



Magazine Issue 5
March 2026

Dear Fellow Allotmenters,

If you were born in March, you have two birth flowers: daffodils and jonquils.

March babies are spoiled with two birthstones: aquamarine and bloodstone, which symbolize courage.

There are two zodiac signs in March. Pisces, which is until March 20, and Aries, which is from the 21st.

The first month of spring is March, which starts between the 19th and the 21st.

March marks the start of spring, with longer days and new growth. While the weather can be unpredictable, it's a great time to sow seeds and start gardening projects.

March is a time of transition in the garden. As days grow longer and the clocks go forward, we begin to see the first signs of spring emerging. While March marks the official start of spring, it can still be a time of unpredictable weather, Especially in colder regions. However, the warmer districts are ideal for sowing seeds and starting new gardening projects. Let's dive into some essential gardening tasks to tackle this month.

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

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Your March Gardening Checklist

March marks the start of spring, with longer days and new growth. While the weather can be unpredictable, it's a great time to sow seeds and start gardening projects. Here are some tasks to focus on this month.

March is a time of transition in the garden. As days grow longer and the clocks go forward, we begin to see the first signs of spring emerging. While March marks the official start of spring, it can still be a time of unpredictable weather, especially in colder regions. However, the warmer districts are ideal for sowing seeds and starting new gardening projects. Let's dive into some essential gardening tasks to tackle this month.

Vegetable Tasks

This month presents an exciting opportunity to sow a variety of vegetables, especially in milder districts where the soil begins to warm up. Here are the key tasks for March:

Undercover Sowing: If you have a greenhouse or cold frame, sow early varieties of cauliflower, broccoli, and celery. These plants thrive in controlled conditions, ensuring a successful start to the growing season.

Broad Beans: In milder districts, you can directly sow broad beans in the ground, while in colder areas, it's best to start them undercover for an early crop.

Onions & Leeks: If you haven't already sown your onions and leeks, now is the time to get them started. These versatile vegetables are an essential addition to any allotment.

Horseradish & Seakale: March is an excellent time to establish new beds for horseradish and seakale. You can plant new specimens or divide old ones to create new patches for growth.

Spinach: For a spring harvest, sow spinach in a sheltered spot or under cloches to protect it from any lingering cold snaps.

Carrots & Potatoes: Towards the end of the month, sow carrots under cloches, and plant early potatoes under cloches for an early harvest.

Fruit Tasks

March is the final window for planting new strawberry beds, so be sure to plant them if you haven't yet.

Keep an eye on any fruit trees, especially peaches, apricots, or nectarines, as early frosts can damage blossoms. When frost is forecast, cover these trees with fleece or a similar protective material, but remember to remove it once the frost has lifted.

Additionally, check the ties on newly planted fruit trees. If any have loosened due to winter winds or frost, make sure to re-firm them to ensure healthy growth.

Greenhouse Care Tasks

For those with heated greenhouses, March is the perfect time to sow tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, melons, and aubergines. Keep seedlings close to the glass to prevent legginess, allowing them to grow sturdy and strong as the days grow longer.

If your greenhouse is unheated, be cautious with watering. Excess moisture can lead to fungal problems, so it's best to water sparingly and allow for proper ventilation on warmer days.

Flowers Tasks

March is a busy month for flowers as well:

Sweet Peas: If you sowed sweet peas in the autumn, now is the time to plant them out. If you didn't, sow sweet peas directly in sheltered plots, but watch out for mice, which love to nibble on these delicate seedlings.

Dahlias: Bring your dahlia tubers out of storage, pot them up, and place them in the greenhouse to get a head start for the season. By the time warmer weather arrives, your dahlias will be ready to be planted outside.

Hardy Annuals: Now is a great time to sow hardy annuals directly in prepared soil. These are fantastic for attracting pollinators to your garden, adding vibrant colour, and being low-maintenance.

Top Gardening Jobs for March

Prune Roses: If you haven't pruned your bush and climbing roses yet, March is your last chance to do so. Pruning helps improve the health and longevity of your roses by removing dead or damaged growth and encouraging fresh new blooms.

Plant Onion Sets and Shallots: Onions and shallots are staple ingredients in many recipes. Plant them now to ensure you have a steady supply through the year.

Plant Summer-Flowering Bulbs: Gladioli, lilies, and Eucomis are great summer-flowering bulbs to plant in containers or borders. They are easy to grow and will add beautiful color to your garden when they bloom.

Lift and Divide Perennials: Overgrown clumps of perennials can be divided and replanted this month to ensure healthy growth for the upcoming season.

Mow the Lawn: If your lawn has dried out and the weather allows, give it a light mow. This will help tidy up any winter debris and stimulate new growth as spring approaches.

Support Bees: Dandelions are one of the first food sources for early bees. If possible, leave a few dandelions to bloom in your garden to help support these essential pollinators.

Start Dahlia Tubers: Start your dahlia tubers off in pots or trays filled with damp, peat-free compost. They'll be ready for planting outdoors when the weather warms up.

Prune Buddleja: Prune Buddleja (butterfly bush) to a low framework of stems. This will encourage new growth and provide an abundance of blooms to attract butterflies in the summer.

Finally

March is the month of new beginnings in the garden, offering plenty of opportunities to get ahead for the growing season. Whether you're sowing seeds, planting new fruit trees, or getting your greenhouse prepared for seedlings, there's no shortage of jobs to keep you busy. Be sure to take advantage of the mild weather in some areas and prepare your garden for the vibrant spring and summer months ahead. Happy gardening.

Puzzle Corner

Mother's day

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

MOM
GENTLE
NURTURING
TENDERNESS

COMFORT
LOVE
STRONG
UNCONDITIONAL

PATIENCE
INSPIRATION
WISDOM
RESPECT



Disney Princesses

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

JASMINE

MERIDA

ARIEL

CINDERELLA

RAPUNZEL

POCAHONTAS

TIANA

AURORA

BELLE

MULAN

SNOW WHITE

ELSA

ANNA

ASHA

MOANA

RAJA



CATS

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

PERSIAN

SIAMESE

BENGAL

RAGDOLL

SPHYNX

ABYSSINIAN

BIRMAN

SAVANNAH

CHARTREUX

KORAT

DEVON REX

SCOTTISH FOLD

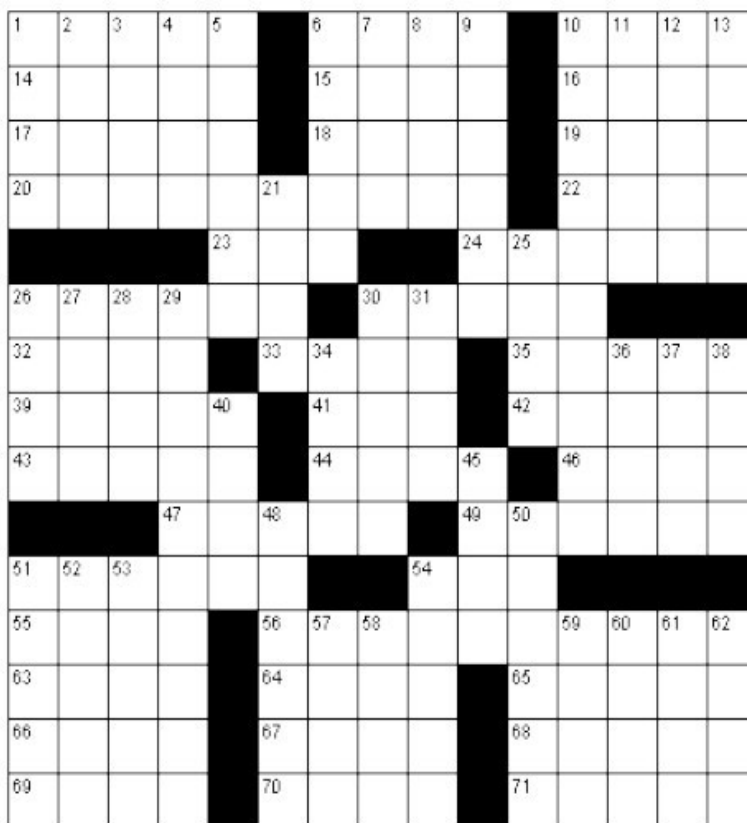
RUSSIAN BLUE

TURKISH ANGORA

BOMBAY



Crossword no.50



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ACROSS

1. Quiets
6. Anagram of "Pals"
10. Arabic sleeveless garments
14. Seventy-two in Roman numerals
15. A river between China and Russia
16. Light-colored dry sherry
17. Class of "superior" people
18. Anagram of "Alas"
19. Image of a deity
20. In an agitated or emotional manner
22. Yield
23. Beam of light
24. Left
26. Length of a pants leg
30. Fate (Hinduism)
32. Was
33. A pointed remark
35. Anxiety
39. A river in southeastern France
41. Personification of the sun (Roman mythology)
42. Grand hall
43. Get undressed
44. Was aware of
46. With affection
47. Stop

49. A name derived from the name of a person
51. A place of worship
54. Former Soviet space station
55. Test
56. A place where scientists work
63. Govern
64. Genus of the pearly-shelled mussel
65. A region of Asia Minor
66. Biblical garden
67. Hurries on foot
68. Baffled (slang)
69. Quiz or exam
70. Nature of being
71. S S S S

DOWN

1. Treble or bass, for example
2. A shaft on which a wheel rotates
3. Sixty-four in Roman numerals
4. A very small arachnid
5. A chain of mountains
6. Saucy
7. Nursemaid
8. A pause in activity
9. Communion with God
10. An ardent follower
11. A type of basin
12. Positive electrode
13. Bottomed
21. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables
25. Christmas
26. A type of wading bird
27. Where a bird lives
28. Fortune teller
29. The act of increasing the value or strength of something
30. Monetary unit of Norway
31. Possessing the necessary skills
34. Requests
36. Singers Campbell or Frey
37. Kill
38. Semester
40. Sword

45. A low dam
48. Attractiveness
50. Kudos
51. A hat with no brim or bill
52. Release through one's pores
53. Stories
54. Large northern deer
57. Excretory opening
58. Containers
59. Infants
60. Burden
61. A cereal marsh grass
62. Tibetan long-haired wild oxen

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.

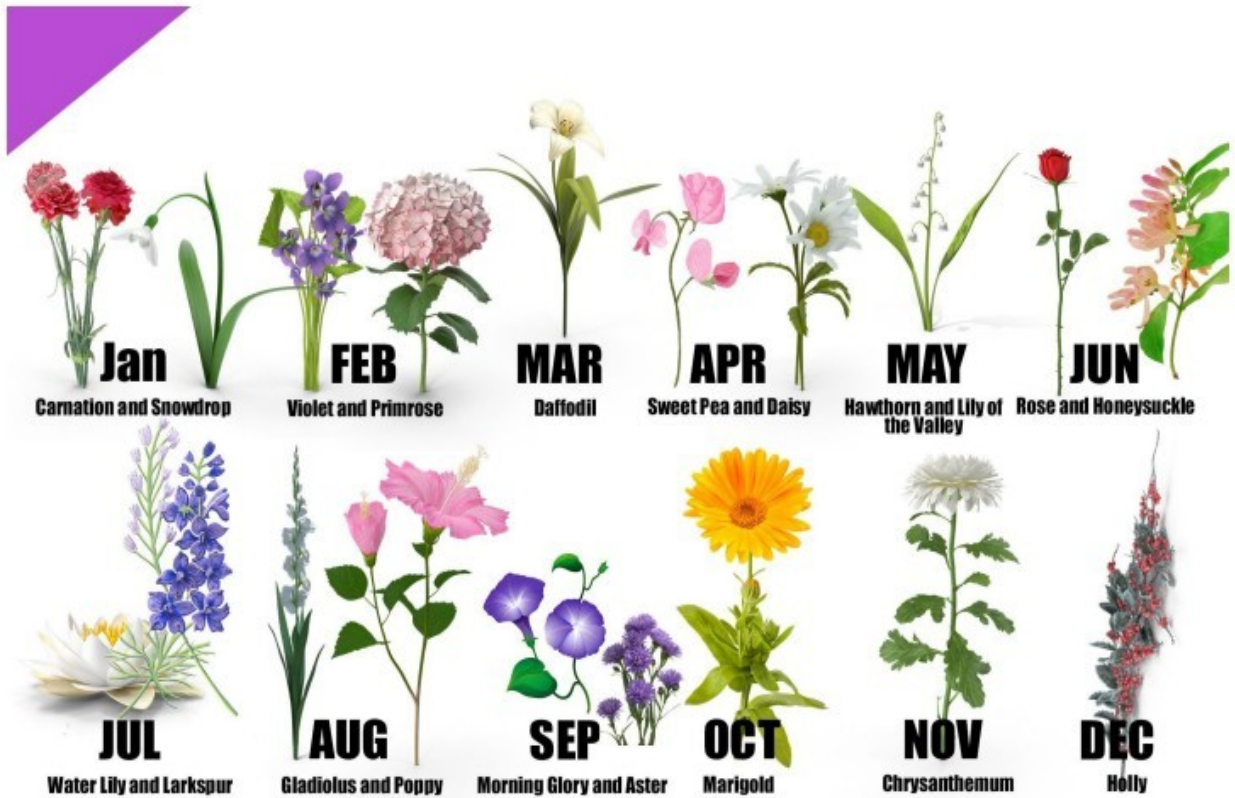
Your annual membership card gives you the time and dates of meetings for the year ahead. Our membership night for renewals is every March and again a discount night is offered for any garden centre items which are not on special offer.

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

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

The Birth Flower for March is the Daffodil. Although most Allotmenters grow fruit and vegetables, some of you will grow flowers as well.



Daffodils

Daffodil Birth Flower for March

Botanical name: **Narcissus**

Daffodils are one of the most popular and cheery heralds of spring. Planted in September, they spend several months developing roots before the flowers burst forth, usually between February and May. Ideal in containers, borders and lawns, they'll suit almost any garden style and situation.

Daffodils have instantly recognisable flowers with a central trumpet surrounded by six petal-like tepals. Usually yellow or white, the flowers stand on sturdy stems, above slender leaves, reaching from just 20cm (8in) tall up to 50cm (20in), depending on the cultivar.

Daffodils dislike waterlogged soil, as well as very dry conditions and deep shade. Avoid shallow planting, overcrowding the bulbs, and cutting back the leaves before they die naturally.

Plant in early September, in fertile, well-drained conditions with plenty of sun. They are happy in containers as well as in the ground, where they do best planted at a depth of three times the height of the bulb.

Daffodil bulbs are poisonous, causing a stomach upset if eaten. They are easily and regularly mistaken for onions, so to avoid any confusion always keep stored daffodil bulbs in labelled bags, and don't plant them where onions might be grown

Outreach Project Update

Hello fellow Allotmenters,

We have a display up in the Petters Way window at Yeovil Town Library. It has been there since the 23rd March and is due to end on the 4th April.

We have other dates when we will be displaying at the Library. You can see these on the website on the Outreach Page.

Please feel free to comment and give your opinion. You can contact me at :

Email :

Info@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

Website:

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

I will keep you abreast of developments with our outreach. The journey as just began and hopefully some outcomes may be offered after the Autumn Show.

I will have more news of other venues we will be putting our display at.

Many thanks for reading,

Gareth Richards
Treasurer

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 Potato.

Just to re-iterate all my work is taken off gardening websites and allotments magazines. I have only had an allotment for two and a half 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 Potato.

Potatoes

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

From earthy new potatoes and bite-sized salad varieties, to floury bakers and roasters, the humble potato remains the nation's favourite vegetable. If you're a potato aficionado, there's a huge number of exciting potato varieties you can grow that you'll never see in the shops. You don't even need a garden to grow them – many grow very happily in large bags or pots on a balcony or patio.

There are three main types of potato to grow, named according to when you plant and harvest them.

First early or 'new' [potatoes](#) are the earliest to crop, in June and July. They don't store for long so are best eaten fresh.

Second earlies (also called 'new' potatoes) take a few more weeks to mature and are harvested in July and August. These also don't store for long, so are best eaten fresh.

Maincrop potatoes take the longest to mature and are harvested from August to October. They are suitable for [baking](#), roasting and mashing, and can be stored for a few months.

How to grow potatoes at home

Potatoes are easy to grow – one seed potato will produce many potatoes to harvest.

Prepare the soil by digging and removing weeds, and then dig straight trenches 12cm deep and 60cm apart. In spring, plant seed potatoes 30cm apart and cover them with soil to fill the trench. When the shoots reach 20cm tall, use a rake, hoe or spade to mound soil up around the bases of the shoots, covering the stems half way

This is called earthing up. You can also grow first early and second early potatoes in a large bag on a patio or balcony, regularly covering the bottoms of stems with more compost as they grow.

First early potatoes can be planted from mid-March, while second earlies should be planted a couple of weeks later. Maincrop potatoes are usually planted in late April or early May and need to stay in the ground longer to produce a good crop. However, planting times vary across the country – planting in northerly areas should be delayed by a couple of weeks, depending on temperatures and risk of frost.

If you have a greenhouse it's possible to plant a second batch of potatoes in late summer, which will yield a crop for Christmas Day.

How to chit potatoes

Before planting, many people 'chit' their early potatoes. This involves letting the potatoes grow short, strong, stubby shoots, which will allow them to start growing more quickly after planting. Place seed potatoes in trays or egg cartons with the end that has the most eyes uppermost. Stand in a cool, light spot until short shoots have formed, or when it's time to plant them out.

How to plant potatoes

You can grow your own potatoes by planting out 'seed potatoes', which are small tubers rather than actual seeds. You can buy seed potatoes from late winter. Don't be tempted to use old potatoes from the veg rack as they won't produce reliable crops.

Home-grown potatoes do well in all types of soil, but the richer the better, so dig in plenty of well-rotted organic matter such as garden compost. An open, sunny site is best.

While maincrop potatoes grow well in the ground, early or salad potatoes will also do well in large pots and bags. Polypropylene potato growing bags are designed especially for this purpose and are handy if you're short of space. However, you can also [plant potatoes in an old compost bag](#), with similar results.

When growing potatoes in the ground, plant earlies and salad types 10-15cm deep and 30cm apart, with 60cm between rows. Maincrop potatoes require more space to produce a decent crop. Plant them 40cm apart, with 75cm between rows. Plant potatoes with the shoots (or 'eyes') facing upwards.

Growing potatoes: caring for your crop

Water potatoes during warm, dry spells but avoid wetting the foliage unnecessarily, and keep the soil free of weeds. As the potato plants grow, use a spade or hoe to cover the shoots with soil to encourage the development of more tubers from the buried stems. This is called 'earthing up'. Leave the top few centimetres poking out the top. As plants continue to grow you will need to earth them up again.

Growing potatoes: problem-solving

Slugs can be a problem, especially if growing potatoes under black plastic.

Potato blight is a fungal disease which turns foliage yellow with dark patches and causes the tubers to rot. Grow a blight-resistant potato variety to avoid the problem. You can also cut the potato plants down at the first sign of infection, as the fungus will not have reached the tubers by that stage. Then harvest the tubers as soon as you can.

Never grow potatoes in the same soil year after year as this could lead to a build up of pests and diseases. These include potato eelworm, which causes stunted growth and poor cropping.

When to harvest potatoes

First early potatoes are harvested in June and July, when the potatoes are about the size of a large hen's egg (gently rummage around in the soil to check). Cut the potato plants (also known as haulms) to the ground, then gently prise the plants out of the ground with a fork. First early potatoes don't store well, so dig them up in batches, as and when you want to eat them.

Second earlies are harvested in July and early August. Harvest in the same way as first earlies. Again, these potatoes don't store well, so dig them up in batches, as and when you want to eat them.

Maincrop potatoes are harvested from August to October, when the leaves on the plants have turned yellow and died down. Choose a dry day to dig up your crop so.

that they store better, ideally in the morning. Cut the plants to the ground and dig up your potatoes, discarding any that are bruised or have been attacked by pests. Leave them on the soil surface for a few hours in the sun to dry out properly, then brush off any soil before bagging them up

To harvest potatoes grown in pots, simply tip out the contents and enjoy the rich – and easy – pickings.

Preparing and cooking potatoes

Wash and scrub potatoes before frying, boiling, baking, mashing, roasting or sautéing – this has to be the most versatile vegetable!

Health note: never eat potatoes raw. Green potatoes contain a chemical called solanine, which they develop when exposed to light. It can cause severe stomach upsets.

Looking for inspiration on how to use your crop? Our friends at olive have curated a delicious collection of [potato recipes](#), including their best-ever roast potatoes.

Storing potatoes

Home-grown maincrop potatoes will store well for many months in a cool but frost-free place. Only store perfect tubers, removing any showing signs of damage, and don't wash them before storage. All light must be excluded to avoid potatoes turning green and poisonous. Hessian or thick brown-paper sacks are available for the job. Check crops in store regularly, removing any rotten ones.

Advice on buying potatoes

- Potatoes are available from a range of garden centres and nurseries, with many offering online sales. If you're a member of an allotment association, you may be able to buy potatoes direct from the 'allotment shop' at a reduced price
- Choose between first earlies, second earlies and maincrop potatoes, depending on when you want to eat your potatoes and if you have a problem with blight (first and second earlies are usually harvested before blight hits)
- Check the seed potatoes thoroughly when they arrive/before you buy. Make sure they're firm and avoid any with very long roots or any with signs of mould

Growing potatoes: potato varieties to grow

Early potatoes:

- 'Annabelle' – compact, small tubers with white skins and golden flesh. Disease resistant.
- '[Charlotte](#)' – yellow skin and flesh, with a lovely flavour. Remains firm when cooked.

Salad potatoes:

- 'Cherie' – delicious red-skinned salad variety with waxy flesh.
- 'Milva' – yellow flesh, perfect for boiling. Good yields.
- '[Pink Fir Apple](#)' – an odd shape, but good flavour.

and discard any with sunken or white patches, as these are rotting and could infect your other potatoes.

What can I plant immediately after harvesting potatoes?

If you want to make the most of soil vacated by harvesting potatoes, you can plant a number of crops in their place, including carrots, leeks and brassicas. If you're practising good crop rotation then brassicas usually follow potatoes. If you don't have plants ready to plant out, see what young plants are available from the garden centre – many have broccoli, cabbage, kale and swede plants ready to plant straight away.

Is it possible to save potatoes for seed next year?

It is possible to save potatoes for seed the following year, but you run the risk of transmitting disease. Seed potatoes are grown in a cool, controlled environment, so are certified disease-free. If you want to save your own potatoes for seed, keep them in a cool, dark spot. In late winter they should develop shoots and you can plant them as you would normal seed potatoes, from late March.

Rhubarb and Ginger Jam



Prepare

over 2 hours

Cook

10 to 30 mins

Serve

Makes 5–6 x 200ml/7fl oz jars

You can use either the slender vibrant pink stalks of early forced rhubarb, or the sharper red-green stalks of outdoor rhubarb that appear later in the year to make

this homely rhubarb and ginger jam. Rhubarb contains very little pectin and will benefit from using jam sugar, which contains a small amount of natural pectin, plus a little citric acid to make jam set.

Ingredients

- 1.2kg/2lb 10oz rhubarb (1kg/2lb 4oz trimmed weight), trimmed and sliced diagonally into 2–3cm/1in slices
- 125g/4½oz fresh root ginger (100g/3½oz prepared weight), peeled and cut into 5mm/½in cubes or grated
- 100ml/3½fl oz freshly squeezed Orange Juice
- 700g/1lb 9oz jam Sugar
- pinch Sea Salt

Method

1. Place the rhubarb in a large bowl with the ginger and orange juice. Sprinkle in the sugar and salt, lightly mixing with the fruit to combine. Cover the surface with a piece of baking paper and leave in a cool place for at least a couple of hours or overnight. This draws the juice from the rhubarb and will help to keep the rhubarb chunks whole.
2. Place two saucers in the fridge to test for setting point.

3. Tip the rhubarb mixture into a large, heavy-based pan or preserving pan, scraping out all the sugary syrup from the bottom of the bowl. Gently bring the mixture to the boil, carefully stirring without crushing the pieces and ensuring the sugar has completely dissolved.
4. Turn up the heat and bring to a rapid boil for 12–15 minutes until the jam reaches setting point. You'll know when the jam is nearly ready because the loose, light coloured bubbles on the surface will have all but disappeared, the jam will thicken and the boil will be slower. Remove the pan from the heat — otherwise the jam will continue to cook – and drop a little of the hot jam onto a cold saucer. Leave to cool for a few minutes, then lightly push your finger through to see if it forms a light gel that holds its shape and doesn't just pool away. It should not be at all sticky. If the mixture remains runny, return the pan to the heat for a couple more minutes, then test again.
5. Tip the jam into a wide-necked jug with a good pouring lip, then fill warm, sterilised jars to the brim and immediately seal with screwtop lids. Leave to cool before labelling.

Sweet Peas Growing Guide



Sweet Pea Quick Facts

Category	Details
Botanical Name	<i>Lathyrus odoratus</i>
Plant Type	Annual (grown for flowers)
Sun Exposure	Full sun (6+ hours daily)
Soil Type	Rich, well-drained, loamy soil
Soil pH	Neutral to slightly alkaline (6.5–7.5)
Bloom Time	Spring through early summer
Height Range	1 to 8 feet, depending on variety
Spacing	6 inches apart
Hardiness Zones	3–10 (grown as a cool-season annual)
Toxicity	Toxic if ingested (not edible)

The Allure of Sweet Peas – Fragrance and Nostalgia in Bloom



Few flowers capture the charm of an old-fashioned garden quite like sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*). Their ruffled petals and intoxicating fragrance harken back to cottage gardens of the 1800s, where trellises dripped with pastel blooms and bees hummed in delight. Today, these romantic climbers remain a gardener's favorite for their color range—from soft pinks and creamy whites to deep purples and bicolors—and their ability to perfume the garden all season long.

Whether you're filling a vase or framing an archway, sweet peas reward the attentive gardener with unmatched fragrance and abundance.

Choosing the Right Variety – Height and Fragrance

Sweet peas come in many forms, and your garden's design should guide your choice:

- **Climbing Sweet Peas**– These are the classics, growing 5–8 feet tall and perfect for fences, arches, and trellises. The *Old-Fashioned* or *Heirloom* varieties like 'Cupani's Original' and 'America' are known for exceptional scent.
- **Dwarf or Bush Types** – Compact and ideal for containers or garden borders. Varieties like 'Bijou' or 'Snoopea' reach only about 12–18 inches.
- **Spencer Types** – Bred for exhibition, these modern hybrids have larger, ruffled blooms and long stems suited for cut flowers.

Master Gardener Tip – If fragrance is your priority, always choose heirloom varieties. Modern hybrids may boast size and color but often sacrifice scent.

When and Where to Plant

Sweet peas thrive in **cool weather** and dislike heat. Timing is everything.

- **Zones 8–10** – Sow directly outdoors in **late fall to early winter** for spring bloom.
- **Zones 3–7** – Start seeds indoors **6–8 weeks before the last frost**, or sow outdoors as soon as soil can be worked in early spring.

Choose a **sunny spot** (6+ hours per day) with **rich, well-draining soil**. Add compost or aged manure to prepare the bed, and ensure good air circulation to prevent mildew.

Seed Preparation – The Secret to Better Germination

Sweet peas have tough seed coats. To give them a head start:

1. **Nick the seed coat** gently with a nail file or knife, or
2. **Soak seeds** in warm water for 12–24 hours before planting.

This softens the shell and allows moisture to penetrate, improving germination rates.

Planting and Support

Sow seeds **1 inch deep and 2 inches apart**, thinning to 6 inches once seedlings appear. For climbing types, install a **trellis, obelisk, or tuteur** at planting time to avoid disturbing roots later.

Keep the soil consistently moist but never waterlogged. Mulching helps retain moisture and keep roots cool.

Caring for Sweet Peas

- **Watering** – Deep, regular watering is key, especially during dry spells. Shallow watering leads to weak roots.
- **Feeding** – Sweet peas appreciate a light feeding of balanced organic fertilizer (like 5-5-5) every 3–4 weeks.
- **Pinching** – When seedlings reach 4–6 inches tall, pinch out the growing tip to encourage bushier plants and more blooms.
- **Deadheading** – Remove spent flowers promptly to prevent seed pods from forming. This keeps plants blooming for weeks longer.

Master Gardener Tip – Sweet peas stop flowering once they go to seed. Harvest often for fresh bouquets to keep the show going.

Common Pests and Problems

Sweet peas are generally hardy, but watch for:

- **Aphids** – Rinse off with water or treat with insecticidal soap.
- **Powdery Mildew** – Ensure good air circulation and avoid overhead watering.
- **Slugs and Snails** – Use copper tape or diatomaceous earth to deter them.

Harvesting for Bouquets

Pick sweet peas early in the morning when blooms are just opening. Cut stems at an angle and place them in water immediately. The more you cut, the more the plant produces—making them perfect for cut-flower gardens.

For arrangements, mix with other cottage classics like **foxglove, delphinium, or garden roses** for an old-world look that fills a room with scent.

End of Season Care

After blooming ends, let a few pods mature and dry on the vine if you'd like to **save seeds** for next year. Once frost kills the vines, cut them back to the ground and compost the remains. Rotate planting locations each year to prevent soil-borne disease buildup.

Master Gardener Tips – Sweet Pea Success Secrets

- Plant in **cool weather** and give the **morning sun** with **afternoon shade** in hot zones.
- Keep roots cool with mulch but provide airflow around stems.
- Never allow the soil to dry out during flowering.
- Choose **heirloom varieties** for fragrance that fills the garden.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can sweet peas grow in containers?

Yes, choose dwarf or bush varieties and provide at least a 12-inch-deep pot with a small trellis or obelisk.

Are sweet peas edible?

No. Despite their name, *Lathyrus odoratus* is **toxic if ingested**. Do not confuse with edible garden peas (*Pisum sativum*).

Do sweet peas reseed themselves?

Sometimes, but germination is unreliable. Save and store seeds in a cool, dry place for best results.

Can I grow sweet peas indoors?

They need bright light and cool temperatures. It's best to start them indoors but grow them outdoors once established.

Sowing Seeds Indoors in Preparation for the Allotment

Whether you are an amateur or professional grower, sowing seeds is the exciting start of your growing journey. However, it takes time, and careful planning to ensure you yield crops.

All seeds which come with varying requirements, so knowing how to sow is step one of the process. Seeds need care, nourishment and patience in the early stages.

If you're looking for guidance on [when to start planting seeds](#) and the right techniques to ensure they grow well, we've highlighted some key techniques below.

[Sign up](#) to join the Allotment Online community for more support and tips or [sign up for our newsletter](#) for news, giveaways and more.

Sowing Seeds Indoors

If you're eager to get going with this season's crops, you can make a head start for your young plants by sowing them indoors. The UK temperature is unpredictable, which means many seeds cannot thrive in the early spring cold and must be sown indoors and hardened off first.

Seeds need a frost-free, light location such as a sunny windowsill, porch, conservatory, or greenhouse. They can be planted in modular pots, or recycled containers. Use peat-free compost, breaking down lumps or using finer textured compost for small seeds and trays. Propagators or trays with clear lids provide warmth and humidity

- [tomatoes](#) and [chillies](#) particularly like these.

How to Sow Indoors

Choose seeds you'd like to grow or use saved packets, but make sure to check best-before dates. Always follow individual seed instructions and remember to keep packets handy for sowing times and next steps!

When sowing, fill trays with compost, leaving a small gap at the rim. Sprinkle small seeds thinly, cover lightly, or gently push larger seeds into modular trays. Water lightly using a can with a rose head or let trays soak from below. Label everything clearly, including sowing date.

Once seedlings germinate, gradually harden them off - start with short outdoor periods, extending daily. Bring them indoors at night, then cover with a cold frame or fleece until hardened over two weeks. Ensure seedlings get even light to avoid legginess and prick them out early to prevent damping off.

Sowing Seeds in Seedbeds

Wondering how to sow seeds into seedbeds? A seedbed is an area of carefully prepared soil where seedlings are raised before being transplanted into their permanent growing position. This method is commonly used for crops such as [cabbage](#), [leeks](#), and [lettuce](#), which benefit from developing strong root systems in a controlled space

Choose a sunny, sheltered spot and prepare the soil by clearing weeds, loosening with a fork, and adding compost or well-rotted manure. Rake the surface to a fine tilth so seeds can germinate easily. Sow in shallow drills, spacing seeds thinly to avoid overcrowding, and cover lightly with soil.

Keep the bed well-watered and free from weeds. Make sure the seedbed area gets plenty of sunlight and is protected from high winds, frost and flooding. You must also protect from pests and weeds, and keep the soil properly fertilised.

Once seedlings are sturdy and have several true leaves, carefully lift and transplant them to their final growing site.

How to Sow Seeds in Easy Steps

Planting Conditions

When planting seeds, you need to be aware of the spacing and depth at which you should place the individual seeds. Larger seeds can sometimes be sown at a depth of a metre into the soil, while smaller seeds must be planted a few inches below the surface.

Another essential factor to consider when sowing seeds is how big the plant will grow upon maturing. For example, when growing herbs like [coriander](#) or [basil](#), the distance between seeds can be smaller. However, for a good yield of [tomatoes](#),

they should be planted far apart so that each plant receives enough light and ventilation. Similarly, but even more so, pumpkins grow into large plants with large produce and should be spaced even farther apart.

Be careful not to break or disturb the root system when removing seedlings for transplanting. To guarantee a good yield, you must thin out the young plants as soon as they emerge. Keep the stronger plants and remove the weaker ones.

Leave enough space between plants to allow for easy weeding without disrupting the root system. Watch for slugs and birds, which are common predators of these young plants in their early stages.

Seed Selection and Germination

First, procure high-quality seeds from your local garden centre. Check the package for the date of expiry or any signs of damage and store the seeds in a cool, dark and dry place until it's time to sow them. If they've been opened, make sure they are kept in an airtight container with proper labels, so you don't mix them up.

To successfully germinate seeds, you need the right mix of sunlight, temperature, moisture and nutrients. The more delicate plants must be sown indoors and allowed to harden off before being planted outdoors, whereas the hardy seeds are directly sown outdoors.

Maintain proper lighting and a well-drained compost during germination. Furthermore, avoid adding too much fertiliser and keep the soil moist to avoid waterlogging.

Different seeds take different amounts of time to germinate, but the seed package should explain!

Sowing Seeds Outdoors

There are some hardier vegetable and fruit seeds that can be sown directly into the soil once the ground has warmed and there is no risk of frost. Choose a well-drained, weed-free area and rake the soil to a fine tilth so seedlings can establish easily.

When sowing seeds outdoors, you will need to create a shallow trench or drill, place the seeds at the spacing suggested on the packet, and cover lightly with soil before watering as instructed. Top tip - keep the rows clearly marked so you can identify weeds later.

Once seedlings emerge, thin them out if they are overcrowded, leaving the strongest plants to grow on. Outdoors, young plants are more vulnerable, so protect with netting or fleece from birds, slugs and cold snaps

How to Prepare the Soil for Sowing

Now that you know the different ways of sowing seeds, let's look at how to prepare the soil before planting the seeds. The seed quality and the soil both play equally important roles in getting a good yield. Your soil must be well-drained, aerated, nutrient-rich and free from weeds and other debris.

Before the planting season, once the soil has slightly warmed up and the ground is no longer frosted, arm yourself with a garden spade, rake, hoe and trowel.

Begin by clearing the area of any plant debris, weeds and stone. Weeds and debris will obstruct the growth of the young root system, making it difficult for the growing plant to absorb nutrients.

Use the gardening fork to loosen the soil, allowing it to be aerated and allowing for proper moisture retention. If you have heavy clay soil, mix it with sand; for sandy soil, add some mulch and organic manure.

Use the rake to break up large clumps of soil and avoid over-compacting the soil.

Add compost and general-purpose fertilisers to the soil and let it rest for a week or two before sowing your seeds. Keep the soil well-hydrated and don't forget to check the pH level of the soil. Depending on the crop you want to sow, you can add lime (if your soil is acidic) or sulphur (if your soil is alkaline).

Protected Sowing Seeds

The UK winters often extend into early spring, requiring growers to plant their seeds in a controlled and protected area before planting them outside. This type of sowing is handy for tender plants or those that need to be planted sooner than others.

Some popular protected sowing methods include greenhouses, polytunnels, cold frames and horticulture cloches or fleece.

You'll want to maintain a constant temperature between 15 and 21°C and make sure they receive ample light, there is proper ventilation, and the soil has adequate moisture levels

How to Contact the Editor

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

gareth.richards@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

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,

Gareth Richards
Treasurer
Eliz Flats, Plot 14



Editor : Gareth Richards – Treasurer
Yeovil Allotments Association

Website :

www.yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

Email :

info@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk

gareth.richards@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk