



A more digestible Guide to Jobs to do on the
Allotment in March

Composited off the Internet
By Gareth Richards

Fruit & Vegetable Growing Guide for March

March is the month when things really start to move in the growing season. In fact the start of the year used to be Lady Day, The Feast of the Annunciation, 25th March until 1752 in Britain when we adopted the Gregorian calendar and started our year on the 1st January. From an agricultural viewpoint, it would have made sense to have stuck with the old system, starting the year on the spring equinox, in link with the seasons

Sowing & Planting in March on the Vegetable Plot

If the weather is cold but otherwise reasonable, you can steal some time and start early by cloching and fleecing.

Although expensive glass cloches have been around for many years, nowadays we can get cheap polythene tunnel cloches and even cheaper horticultural fleece.

Place the cloche or fleece a week or two before planting and the soil will have warmed up nicely as well as being dry and easy to work.

Water well into the drill prior to sowing and replacing the cloche. Do remember to water weekly or more frequently in sunny weather under cloches.

To hold down fleece without tearing, save plastic 2 litre milk containers and fill with sand or water although water tends to leak. The smooth surface will weigh down the fleece but not damage it. It's surprising how just a layer of fleece can raise the temperature of the underlying soil.

Plant out your onion and shallot sets. If growing onions from seed started earlier in the year under cover these can also go out now.

You can also direct sow onions, thinning to the eventual spacing. Cloching will help them establish and also stop pigeons from pulling them up.

March is the right time to establish an asparagus bed if you are starting from crowns. Do make sure you get it in the right position as it will be there permanently.

Mid March should let you start planting out those potatoes you've had chitting. If you want some really early potatoes, start some in a black polythene sack in the greenhouse or tunnel. Punch drainage holes in the sack and use a multi-purpose compost. See [Guide to Growing Potatoes](#)

Staying with root crops, you can plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers now. Be aware that getting them all up at harvest time is very difficult and any tubers left in the ground will grow, so effectively you're creating a permanent bed.

Things to Sow

Beetroot

Broad Beans

Early Peas (but they may do best started in a gutter in the greenhouse then slipped into a trench or in seed trays)

Brussels sprouts – early varieties like Peer Gynt will be ready in September

Kohl Rabi

Leeks

Lettuce

Radish

Parsnips

Spinach Beet

Early Turnips

Under Cover in Greenhouse, Coldframe and Polytunnel

Sow in Heat

Windowsill or a propagator in the greenhouse will come into use now to start off your tomatoes, peppers, aubergines and cucumbers.

Under Cloche

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

Fruit

Planting & Pruning

There is still time to finish planting bare rooted fruit trees and bushes, especially raspberries and other cane fruits.

Early this month you can still prune apple and pear trees while they are still dormant. There is also time to prune gooseberries and currants. With currants shorten the sideshoots to just one bud and remove old stems from the centre of the bushes.

They'll benefit from some compost spread around the base as well or some general purpose fertiliser like fish, blood & bone. Trees will appreciate some wood ash spreading under them.

Harvest

Any leeks left standing should come up now – you can freeze them for use in soups and stews or make concentrated leek & potato soup to freeze and thin out when used.

Parsnips too should come up in early March before they try and re-grow. They'll store for a month or so in damp sand but the plant knows it is growing time again. If you turn them into a mash, perhaps with carrots, they'll freeze well taking up little room

You may have spinach beet and chards available, the last of the late Brussels sprouts, winter cauliflowers, kale, swedes and scorzonera.

Don't forget to keep checking the purple sprouting!

General Jobs on the Plot

Have a good tidy up and finish those odd construction jobs because you are going to be busier still later in the year!

Growing in a Polytunnel in March

What to sow, plant and harvest from your polytunnel in March

You will really feel the warmth in your greenhouse or polytunnel now and so do your plants. They start to grow quite rapidly now but be aware that the nights are still quite cold and there is still a high risk of frost. Many garden centres will try and sell you tomato plants from the end of March onwards. Don't let them tempt you until May.

Sowing in the Polytunnel

Direct sowing into beds

In March you can still sow the following vegetables directly into the soil. However, if you sow carrots, beetroot and peas now they will only be ready in mid June which is far too late to plant your tomatoes or peppers.

Beetroot (Pablo F1)

Carrots (Ya Ya F1, Amsterdam Forcing)

French beans (dwarf and climbing types)

Peas, Mangetout (Sweet Horizon)

Radish (Short Top Forcing) – small amounts at regular intervals

Turnips (Milan Purple Top) – small amounts at regular intervals

Planting into beds

You can now plant out the seedlings you raised earlier on your heating bench: lettuce, scallions, dill, coriander, chervil, early cabbage, calabrese, mini cauliflowers, early leeks, perpetual spinach, Swiss chard, salad rocket and all other oriental salads. Most seedlings take about 4-5 weeks from sowing until they are ready to plant.

Sowing into modules/pots (18-20°C)

Do not let your heating bench clutter up too much. Most vegetables only require some warmth for germination and in March the seedlings are better off if placed on a non-heated bench in the tunnel or greenhouse. Only your tomatoes, peppers, chillies, aubergines, courgettes, cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, celery, celeriac and basil should remain on the heating bench until they are planted in May. Really all other vegetables should be moved off the heating bench about a week after they have germinated.

In March you can sow the following vegetables into modular trays and place them in your propagator or warm, south-facing windowsill in the house:

Aubergine (Black Prince F1) – 5 seeds per 7cm pot, for pricking out

Basil (Sweet Genovese) – 4 seeds per cell (only late in the month)

Calabrese (Green Magic F1) – 1 seed per cell

Cauliflower (for mini cauliflowers) – 1 seed per cell

Celery (Victoria F1) – broadcast in a tray for pricking out later

Chilli peppers (various varieties) – 5 seeds per 7cm pot – only early in the month

Courgette (Parthenon) – 1 seed per 7cm pot

Coriander, Dill and Chervil – 5 seeds per cell

French beans (climbing and dwarf) – 5 seeds per 9cm pot

Kohlrabi (Azur Star) – 1 seed per cell

Lettuce (various types) – 1 to 3 seeds per cell

Oriental salads (mizuna, rocket, tatsoi, etc.) – 5 seeds per cell

Pepper (Roberta F1, Bell Boy F1) – 5 seeds per 7cm pot, for pricking out

Scallions (Parade or Ishikura) – 5 to 10 seeds per cell, depending on how many you like in a bunch

Tomato (Sungold F1 & others) – 5 seeds per 7cm pot, for pricking out.

Do not sow your cucumbers and melons yet. You'll get much better results if you wait until April to sow them.

For planting outside

You can also raise the following vegetables indoors for planting out into your vegetable garden later.

Cabbage (early varieties) – 1 seed per cell

Calabrese (Green Magic F1) – 1 seed per cell

Celery (Victoria F1) – broadcast in a tray for pricking out later

Celeriac (Giant Prague) – broadcast in a tray for pricking out later

Kohlrabi (Azur Star) – 1 seed per cell

Leeks (Hannibal) – 2 seeds per cell

Lettuce (various) – 1 to 3 cells per cell

Onions (Golden Bear F1) – 4 seeds per cell

Scallions (Ishikura Bunching) – 10 seeds per cell

Harvesting from the Polytunnel

Salad rocket, wild rocket, various mustard leaves (Green Wave, Green in the snow, Red Frills, Green Frills), tatsoi, pak choi, corn salad, winter purslane, cress, mizuna, mibuna, komatsuna, texel greens, baby spinach, beet leaves (Bulls Blood) and possibly even some lettuce leaves.

You can still harvest the overwintered Swiss chard and perpetual spinach and towards the end of the month you should get your first radishes and baby turnips.

General greenhouse/polytunnel jobs

Water more frequently now, about twice a week. Do not saturate beds though.

Ventilate as much as possible, but still close the doors and windows at night.

Prick out aubergine, pepper and tomato seedlings into individual 7cm pots using good potting compost.

Cover up the emerging potato shoots with fleece or cover completely with soil if frost is forecast.

Continue with digging in well-rotted manure or compost into empty beds. Remember each bed needs to be fed every year.

Keep a watch out for pests, especially aphids on a variety of crops and leatherjackets and cutworms on newly planted lettuce.

Prick out celery seedlings into cell trays – one seedling per cell.

Earth up potatoes and still watch out for frost. If frost is forecast you can either completely cover the potato stems with soil or compost or alternatively cover them with a double layer of fleece.

How to Contact the Editor

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

info@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.

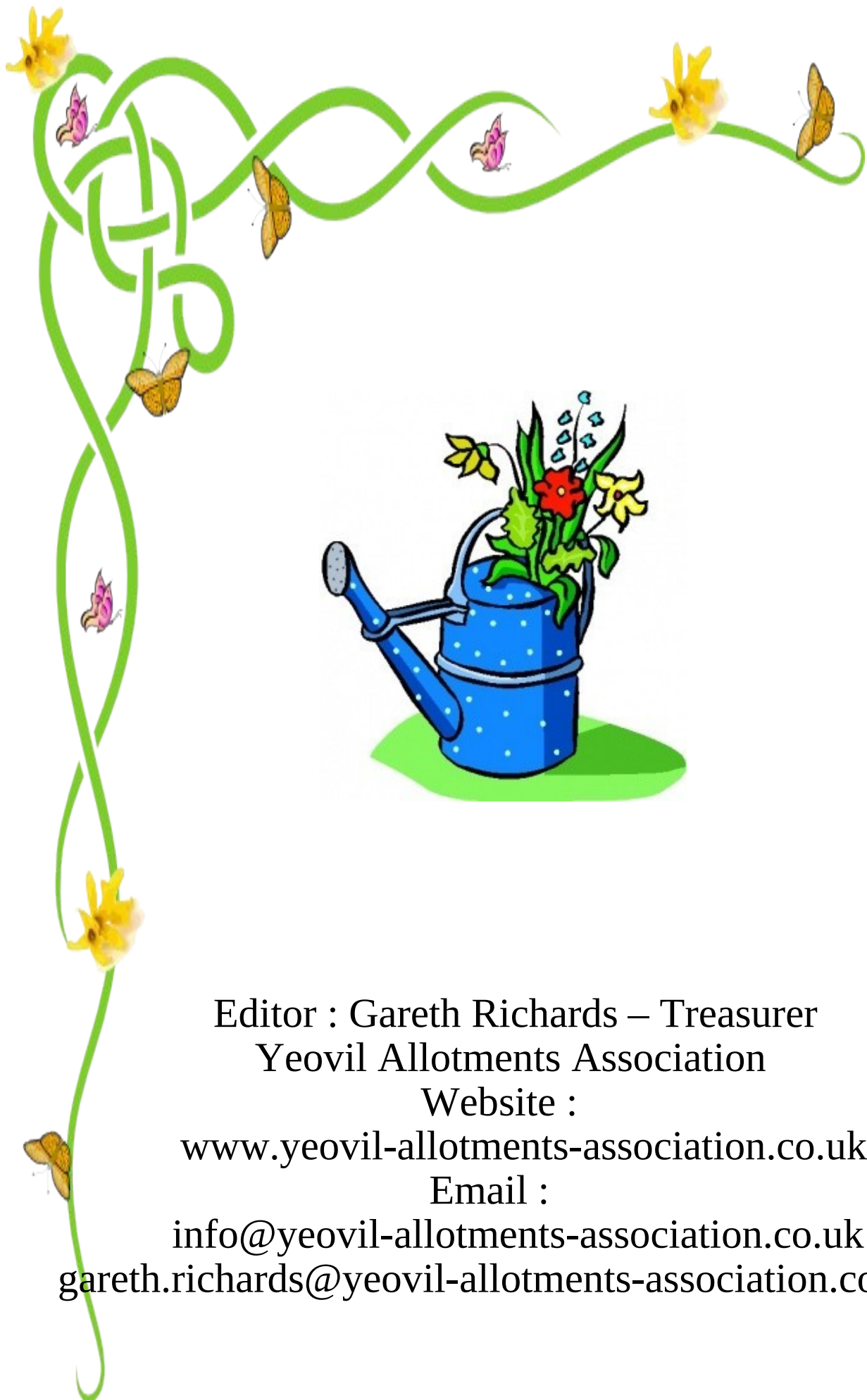
We also have our own website at :

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

where you can find this magazine as well as a catalogue

Happy Allotmenting and best wishes,

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