



Magazine Issue 6
April 2026

Hello Fellow Allotmenters,

“April showers bring May flowers” is an old proverb that highlights April’s rainy weather.

April is known for its rainfall, which nourishes the ground and leads to a spectacular bloom of flowers in May. The phrase serves as a reminder that even gloomy days lead to brighter, more beautiful times.

April is a month that embodies the spirit of spring and renewal. With its vibrant holidays, rich history, and the unmistakable signs of nature coming back to life, April is a time for growth, appreciation, and fun.

Whether you’re celebrating Earth Day, enjoying the cherry blossoms, or sharing a laugh on April Fool’s Day, this month offers countless reasons to embrace the season and make the most of the beautiful days ahead. So, take a moment to enjoy all that April has to offer, from the blooming flowers to the warmth of the sun and everything in between!

Those born in April have the dazzling diamond as their birthstone. Known for its brilliance, clarity, and strength, the diamond symbolizes everlasting love, purity, and prosperity.

People born in April fall under the zodiac signs of Aries (March 21 – April 19) or Taurus (April 20 – May 20). Aries are known for their bold, ambitious, and enthusiastic personalities, while Taurus individuals are often described as reliable, patient, and grounded. These signs bring a dynamic mix of energy to April, balancing bold action with a steady appreciation for life’s comforts.

Thanks for reading,
Gareth Richards (Treasurer)
Elizabeth Flats Allotments, Plot 14

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Allotment Tasks for April

Daylight begins to lengthen, but the weather can often still be unpredictable. Sharp showers can do a lot of damage to young plants and soft new growths. Many areas will still be seeing frosts overnight, but that should start to ease off slightly and certainly lift sooner. Where the soil was winter dug and left rough, the action of frost, and snow should have done wonders to break down the large lumps. When the soil begins to dry on the surface areas can be trod and raked down to a fine tilth ready for direct sowing in the coming weeks.

Although the greenhouse will start to require more regular ventilation, try to only use the roof vents, as side vents and doors will let in cool draughts which will not do young plants and seedlings any good.

Where young plants are in cold frames, these should also be ventilated a little through the day to acclimatise them to the outside air but should still be closed off an evening. As the weather slowly improves, early signs of pests can often be found – be vigilant and deal with them at the earliest stages before they become infestations.

If not already done so, check pH in beds that are to grow brassicas. Lime if the test shows the soil on the acidic side.

Vegetables

- All plants in frames will require more ventilation.
- Prepare celery and bean trenches.
- Make successional sowings of salad onions, lettuce, radish under cloches or frames.
- Plant new potatoes early in the month if not already done so, and second earlies towards the end of the month.
- Early potatoes already planted and showing above the soil may require frost protection – draw a little soil over any growths.
- Sow Kohl rabi.
- Feed spring cabbage and over wintering onions, garlic, shallots etc

Fruit

- Watch for 'Big Bud' on black currants – dispose of badly affected plants or pick off buds on lightly affected.
- Keep any new growth on trained fruit trees well tied in.
- Remove grease-bands from fruit trees if used.

Greenhouse

- Ventilate greenhouses freely on warm days, and damp down a little in the mornings.
-

- Thin out seedlings from last month's sowings according to packet instructions.
- Transplant broad bean seedlings sown in pots to their final positions and cover with fleece if frost is forecast.
- Keep new growth on trained fruit trees tied in to support their structure.

- Fruit Tasks

Fruit crops require careful attention in April to ensure a healthy harvest later in the year.

- Watch for 'Big Bud' on blackcurrants—remove affected buds or dispose of heavily infected plants.
- Remove grease bands from fruit trees if used over winter.
- Thin out heavy fruit sets on peaches and nectarines, leaving fruits about 10cm apart to allow them to develop properly.
- Apply a high-potassium feed to fruit trees and bushes to support flowering and fruit development.
- Protect early blossoms from frost by covering them with fleece on cold nights.
- Mulch around the base of fruit trees and bushes to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.

Greenhouse & Indoor Sowing

For those with a greenhouse, April is a crucial time to get summer crops started.

- Sow **tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, courgettes, pumpkins, marrows, runner beans, French beans, and sweetcorn in pots.**
- Prick out seedlings in trays as soon as they develop their first true leaves to prevent overcrowding.
- Transplant greenhouse tomatoes into growing bags or large containers and tie stems to supports.
- Sow sweet peas in deep pots and keep frost-free in a greenhouse or sunny windowsill.
- Plant up hanging baskets and summer bedding but keep them indoors until after the last frost.
- **Sow herbs like basil, chives, parsley, fennel, and coriander** in pots or trays for a steady supply throughout the season.
- Open greenhouse doors and vents on warm days to improve air circulation, or install automatic vent openers to regulate temperature.

Flower Tasks

April is a wonderful time to prepare your flower garden for a summer display.

- Stake sweet peas if not already done to support their climbing growth.
- Pot up and start dahlias in containers indoors to get a head start on the season.
- Plant out gladioli corms for successional flowering through the summer.
- Pinch out the shoot tips of fuchsias to encourage bushier growth and more flowers.
- Deadhead spring bulbs like daffodils and tulips to prevent seed production and encourage bulb growth.
- Sow hardy annuals such as poppies, cornflowers, and calendula directly outdoors for summer colour.

Weeding & Pest Control

Keeping on top of weeds and pests early in the season will make maintenance easier later on.

- Continue weeding, focusing on perennial weeds before they take hold.
- Hoe regularly to prevent annual weed seedlings from growing and competing with crops.
- Check for early aphid infestations and blast them off with water or use a soft soap spray.
- Protect young plants from slugs and snails with organic deterrents such as copper tape or wool pellets.

- Use netting to keep birds off newly sown seeds and young seedlings.
- Encourage beneficial insects like ladybirds and lacewings by planting pollinator-friendly flowers.

What to Harvest

April marks the beginning of the harvest season for some early crops.

- Spring onions – Harvest for fresh, mild-flavoured salads.
- Rhubarb – Pick young, tender stems but leave some to continue growing.
- Purple sprouting broccoli – Continue harvesting while it's in season.
- Overwintered spinach and chard– Pick regularly to encourage new growth.
- Leeks – The last of the winter leeks can be pulled up before they bolt.
- Early radishes – Harvest young radishes for the best flavour.

By staying on top of these tasks, you'll ensure a productive and healthy allotment for the growing season ahead. Happy gardening!

Puzzle Corner

MINERALS

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QUARTZ
DIAMOND
GOLD
AMETHYST

TOPAZ
MICA
PYRITE
EMERALD

SILVER
IRON
RUBY
HEMATITE

HALITE
OLIVINE
SAPPHIRE
TOURMALINE



Disney Princesses

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JASMINE

MERIDA

ARIEL

CINDERELLA

RAPUNZEL

POCAHONTAS

TIANA

AURORA

BELLE

MULAN

SNOW WHITE

ELSA

ANNA

ASHA

MOANA

RAJA



Crossword no.172

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| 66 | | | | | | 67 | | | | 68 | | | |
| 69 | | | | | | 70 | | | | 71 | | | |

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ACROSS

1. A portable container
5. Spheres
9. Hyrax
14. Indebtedness
15. Sport played on horseback
16. Bowel cleansing
17. Scarce
18. French for "State"
19. Discoloration
20. Conspicuous
22. Dispatches
23. Anagram of "Wanes"
24. Senior member of a group
26. Sprocket
29. Expunges
33. Died
38. Clothes
39. Hearing organs
40. Supplications
42. Operatic solo
43. Incarnation
45. Most small
47. Affectedly modest
48. Whiskey
49. A prehistoric Indo-European people
52. Smudge
57. Beach
60. Workbench
63. Craze
64. Door-to-door cosmetic company

65. A slender woodwind instrument
66. Not inner
67. Avatar of Vishnu
68. Tear
69. Smooth and shiny
70. To a great depth
71. Mid-month days

DOWN

1. Army units of 2 or more divisions
2. Cognizant
3. Anagram of "Worse"
4. Swelling under the skin
5. Not closed
6. Repetitive learning
7. Flavorless
8. Latin for "Below" or "Under"
9. After-dinner sweet
10. Occurring before birth
11. Characterized by malice
12. Amongst
13. Grandmothers
21. Native of Peru
25. Zestful
27. Fish hawk
28. Mousse
30. The founder of a family
31. Goddess of discord (Greek mythology)
32. Chair
33. No longer alive
34. Overhang of a roof
35. Pack to capacity
36. Mouths of rivers
37. Anagram of "Led"
41. What we breathe
44. Unpaid debts
46. Quiz or exam
50. Accolade
51. Exploded stars
53. Native of New Zealand
54. Receded

55. Without company
56. Tall woody perennial grasses
57. Dirty air
58. Drag
59. Upon
61. City in Italy
62. Strike sharply

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

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 1st 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 1st 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

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Allotment Rules and the Law

Your first port of call to take on an allotment plot would be to contact your local authority; Your local Parish/Town/Borough/City Council who may run your local allotment sites or be able to provide contact details for private allotment societies in your area. This varies from area to area and availability can be limited with long waiting lists.

If you find that there is no allotment site in your local area, you can apply to your local authority under Section 23 of the **1908 Small Holdings and Allotments Act** whereby all local authorities have a mandatory obligation to provide allotment provision excluding London (**London Government Act 1963**). This can be a long process and you will be required to bring together at least five other local council tax-payers who would also like an allotment plot to write an official letter requesting this provision.

If you have local knowledge of nearby land; particularly disused land, it would be worthwhile to find out who owns the land and approach them. Many keen growers are transforming their own gardens into kitchen gardens and vegetable patches to be able to grow their own.

There is also the option of joining a **Community Garden**, however that option negates the opportunity to independently grow and lay out your plot as you desire.

An allotment society will usually be run by an elected committee who will collectively make decisions on funding, equipment and works to be carried out on site and any actions to be taken.

They will invite members to an annual AGM meeting where plot holders will have the opportunity to vote in committee members and voice any concerns about the allotment site.

Committee members can sometimes claim work hours and some members will be voluntary, but they will have their own individual roles and skill sets to offer; such as treasury, chairperson and so on. Many committees will offer above and beyond the requirements and have more facilities for their plot holders and may also run a shop for growing essentials.

Many committees become members of the **National Allotment Society** and such organisations to ensure good practices and legal compliance for their allotment sites.

Once you have applied and have been offered a plot, you will be issued with a legal document to sign called an Allotment Letting Agreement; a Tenancy Agreement. The tenancy agreement sets out the rights and responsibilities of the plot holder. Common clauses include rent, duration of the lease and termination notice, undertakings of the allotment holder as well as permitted activities, the building of structures and sub-letting rules.

Allotment holders are required to pay rent, which the law says should be at an affordable rate, which is deemed reasonable for the piece of land. The yearly rent can vary widely depending on the location and size of the plot as well as facilities, and the landlord is responsible for the payment of water rates and general maintenance of the site.

Allotment agreements usually run indefinitely; being renewed upon receipt of your annual rent charge.

The **Allotments Act 1922** provided allotment holders with some security of tenure by setting out specific periods of notice for ending a tenancy. Landlords could only end an allotment garden tenancy by giving the allotment holder a minimum of six months' notice. This was increased to 12 months by the **Allotments Act 1950**. The landlord may end the tenancy by giving one month's notice where the allotment holder has breached any of the conditions of the tenancy agreement.

Requirements of the plot holder will likely include the following points but may vary:

- Keeping the plot to in reasonable state; weed-free and tidy
- Not to use for commercial use; for personal use only
- Not to cause any issues for the occupiers of other allotments or obstruct any path used by the other occupiers of surrounding allotments
- No subletting the plot without the written consent of the landlord
- No building any structures without the written consent of the landlord

Your Allotment Landlord will be accountable for general upkeep of the Allotment Site, which may include maintaining main accesses, roadways, parking, toilets and water facilities, security of the site and should hold Public Liability Insurance.

Although the last such Act was introduced in 1950, many of the provisions made by the various Acts up to and including the Allotments Act 1950 have been affected by more recent pieces of legislation. For instance, the Local Government Act 1972 amended the allotments legislation in a number of matters of detail, for example, removing the requirement upon local authorities to establish allotments committees (contained in Section 12 of the Allotments Act 1925). Similarly, the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 abolished a number of minor Ministerial controls over a local authority's administration of allotments. Other Acts which have impacted upon allotments include the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, the Local Government and Planning (Amendment) Act 1981 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981. More recently, the Statute Law (Repeals) Act 1993 repealed various parts of the allotments legislation.

Allotment Disputes at a Glance

In the first instance, you should refer to all documentation relating to your tenancy and your Site's policies and procedures. This will help you determine:

1. You have a case to dispute
2. How to complain through the correct procedures in order to achieve a positive outcome.

Initially, it may be worth discussing your grievances with the appropriate Committee member/s; maybe arrange a meeting with an independent third party for mediation.

You may be required to document your issues, provide a formal complaint or provide evidence. If this is a collective issue amongst ploholders, this may require some co-ordination as a group to approach your committee.

All Site committees should legally respond to disputes in a fair manner with adequate policies, procedures in place with reasonable notice given for any changes and amendments.

If you are unable to resolve the situation adequately, you may have a regional area representative/federation that you can contact. You will need to check your location for those details.

The National Allotment Society can help provide legal advice to their members for both site committees and ploholders.

Committing to an Allotment Plot

Many Council's and Societies across the UK have long waiting lists for an allotment plot at their sites and keen growers are resorting to transforming their gardens to grow their fruit and vegetables. The 'grow your own' concept has gone full circle, becoming popular again with us all being more conscious of sustainability, health and looking after our finances. The ideology of a summer plot filled with lush green foliage has potential growers dreaming of hazy days, tending their patches but what is really involved for an allotment plot holder.

By signing up for the tenure of a plot, you are committing to the annual fee, which varies widely, and as to what that may cover and what each sites' rules are as part of their tenancy agreement. You can read more about this on the [Allotment Rules page](#).

We also talk about [tools and equipment](#), and storage for those; such as [sheds](#) and [polytunnels](#) or [greenhouses](#) on those pages, which are all investments to consider.

Aside from the financial commitment, there is your life balance to consider; do you work full-time? Do you have other regular commitments? Are you in good physical health? Do you like to go on holiday frequently?

The time to allocate for your allotment will depend on many factors; the plot size, how active you are, what you intend to grow, the condition of the plot when you take it on and the time of year.

An average 10 pole plot equates to 250sq metres and sometimes smaller ones can be available if that is too much to manage. Or you could consider sharing it with a friend or relative and share the workload. Another alternative is to go for raised beds and [no-dig gardening](#) if traditional growing and digging is physically challenging.

Consider what you are growing and whether those particular crops are high or low maintenance, whether you can store and eat all the produce - Think about your household consumption before sowing 30 cauliflowers that will be ready all at once! After all, we want to reap the benefits of what we sow.

Hopefully your allotment plot site will hand your new plot over ready to go, but unfortunately, that is not always the case and so before you even get started, you may have to clear dense weeds and rubbish. Having been neglected, a lot of preparation work will go into getting the [soil](#) weed-free and rich in nutrients, along with your own planning and plot re-design to get the lay-out just as you want it.

If you love to go on holiday, you will need to arrange somebody to water the plants in your absence; perhaps a friendly plot neighbour will help, and you can return the favour. It's worth considering when you go away and how long for - during a warm and wet May-June, the weeds grow the minute your back is turned!

Obviously, spring and throughout the summer, into the autumn is generally busy - the busiest time peaking May-June, as you will go from prepping soil beds to sowing and planting along with maintenance and weeding, watering and then, hopefully lots of harvesting. After harvesting, you will be busy with an array of storing jobs dependent on your crops like washing, blanching, drying out, freezing, covering and storing, making chutneys, sauces, canning, pickling - all ready to enjoy the fruits of your labour!

Winter months on the plot tend to be more dormant unless you are growing in a greenhouse or polytunnel.

If your plot is in a reasonable condition, you have established plants and you are on top of the weeding, you will likely require approximately a half to one day per week; split into a few hours here and there throughout the week to keep maintaining everything. Plan to allow for travelling time to and from your plot too.

So far, we have made it sound like hard work - and it is or can be! But it is also extremely rewarding, and you might find that you really take to growing your own and spend virtually all of your spare time at the plot, which is a great way to unwind and escape and also make friends and socialise with like-minded people who are often more than willing to offer advice.

You might decide to swap gym time for digging or time spent relaxing with a book for the bench at the plot with a flask - It does not always have to be work at the allotment. Hopefully you can get the whole family involved if your time is juggling growing [children](#) too!

The key is to factor in your life and how a plot can be part of that realistically. If you have an office job or work that is quite sedentary, you might embrace time spent moving around, outdoors.

If you have a very full life, it can be done but you may just need to be organised and plan ahead; make lists and stay on top before things become over-whelming. You will find that you are always checking the weather forecast because 'best laid plans' and all that, so try and utilise the dry and fair days. During the summer, you can benefit from the lighter, longer days and so jobs can be done early morning or evening if the daytime is too hectic or too hot.

It's worth having a bag of spare clothes kept in the boot of the car or shed for example, if you like to call in on your way home from work. You don't want to get carried away only to realise that you are still in your suit or heeled shoes!

Sometimes, life throws us a 'curve ball' and unforeseeable things happen, such as illness, which prevents us from getting on but that is totally understandable. It is worth communicating it with your allotment site and plot neighbours who will more than likely offer a helping hand or at the very least, give you reasonable time until you are able to get back to it.

It's worth noting that there are many health benefits including physical exercise, mental well-being, an improved diet, it is money-saving and it combats isolation. If you struggle to find enjoyable ways to exercise or to 'switch off', then getting close to nature and working with a purpose may be the answer and will justify time spent working an allotment plot, even if it means something else has to give. Growing gives you a sense of achievement and great satisfaction as well as its challenges.

As you grow and learn, you may become more adventurous with your growing projects. The main thing to remember is that it should be enjoyable, it is a hobby and if it is not for you, give it back for somebody else to use it, rather than neglect it. Use it or lose it.

If you get the opportunity, go for it. However daunting it may seem at first, embrace the challenge and enjoy the growing journey. You will never stop learning. We don't make mistakes, we have a first and then a second attempt and sometimes things do not go so well due to the weather or other factors that are out of our control. There will be days when you pull up the most impressive vegetable and proudly show it off too!

Plot Tools and Equipment for the Allotment

If you are an allotment beginner, you will need some handy allotment tools, gardening accessories, and equipment to be kept at your plot for the best results. But, before you do, you will need to ensure you have a safe and secure shed or storage to keep it all locked up.

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Gardening Accessories & Attire

Before you undertake any work, make sure you are equipped with the necessary allotment tools and gardening accessories. Don't just be prepared, dress up for the job! Wellies or old walking boots, waterproofs and clothes that you don't mind getting dirty or possibly ripped. Think layers for wrapping up or cooling down, keeping dry and warm. Even during the summer, it is better to wear thin, loose but long-sleeved tops and full-length trousers to save getting scratched by anything prickly like fruit bushes or bitten by insects. A hat if it's hot and sunny and a woolly hat if it is cold. Garden gloves and any protective wear depending on the task at hand.

It is also worth keeping spares and footwear to change into, to save bringing home lots of soil and dirt via the car.

A flask and lunch box - A cup of tea at the plot goes down a treat and it's also important to stay hydrated, especially if you are doing some heavy-going physical work. We recommend a reusable water bottle, refreshments and snacks to keep you going.

Some growers use allotment accessories like camping stoves and other equipment at their plots. Do check for permission first if you are hoping to have a BBQ or bonfire as some sites do not permit it.

Watering At Your Allotment

A water butt with a drainpipe and guttering fitted to your shed is an essential allotment tool that helps you in storing water and recycling the rain.

A watering can is one of the most useful gardening accessories we are always recommending - maybe even a few so helpers can join you and save time.

You would not be able to use a hosepipe as there would not be enough pressure from tank taps supplied on your site, it's also not deemed ethical to use them.

Many growers use open-ended bottles and pots, sunken into the soil to direct rainwater to the roots of their plants.

Whether it's utilising allotment tools for garden maintenance or incorporating gardening accessories for water conservation, thoughtful choices enhance your allotment experience.

Soil Preparation, Maintenance and Planting

A spade and a fork are some simple yet necessary gardening accessories that you will need for digging and breaking up the soil as well as pulling up larger weeds and shovelling compost and soil.

Handheld trowel and fork for some low-maintenance weeding or careful weeding around shallow-rooted crops.

A hoe does a great job of weeding as well as helping to break down lumps of soil.

A rake for more soil fine-tuning and sweeping up debris.

Some growers opt to use petrol-powered rotavators for turning their plots over as well as a petrol lawn mower if you have grassed areas. There are also battery-powered tools you can buy including strimmers, which can be great for edges and overgrown areas.

Gardening accessories, such as a bulb planter, are handy tools for popping bulbs down deep into the soil. Knee pads may help with comfort if you are planning on doing weeding.

Have a handy basket or bag for gathering weeds as you work and another for harvesting when the time comes.

For heavier soil work, you may benefit from a wheelbarrow to shift quantities from one bed to another or to move compost about.

With the right allotment tools and gardening accessories, you can efficiently manage your plot and enjoy a bountiful harvest.

Pruning and Harvesting

Pruning and harvesting on your plot can be made a lot simpler if you have the right set of allotment tools and gardening accessories. Not just limited to these tasks, but secateurs, shears and cutting tools are always handy to have for several jobs.

A handy tool belt or bag is useful for blitzing those little jobs as you walk around the plot, making them essential gardening accessories.

When you are harvesting your crops, have some suitable vessels for transporting them home. An obvious one to some, but you don't want to mix loose, squashy raspberries with large muddy carrots in one bag or box!

Allotment Tools for Growing

There will be plants that will require support so always have a supply of supporting allotment accessories like canes and sticks or poles. Some ties, string and handy hardware to help train your climbers and to help your taller plants.

Netting is one of the most important gardening accessories as it helps protect the crops; you will need finer mesh-type netting with much smaller holes for some plants. Netting can come in a range of types and sizes for different uses.

Pots and trays from plants you've bought come in handy when it comes to sowing your seeds or you may want to buy a propagator. Large containers can be used around your plot to save space as well as make the plot more attractive with colourful flowers.

There are also some big investments you could make such as a greenhouse or large polytunnel and you can also do this on a smaller scale and with cloches, cold frames and DIY projects. Some sites will require permission to be sought before erecting any sizable structures. Fruit cages and brassica cages are popular on allotment plots. If you are considering the smaller, cheaper 'greenhouse' frames with plastic coverings, be mindful of the wind - many self-assembly garden kits get strewn around

allotment sites and the plants get damaged in the process. They need to be secured down well in a sheltered yet sunny position.

Don't forget the scarecrow! You can use many items to deter birds including old C.D.s on string, bunting and more.

Plant food, fertilisers, and insect and pest repellents are useful to have. Try to use chemical-free products or homemade remedies where you can.

Straw and mulch supplies and compost, growing bags and manure will be well used, in time you can produce some of these yourself or source locally for free.

All of the above-mentioned allotment tools and gardening accessories will help to ensure that you have everything you need to nurture your plants and maintain a successful allotment patch.

List of Essential Gardening Accessories

There are no bounds when it comes to this information, and you can decide which items of your own will make the best allotment tools for you. You might deem some of them unnecessary if you have them at home, ultimately the choice is yours.

Another very important but neglected allotment tool is a First Aid kit. As we know, accidents do happen; so even just a pack of plasters or some antiseptic wipes can save a trip back home, disrupting your day. If it's anything serious, do seek immediate medical attention! In summer, it's easy to wile away too much time in the full sun, only to find you are rather pink and tender by the end of the day so suncream is always handy to have.

Personal belongings like your mobile phone, keys, and wallet should be put somewhere safe before you begin to work. Zip up your mobile in your pocket - many growers lose valuable items in the soil during digging!

If you prefer paper to screens, take a book for a well-earned break in the sunshine. You will be thankful for a bench or chair to sit on!

We touched on refreshments earlier on this page but your plot is a lovely place to have a picnic and refuel.

A torch is another useful tool if you are working during the evening. We often work until dusk and then need to lock up our gardening accessories, and equipment and walk back to the car, only to find it's pitch black!

While our ideas are not exhaustive, this should be a brilliant start. There are many handy allotment and gardening accessories on the market which are deemed necessary, however, this is based on personal preference, so varies widely. If you have a few basics to do the things you want to do, you can build on your equipment in time, you can always 'borrow' tools from a friendly plot neighbour if they are happy to lend you theirs. Do ask first!

Growers sometimes evolve their growing to specialise in one type of crop or a type of growing - You may decide to do No-Dig and therefore will not need to dig your plot and will likely be collecting cardboard.

You might like to know your exact soil type and temperatures and invest in those specialist items.

Whatever your approach is; whether it is to potter and take your time, use it as a form of exercise or fit plot work around a busy schedule, you will probably find your balance of convenience and necessity.

The key is to enjoy it!

How to Grow Microgreens

Thanks to their nutritional benefits and ease of cultivation, microgreens are growing in popularity. Slightly more developed than sprouts but not yet mature plants, they're harvested just after the first leaves appear.

Ever noticed tiny, vibrant leaves delicately placed on restaurant salads or mains? Those are microgreens! Packed with flavour and nutrients, they add a gourmet touch to even the simplest dishes.

The good news? You don't need a garden or fancy tools to learn how to grow microgreens - your kitchen windowsill will do just fine. They're quick, easy, and a great starting point for new growers. In the UK, growing microgreens can be done using surplus seeds. You can also buy microgreen starter kits at most garden centres.

If you are just getting started with your allotment journey, here's a complete guide on how to grow microgreens. What's more, [you could sign up here](#) for support and useful tips from fellow growers! Read on to learn more.

How to Grow Microgreens

You don't need special equipment to grow microgreens - a simple shallow tray or even a clean takeaway container will do. Before you begin, make sure your tray is clean and your seeds are still in good condition. Use sterile compost, or line the bottom with damp kitchen paper to help with water retention.

Sow your seeds onto the surface of the compost, then press them down gently. Larger seeds (like peas or beetroot) can be soaked first to help with the germination process. You may dust a little compost or vermiculite over the top to keep them lightly covered.

Mist the surface gently to keep it moist - avoid pouring water directly. Keep the tray somewhere warm and bright, such as your windowsill, ideally between 15–20°C. Lids or plastic covers can be used to retain humidity, but remove them once the seedlings start sprouting.

You can grow mixed microgreens, but it's best to grow similar-sized seeds together in one tray for easier harvesting. Alternatively, keep each variety in separate trays.

Check your trays daily to maintain moisture and monitor growth. In just 7–10 days, your microgreens will be ready to harvest. You can cut the microgreens with scissors. Pluck a single leaf to determine the flavour intensity.

In the right conditions, you can take your growing trays and containers outside too. The question is when to plant microgreens? Which season is the best?

Microgreens can be planted and grown year-round, however, winter growing can be trickier due to low light and colder temperatures. You may need a grow light or some heating support to help them along.

How to Harvest Microgreens

as they usually are ready to harvest within **7 to 10 days** of sowing. In colder conditions, it may take a few extra days. You'll know they're ready when the first set of true leaves appears.

If you are an impatient grower wondering when to pick microgreens, you are in for a treat

Microgreens are best enjoyed fresh - top them over salads and proteins like fish or chicken. They are a great addition to wraps as they add a nice crunch. You can also use them as a delicate garnish on savoury dishes and desserts. Avoid storing them for long periods, as this can reduce their flavour and nutritional value.

Some seeds you may well have left over that can be grown for microgreens include:

Beans - [Broad](#), [French](#), [Runner](#)

- Beetroot

- Brassicas - Broccoli, Brussels

Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Kale, Pak Choi

- Carrots

- Chard

- Herbs - Basil, Borage, Coriander, Dill, Fennel, Lemon

Balm, Sorrel

- Kohlrabi

- Leeks

- Lettuce

- Mizuna & Mibuna
- Mustard
- Peas
- Radish
- Rocket
- Salad Leaves
- Turnips

Seed Saving from your Homegrown or Allotment Grown Fruit and Vegetables

Growing your own fruit and vegetables is extremely rewarding and helps towards a sustainable lifestyle with many benefits. There are many things we can do to enhance our growing experiences including the saving of seeds from previously grown fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Seed-saving has been practiced for many years; some crops are easier than others to do so. If harvested at the right time and the seeds are stored in the correct way and then sown in the correct conditions, you should be able to achieve success without having to buy seed packets or young plants.

Seeds should be stored in individual envelopes or in an airtight container, in a dry place, indoors. This prevents moisture from spoiling the seeds or mice eating their way through your supply.

It is important to label your seeds correctly, including the name, variety and date you collected them. Not only does this ensure that you know which seeds you are sowing but you can also analyse how successful each seed-saving project was. By the time sowing season rolls around, you will need to remember exactly what's what.

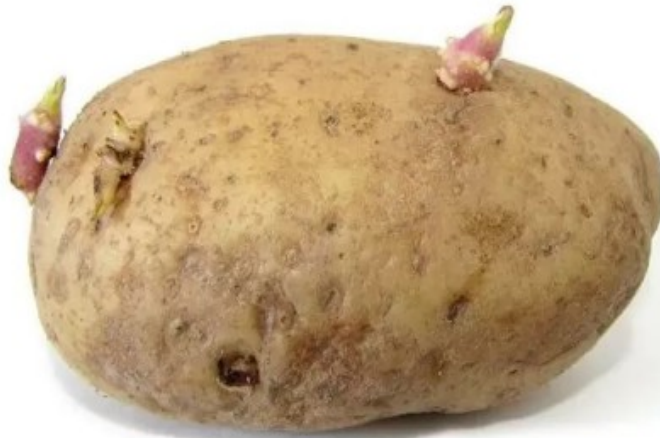
Seed swapping is a popular scheme on many allotment sites; try new varieties or recommend yours to other growers.

It is also a fun, crafty project for children to make their own decorative seed packets to sell at school fetes and so on.

Things to remember for seed saving:

- Seed from F1 hybrids will not be the same as the parent plant.
- Save seed from healthy looking plants
- Collect seed when seed heads appear to be ripening. Unripe pods will not ripen once picked
- Collect on a dry day to avoid fungal rot on seeds
- Label with name and date to avoid confusion later
- Collect seeds directly from the plant into paper bags or into trays lined with newspaper
- Dry capsules and pods in a warm dry place until seeds are released
- For fleshy seeds such as tomatoes and cucumbers - ferment the seed for 3 days to remove the jelly like coating. Rinse in water then dry in a warm place
- Separating seeds from the chaff - the remains of the seed capsule. Use a tea strainer for small seeds or garden sieves for larger seeds, blowing away the chaff

Potato Chitting



Potato Chitting is a method used to give your potato crop a head start by growing the shoots before planting them. Early crops can be chitted approx 6 weeks before you intend to plant them. This will result in an earlier and plentiful harvest and less likely to become diseased due to the strength of the shoots.

To start chitting your potatoes, we recommend late January to mid February depending on your location; the cooler the later.

To chit potatoes you will need an early crop batch of potato seeds and containers; egg boxes are ideal for this exercise.

Potatoes have one end with 'eyes' where the shoots start from. Place the seed in the egg box with the eyes facing upwards (at the top). You won't need the lid of the egg box. Label each tray with the variety of potato you're chitting.

Store the potato seeds in a light, cool place indoors and store for approx 4-6 weeks until they have shoots about 2cm long. They must be chitted inside or protected against frost, which will damage the shoots.

Early varieties of potato seeds don't require too many shoots; infact they only need a few. If they have too many, break off the excess roots as this could result in smaller potatoes.

They will then be ready to plant out as long as your location and it's weather conditions allow. Usually during the last week in March to the first half of April.

See how to [grow potatoes](#).

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

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,

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