms of nutrients to the soil, but they protect what is there and last a long time.

- **Slate, shingle and pebbles** look smart, they are easy to lay and don't wash off.

●**Sheets and woven fabrics** are great time savers. Choose permeable versions so the rain can soak through and cut slits for planting. Fabric suppresses weeds and holds moisture under the soil. If it looks artificial put bark chipping or stones on top.



### How Do You Mulch?

If you're using nutrient rich mulch like mushroom compost or manure it needs to be at least two to three inches thick to have an effect. Place it around your plants before or after frosts on damp soils, and weed first or you'll have dandelions like trifids. Put enough mulch down so it mirrors the length of the branches overhead. If you have lots of mulch available cover up all bare soil, if not go around the plants.

Fabrics and sheets are tricky to put in place after you've planted so the best option is to use them when you're creating a bed. Aggregates, like stone and pebbles, can go down at any time of year as can bark chippings.

### Where To Get Mulch?

Garden centres and online stores sell mulch, but it can work out expensive if you have a large area and need to mulch every year. Stones and fabrics cost more to begin with but last a lot longer.

If you are fed up with the cost of bio-degradable mulch make your own by chopping up your organic waste with a **garden shredder** or using a **mulching lawn mower**.



Garden shredders are an excellent way to use up the trimmings and pruning waste from your garden. Instead of sending it to the local council, who will compost it and then offer to sell it back to you, do it yourself, for free. You could have a bonfire, but damp prunings don't light easily and your neighbours won't appreciate it. A shredder on the other hand is tidy, doesn't ruin washing, and it's efficient. It will help with two garden essentials:

#### ●Compost

If you have a compost heap you'll know it takes months even years to rot down. If you shred the tough stuff first it takes a lot

less time. Useable compost in four months is possible if you shred finely, and because it rots down quickly you'll find fewer weeds.

Young plants love compost and your existing container-bound plants will enjoy an upgrade into a new home, or even a topping up. Each year you should remove an inch of the old compost from your container and refill with fresh.

### ●Mulching

**Chop up your woody material in a garden shredder** to make perfect protective mulch that will last around three years, and eventually rots down to feed your plants.

A shredder also cuts down on the amount of time prunings are left in your garden. The longer you leave that heap the more wildlife is going to move in. Hedgehogs, slow worms, pollinators and birds will all take cover there. When you throw it away, light a fire or otherwise move it, these creatures are disturbed. Shredding it straight away just seems fairer.

Even if you don't need mulches or compost, and you don't fancy selling it locally, shredded garden waste is much easier to take to the tip than large branches and sticks. It makes less mess in your car and it's easier to carry.

It seems **wasteful and pointless to throw away woody garden waste when we spend all this money on compost** and mulching. Self sufficiency is the way to go. Your neighbours and friends may well donate their prunings too – rent out your shredder or take the mulch in payment.

**Garden shredders** don't make as much noise as you'd think and they are easy to store. It's an investment for sure, but if you

have a big space with lots of garden waste don't pay the council to remove it and then buy compost and mulch – chop it up with a shredder and make your garden beautiful.

### What Are The Benefits Of Mulching

We've touched on this lightly already, but the benefits of mulching are huge so we'll look again. Here's what mulching can do for your garden:

- Mulch retains moisture so you'll need to water less. Organic mulch absorbs water and releases it over time. Both types stop sun and wind removing moisture from soil.
- Mulch suppresses weeds so your plants get all the available nutrients and you avoid backache.
- Mulch prevents soil erosion. Rain, wind, animals and watering can wash soil from your growing areas. Mulch keeps it in place.
- Bio-degradable mulch releases a drip feed of nutrients which means your plants will grow steadily and surely.
- All types of mulch deter pests like snails and slugs who prefer smooth surfaces.
- All mulches protect against root damage from frost and heat.
- Bio-degradable mulch improves the soil texture as it breaks down. Worms love damp, nutrient rich soil and in return they aerate and feed your plants with nutrients of their own.
- All mulches keep flowers and fruits away from the bare soil.
- Mulches just look smart, tidy and finished. It's the visual equivalent of dusting a cake with icing sugar, and who doesn't want a tidy smart garden?

## Are There Any Drawbacks To Mulching?

Not really. Mulch is recommended by gardening experts but there are some things to avoid when you apply it.

- Direct contact with stems and branches can lead to rot and damage. This can weaken the plants considerably.
- Cheap, low quality mulches can introduce weeds or disease.
- Mulch lowers the ground temperature so therefore seeds and young plants get off to a slower start. It's best to mulch around established plants.
- Some of the bigger pieces of mulch, such as bark or stone, can provide hiding places for slug and snails.
- You'll have to water more to start with to ensure liquid reaches roots and doesn't just soak up in the mulch.
- You might spot a white line of fungus in your bio-degradable mulch. Do not panic! This is beneficial saprophytic fungi. Leave it alone, it doesn't hurt and is just having a snack of the rotting mulch. It'll help break down the organic matter and support plant life.

Overall the benefits of mulching vastly outweigh any complications. You'll see a big improvement in your plant growth if you mulch.

# How to roast a turkey



## Prepare

less than 30 mins

## Cook

over 2 hours

## Serve

Serves 8

## Ingredients

- 1 free-range **turkey** weighing 4kg/8lb 11oz
- salt and freshly ground **black pepper**
- 175g/6oz unsalted or lightly salted **butter**

### **For the bread sauce**

- 450ml/15fl oz full-cream **milk**
- 1 small **onion**
- 4 **cloves**
- 75-100g (2½ to 3½ oz) fresh white **breadcrumbs**
- freshly grated **nutmeg**, to taste
- 40g/1½oz butter or 2 tbsp **double cream**
- **cayenne pepper**, for sprinkling

### **Method**

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4. Check that you have not left the plastic bag of giblets lurking inside the bird. Put the turkey in a large, deep roasting tin. Season generously all over with salt and pepper and massage the seasoning into the skin.

2. Melt the butter in a large saucepan. Fold the muslin in four and lower it into the melted butter, pushing it in so that it soaks up virtually all the butter.

3. Lift out the butter-soaked muslin and lay it over the turkey, making sure that it completely covers the breast and upper thighs.

4. Pour about 300ml/½ pint water into the roasting tin and slide it into the oven. Cook for approximately 3 hours 20 minutes, basting the bird approximately every 30 minutes with the pan juices.

5. Test that the turkey is properly cooked in just the same way as you would a chicken. Pierce the thickest part of the thigh with a skewer. If the juices run clear then the turkey is done. If they are

1. pink, slide it straight back into the oven for a further 15 minutes before testing again and continue to do this until they do run clear.

2. Once it's done, transfer the turkey to a large serving dish, discard the muslin and leave in a warm place to rest for at least half an hour. Cover with foil to stop the meat going cold.

3. While the turkey is cooking, make the bread sauce. Pour the milk into a heavy-based saucepan. Stick the four cloves into the onion, add to the milk and bring very, very slowly up to the boil, so that the milk has plenty of time to absorb the flavours of the onion and the cloves.

4. Remove the onion and cloves and stir enough breadcrumbs into the milk to give a thick sauce. Season to taste with nutmeg and salt. Stir in the butter or cream, adjust the seasoning, then spoon into a warm serving bowl, sprinkle with a little cayenne pepper and place on the table. If making in advance, leave to cool, then cover with cling film and store in the fridge for up to three days. Reheat thoroughly before serving. Sprinkle with the cayenne pepper just before serving.

### **Recipe tips**

You'll need a large piece of butter muslin (available from good cook shops or fabric shops) for this most classic of Christmas roast turkey recipes.

## How to Contact the Editor

If you have comments or you know I have given wrong advice then please contact me by email at [gre1ath@gmail.com](mailto:gre1ath@gmail.com)

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 year, so there is plenty of time for your comments.

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 first magazine.

Happy Allotmenting and best wishes,

Gareth Richards  
Treasurer  
Eliz Flats, Plot 14

Blank



Editor : Gareth Richards - Treasurer

Yeovil Allotments Association