



Magazine Issue 7
May 2026

Dear Allotmenters,

Welcome to May's issue of our magazine. May is known as a month of transition. If you live in the northern hemisphere, the fresh cold winds are gone, as are the rains of early spring.

By the time May comes around, the spring flowers are blooming, birds are chirping, and life is starting to seem a little more joyful day by day!

It is said that those born in May have a greater chance of being more successful in life and experience more love. While this may not be scientifically factual, it has been noticed that people born in May understand the importance of love and success more than others.

The birthstone for May is the emerald. Emeralds are a type of stone called beryl and typically range from a deep-sea green to a lighter color. Emeralds are symbols of fertility and rebirth.

May actually has two birth flowers – Lily-of-the-Valley and The Hawthorn. The Hawthorn flower is a symbol of hope, while the Lily-of-the-Valley represents the return of happiness and sweetness.

May also has two Zodiac signs, Taurus and Gemini. People born under the sign of Taurus are said to be ambitious and smart, yet trustworthy. Those born under the sign of Gemini are said to be passionate, adaptable, and smart.

Thanks for reading,

Gareth Richards (Treasurer)

Elizabeth Flats Allotments, Plot 14

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Some Allotment Tips

Soil Preparation & General Maintenance

With the soil warming up, this is the perfect time to give your allotment a solid foundation for the growing season ahead.

Hoe and rake your vegetable beds regularly to keep weeds at bay. Tread down any rough-dug soil from winter and rake it to a fine, smooth tilth, ensuring an ideal planting environment.

Mulch around your crops and on bare soil to lock in moisture and suppress weeds.

Prepare new beds by ensuring any soil amendments are incorporated. A well-rotted compost or manure will help improve fertility and structure, setting your plants up for success.

Vegetable Tasks

May is a month of great activity on the vegetable patch. There is plenty to sow, plant, and tend to this month.

- **Sow carrots, beetroot, spinach, leaf beet, salad onions, radish, lettuce, peas, turnips, swedes, kale, spring onions, broad beans, pumpkins, squashes, radicchio, and endive. .**

- Plant out courgettes, maincrop potatoes, celeriac, and celery at the end of the month once the risk of frost has passed.

- Earth up early potatoes to increase yield and ensure the plants remain stable and well-fed.

- Stake peas and erect frames for climbing beans. You can sow beans under glass or directly outdoors towards the end of the month.

- Thin out seedlings from earlier sowings, such as carrots, to ensure strong and healthy plants.

Fruit Tasks

May is an exciting month for fruit enthusiasts, as trees and bushes begin to develop their crops. With the milder weather, it's a great time to ensure your fruit plants are well-supported and protected.

- Mulch strawberry beds with straw to conserve moisture and keep the fruit clean as it ripens.
- Thin canes on autumn-fruiting raspberries to promote healthy growth and maximize yields.
- Keep fruit trees well-supported , tying in any new growth on trained trees and canes. This includes currants, apples, and pears.
- Mulch fruit trees with well-rotted manure or compost to lock in moisture and suppress weeds. This is especially important with the milder temperatures, as trees are likely growing quickly

Greenhouse & Indoor Sowing

For those with greenhouses, this is a crucial month for moving plants from indoors to their final spots and sowing new crops that thrive in the warmth.

Harden off tender young plants that have been growing in the greenhouse. Acclimatize them to outdoor conditions before planting out later in the month.

Move plants out of the greenhouse to garden off during the day but bring them back in at night to avoid any late frost damage.

Plant tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, peppers, and aubergines in available greenhouse space. These crops need plenty of warmth, so

make sure they are well-watered, and keep an eye on ventilation to avoid scorching.

Prick out seedlings once they have developed their first true leaves to prevent overcrowding and fungal diseases.

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Flower Tasks

May is a month where your flower beds begin to show their true potential. As the weather warms up, there are plenty of tasks to keep your garden blooming.

- **Plant out dahlias** once the danger of frost has passed. This is typically towards the end of the month.
- Direct sow annuals for cut flowers , such as cosmos, cornflowers, larkspur, and heliopsis. These will provide a steady supply of blooms for cutting throughout the summer.
- Prune spring shrubs like forsythia and chaenomeles after flowering to keep them compact and encourage new growth.
- Pinch out the shoot tips of fuchsias to encourage bushier growth.
- Plant more gladioli for a succession of summer flowers.

Tip: Regularly check for pests such as aphids on young growth. Use biological controls if necessary or a soapy water spray to control the issue organically.

Pest Control & General Allotment Maintenance

As temperatures rise, pests such as aphids, slugs, and snails will be on the move. Keeping up with pest control is vital in ensuring a healthy and productive growing season.

Puzzle Corner

Amphibians

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



• OLM

• FROG

• NECTURUS

• TOAD

• SIREN

• CAECILIAN

• AXOLOTL

• NEWT

• SALAMANDER



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



Animals 2

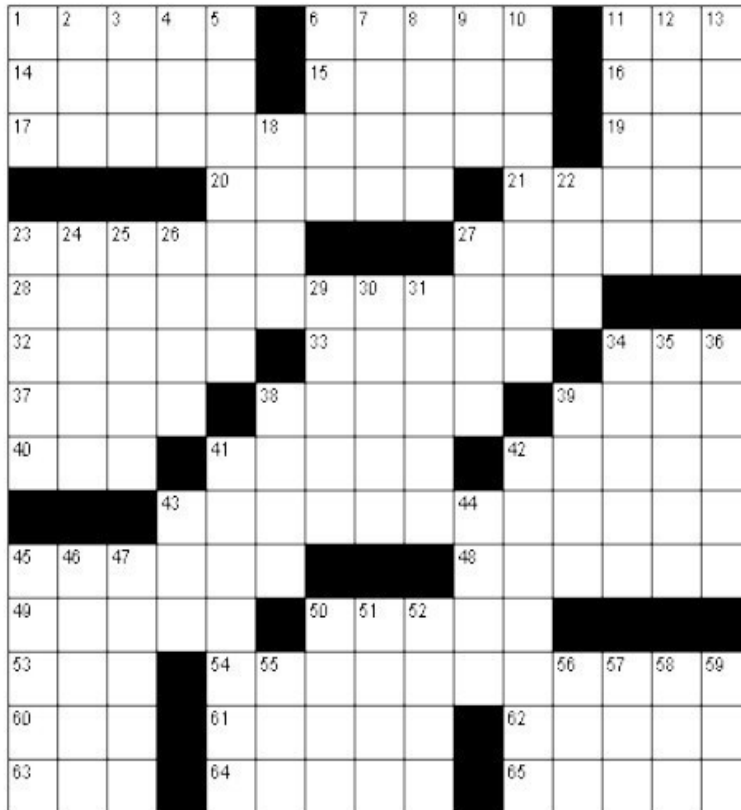
C	L	P	B	C	K	E	R	I	D	G	H	S
P	I	E	P	H	N	O	T	N	E	A	I	C
R	F	A	A	I	U	P	L	G	O	A	T	I
H	I	C	R	C	B	B	I	T	T	T	H	E
O	T	O	R	K	F	D	O	N	K	E	Y	N
W	D	C	O	E	Y	D	G	B	I	R	D	T
L	A	K	T	N	H	U	R	T	T	T	S	I
G	O	R	P	I	G	C	G	U	A	L	H	S
B	R	H	E	N	G	K	N	R	E	E	E	T
C	C	T	C	D	C	H	M	K	A	W	E	Y
H	O	R	S	E	F	I	M	E	U	S	P	A
W	W	E	R	G	B	E	R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



- PIG
- SHEEP
- GOAT
- HORSE
- DONKEY
- COW
- TURKEY
- OWL
- CHICKEN
- PEACOCK



Crossword no.25



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ACROSS

1. Muscle
6. Emblem
11. Panda
14. Swelling under the skin
15. Extraterrestrial
16. Self-importance
17. Water-driven turbines
19. Earned Run Average
20. Fees
21. Bovine mammary gland
23. Rouse
27. Deleted
28. Takes arbitrarily
32. Anagram of "Drool"
33. Former Pakistani copper coins
34. Doctrine
37. Assemble or modify written material
38. Airplane driver
39. Against
40. Soaked
41. Encrypted
42. Malicious setting of fires
43. Sofa
45. Length of a pants leg
48. Speaks
49. Engine
50. Desert "trees"
53. Consumed
54. Teenage years
60. G
61. A long backless sofa
62. Regions
63. Peculiar
64. Make a great effort
65. Requirements

DOWN

1. Stitch
2. Anagram of "Aid"
3. Mesh
4. Scottish for "Uncle"
5. Soldier
6. Monetary unit of Thailand
7. To the windward side
8. Becomes deceased
9. Mousse
10. Guarantees
11. Unwanted plants
12. Consent
13. Save up
18. Bend out of shape
22. Hyrax
23. Cover with drops
24. Afterpiece in ancient Roman theater
25. Divided
26. Lope
27. French for "State"
29. Sudden short attacks
30. Cove
31. Positive electrode
34. Something inserted
35. Absconded
36. "Great _____ think alike"
38. Lyrical composition
39. Operatic solo
41. A word acted out
42. Pertaining to the continent of Africa
43. Chief Executive Officer
44. Decays
45. An insect in its final adult

stage

46. Renowned
47. Horse
50. A small arm off of a larger body of water
51. Wing-shaped
52. Penny
55. French for "Ten"
56. Before
57. Born
58. Someone who is morally reprehensible
59. S

Link to Brimsmore Garden Centre

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

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

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

Brimsmore Garden Centre website address :

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

Email : brimsmore@thegardensgroup.co.uk

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.

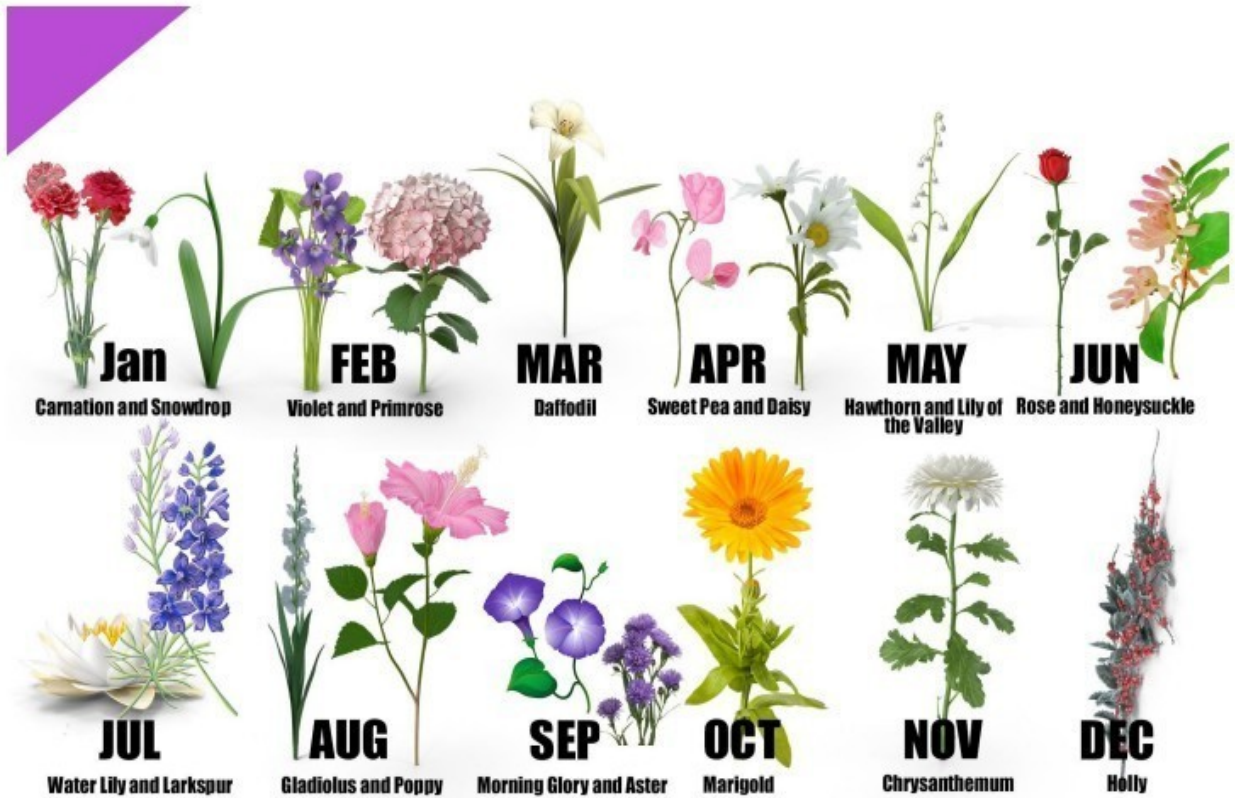
Your annual membership card gives you the time and dates of meetings for the year ahead. Our membership night for renewals is every March and again a discount night is offered for any garden centre items which are not on special offer.

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

S	I	N	E	W		B	A	D	G	E		W	A	H	
E	D	E	M	A		A	L	I	E	N		E	G	O	
W	A	T	E	R	W	H	E	E	L	S		E	R	A	
					R	A	T	E	S		U	D	D	E	R
B	E	S	T	I	R					E	R	A	S	E	D
E	X	P	R	O	P	R	I	A	T	E	S				
D	O	L	O	R		A	N	N	A	S		I	S	M	
E	D	I	T		P	I	L	O	T		A	N	T	I	
W	E	T		C	O	D	E	D		A	R	S	O	N	
				C	H	E	S	T	E	R	F	I	E	L	D
I	N	S	E	A	M					O	R	A	T	E	S
M	O	T	O	R		C	A	C	T	I					
A	T	E		A	D	O	L	E	S	C	E	N	C	E	
G	E	E		D	I	V	A	N		A	R	E	A	S	
O	D	D		E	X	E	R	T		N	E	E	D	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 Flowers for May are the Hawthorn and Lily of the Valley. Although most Allotmenters grow fruit and vegetables, some of you will grow flowers as well.



Hawthorn



Lily of the Valley

Hawthorn

Botanical name: **Crataegus**

Common name: **Hawthorn**

Common in hedgerows, the blossom of these trees is a sign of warmer, longer days. Small round fruits and autumn leaf colour extend their season of interest.

Versatile in use, they can be grown as hedges, shrubs or trees that thrive on a range of soils and in exposed situations. The tree provides a good wildlife habitat, with masses of nectar-rich flowers for insects and autumn berries, known as haws, offering food for birds.

Mature specimens are medium sized trees with pendulous branches along which clusters of small, cup-shaped white or pink-red flowers emerge in spring. Red or orange, elongated berries follow in autumn, often persisting through winter. With dense thorny branches, they also make an excellent hedging plant.

Hawthorns will grow in most soil types, in sun or light shade. They are tolerant of exposed sites and urban pollution.

Hawthorns do not do well in permanently waterlogged soil and will not flower in deep shade.

The old English saying 'Ne'er cast a clout till May be out' is believed to mean – you shouldn't remove warm clothing (clout) until hawthorn (also known as May) is flowering. Some people believe it refers to the month of May; either interpretation reminds us how changeable UK weather can be in late spring.

How to grow hawthorn

Hawthorn can be grown as a tree or a hedge. As trees, they are small to medium-sized and ideal for your garden. As hedges, they form a dense boundary that blossoms and supports wildlife.

Ideal for hedges or garden trees

- Deciduous (loses leaves in winter)
- Provides food and shelter for wildlife
- Can grow in exposed sites and on wet soils
- Position in sun or part-shade
- Trees need little maintenance once established
- Trim hedges at least once a year to shape them

Hawthorn hedging

Common hawthorn, **Crataegus monogyna**, is a British **native** plant that makes a medium-sized hedge up to 3m (10ft) in height. However, it can easily be kept at a lower height of between

1.4-2.5m (5-8ft) if trimmed. Hawthorn has a looser, less formal appearance when trimmed occasionally, or left untrimmed. Leaving longer periods between trimming reduces maintenance and often improves spring blossom.

To create a diverse habitat for wildlife, hawthorn can also be planted with other native species like *Corylus avellana* (hazel) and *Sambucus nigra* (elder). *Crataegus laevigata* (Midland hawthorn) has pink/red-flowered cultivars, can also be used for hedging, but it is sold less frequently in quantity.

Hawthorn is deciduous, so if you prefer a green hedge year-round, choose an evergreen such as *Taxus baccata* (English yew), *Prunus laurocerasus* (cherry laurel) or *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar).

Buying

Hedges

Hawthorn hedging is usually sold as

bare-root plants in winter when the plant is dormant. They come in bundles of rooted hardwood cuttings, which can be mail ordered or purchased from nurseries and garden centres. Container-grown plants are sometimes available during the growing season (March-September), but are likely to be more expensive than bare-root plants.

Trees

Hawthorn trees can be bought bare-root, or as container-grown specimen trees. Specialist tree and shrub nurseries stock the best range

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Hawthorn trees

Hawthorn (*Crataegus*) trees are ideal for smaller gardens, and are especially useful if you would like to encourage wildlife. They flower and fruit reliably, with decorative haws (fruits) persisting into winter. Some like *C. persimilis* 'Prunifolia' and *C.x lavalleei* 'Carrierei' have good autumn colour. Trees usually range from 5m-10m (16ft-33ft), while smaller slower growing dwarf selections like *C.laevigata* 'Gireoudii' (up to height 4m/13ft) are suitable as large border shrubs.

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Planting

compost in a container.

When to plant hawthorn

Bare-root hedging plants can be planted during winter. Anytime between October and February is fine, but avoid periods when the soil is **waterlogged** or frozen.

Container-grown hawthorn trees for specimen planting can be planted any time of year, but you will find them easier to keep watered if you plant in winter or spring. They are also sometimes available from nurseries as bareroot plants in winter.

Where to plant hawthorn

Hawthorn is a hardy plant and will grow on a range of soils, in full sun or part-shade. They are very tough, tolerating exposed positions and wet soils. Ground that is frequently waterlogged should be avoided though, as these conditions are likely to rot the roots. When planting a tree, make sure there is enough space around the tree for it to reach its ultimate dimensions (check label or the [**RHS website**](#) for these).

How to plant hawthorn

For hawthorn hedging, follow our guide on [hedge planting](#). Make a row, spacing plants 45-60cm (18in-2ft) apart. If you would like a wider hedge plant a double row. Thicker hedges give good cover for nesting birds, but can also improve privacy. Small hedging plants don't require staking but may need protection from [rabbits](#) and [deer](#).

For hawthorn trees, notes on how to plant these can be found on our [tree planting page](#), or follow [the RHS guide here](#) if you have chosen a larger specimen tree. Specimen trees, or those in exposed positions, benefit from [staking](#) for 18 months to 3 years until well-rooted.

Ongoing care

[mulching](#) the tree with bulky organic matter like bark, composted bark, or leaf mould will reduce moisture loss from soil around the roots. Leave a gap of about 10cm (4in) around the woody base of stems/trunk that is free from mulch, to prevent the [bark](#) rotting. Weeds compete for water and [nutrients](#) with garden plants, so try to keep the area immediately around your hedge or tree weed free.

Watering is key to successful establishment. Pay particular attention to this during dry weather. Direct water toward the base of the plant, thoroughly soaking this area, so water gets down to the roots. Continue to monitor watering during dry periods for the first three growing seasons after planting.

Hawthorn aren't heavy feeders, but a general purpose fertiliser, such as Growmore, or blood, fish and bone applied in early spring (February) often gives newly-planted hedges and trees a boost during the growing season. Once established, if the hedge or tree is growing well, this should be discontinued.

Pruning and training

Hawthorn hedging

Newly planted: If the hedging plant is not well branched, cut back the leading shoot by 15-30cm (6in-1ft) after planting. In the following summer, side branches can also be trimmed by one-quarter to one-third to encourage bushy growth. If they still seem sparse after the first growing season, this process can be repeated.

In late summer (August) of the third year, begin to shape the sides of the hedge so they taper (become narrower) toward the top. This is done so that light reaches all sides and it remains leafy without bare branches. Leave the top uncut until the hedge has reached the desired height.

Maintenance:

Once established, to maintain a formal look, cut your hedge twice or more from late spring to summer. A last cut in early autumn will keep it looking neat overwinter. To maintain the tapered shape, when cutting, aim for a flat-topped A-shape with the base about 1m (3½ft) wide. For a more informal look, which can help to encourage wildlife and more blossom and berries, cut your hedge once, or every other year.

Overgrown hedges:

In time, hedges can become wider and taller. If they outgrow their space, [renovation pruning](#) can help reduce their size.

This is best done when the hedge is

[dormant](#) in mid-winter (Jan/Feb). This type of pruning can stress the hedge, so if wish to cut back the top and sides by more than half, this is best staggered over two or three years.

Hedge laying, can also help to rejuvenate a sparse or overgrown hedge. This is a traditional practice, where hedging plants are partially cut at the base, then laid and pegged horizontally. This is most frequently seen in the countryside, but could also work well in larger gardens, or those that border fields

Hawthorn trees

Hawthorn trees need little pruning, other than to remove any broken, crossing or diseased branches. Check your tree periodically, especially after storms for this kind of damage. If the tree appears unbalanced, or if two main shoots (twin leaders) form you may wish to remove these branches.

Propagating

Hedges from seed: *Crataegus monogyna* (common hawthorn) can be grown from seed. This is a money saving way of raising many plants and useful if you need them in quantity for a long hedge. Seed is best collected when the haws (fruit) are still green in late summer. Soak in warm water for several days to soften the flesh, then remove seed by squashing fruit against the side of a seive. Sow in containers (shallow seed pans are ideal) of John Innes (or half multipurpose to half grit/perlite). Place these in a sheltered site, such as a cold frame or near an external wall. Seed can also be sown in drills (shallow rows) directly into soil. Cold winter temperatures help to break the seed dormancy, but germination in the first year can be erratic. For this reason it's worth keeping the seed in place for a second winter, as more may germinate.

Trees from seed: Hawthorn trees can also be sown from seed, using the above method, but if the tree is a named cultivar, it may not be identical to the parent plant.

Trees and hedges from cuttings: Hawthorn are very hard to grow from cuttings, try raising from seeds first.

Grafting trees: Named cultivars of hawthorn are sold as grafted trees. Grafting means the resulting plant is identical to the parent tree (unlike seed grown trees). This technique requires some skill, so it's easier to buy trees, unless you are more experienced, or enjoy a challenge.

To propagate trees by grafting, take young wood (called the 'scion') from the desired tree and graft onto a two or three-year old *Crataegus monogyna*, *C. crus-galli* or *C. laevigata* sapling. Chip bud grafting can also be done in summer.

Problems

- Fungal leaf spots cause dark-spotting and blotching to the leaf surface. Spots often have a grey centre and can be accompanied by leaf yellowing. Although unsightly, this is unlikely to cause the tree to die
- Signs of ill health or the death of mature hawthorn trees and hedging can be due to the common disease [honey fungus](#). It's worth checking the roots to find out if this is present

Lily of the Valley

Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*) is a perennial plant reaching heights of 0.1-0.5 metres, known for its extensive colonies and fragrant, bell-shaped white flowers. It thrives in fertile, humus-rich, moist soil and prefers full or partial shade. This plant is toxic if ingested and may be susceptible to grey moulds and swift moth caterpillars. It requires no pruning and can be propagated by seed or division.

With its sweetly fragrant, nodding white bell-shaped flowers, this hardy perennial adds charm to shaded gardens in late spring.

Slender arching stems rise above lush green foliage, creating a delicate yet striking display. *Convallaria majalis*, commonly known as Lily of the Valley, thrives in moist, humus-rich soil and naturalises easily, forming a dense carpet over time.

Ideal for woodland gardens, shady borders, or under trees, it brings brightness to darker spots and requires minimal maintenance once established. Spreading via underground rhizomes, this cottage garden favourite also makes an excellent cut flower, allowing you to enjoy its scent indoors.

Please note that the lily-of-the-valley sold as bare root plants have been field grown. To keep the roots hydrated, they are supplied with a little compost. Those bare root rhizomes sold in a multibuy offer will come in a bundle of five, and these can be gently teased apart before planting out.

Please note that the lily-of-the-valley sold as bare root plants have been field grown, however in order to keep the roots hydrated, we may have potted them up. Therefore, they may not have a well developed root system and you shouldn't worry if the soil falls away when you are planting out.

How to care for *Convallaria majalis*:

***Convallaria* thrives in shady spots with well-drained, humus-rich soil. When planting bare root rhizomes, position them 5-8cm (2-3in) deep and space them 20cm (8in) apart to allow room for spreading.**

Potted plants can be placed at 30cm (12in) apart and will increase to provide excellent ground cover. Water the rhizomes well after planting to help establish them.

To maintain healthy growth and prevent overcrowding, divide and replant congested clumps in September by carefully lifting the clumps and separating the rhizomes, ensuring each division has some roots attached.

Apply a generous mulch of composted leaf mould around the base of the plant to help retain moisture, suppress weeds, and enrich the soil as it decomposes.

Flowering period:

- Jan
- Feb
- Mar
- Apr
- **May**
- Jun
- Jul
- Aug
- Sep
- Oct
- Nov
- Dec

Eventual height:

0.25m

Eventual spread:

0.25m

Position:

Light shade / shade

Rate of growth:

Average

Soil:

Moderately fertile, moist, well-drained soil

Hardiness:

Fully hardy

This perennial dies back to below ground level each year in autumn, then fresh new growth appears again in spring.

Humans/Pets: TOXIC if eaten

Outreach Project Update

At the moment Outreach has begun in Yeovil Town Library. If you look at the outreach page on the website, you will see some new dates.

I do not know what the future will hold. It seems there are opportunities to raise our profile in town .

I will let you know the outcomes as I get to know them. Feel free to put a comment on the website. I would like some feed back even if it only a like or needs to improve.

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Many thanks,
Gareth (Treasurer)
Editor

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 Onion.

It can be cooked or eaten raw in salads or in sauces.

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 bit years so bringing knowledge to the readers is wholly an exercise in already published work.

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

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

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

Onions

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

Onions are a versatile crop, coming in a range of colours for different uses in the kitchen. Onions are a staple in a huge variety of dishes, from hot curries to soups, salads and tarts. All onion varieties are easy to grow and they store well, too, so you can enjoy home-grown onions all year round.

How to grow onions

You can grow onions from seed, but it's much easier and quicker to grow them from sets (small onions). Most are heat-treated, meaning they're less likely to bolt (produce flowers), which stops the onions bulking up. One small onion set grows into one larger onion. Plant these in autumn or spring, 10-15cm apart in well-prepared, moisture-retentive, fertile soil in full sun. Keep the area weed free and water in dry periods. Harvest the onions when they're big enough to eat or the foliage has turned brown and started to wither.

How long do onions take to grow?

Onions require 90-100 days to mature from seed, which is around four months. From sets, onions are ready to harvest after around 80 days, or just under three months.

How to sow onion seed

Sow onion seed indoors as early as January, so they are large enough to plant out in spring. Sow seed in a pot or tray of moist seed compost, about 1cm apart. When the seedlings are a few inches tall, prick them out and transplant into fresh, peat-free multi-purpose compost. Once established, transplant seedlings into the garden, 10-15cm apart.

How to plant onion sets

There's no need to soak onion sets before planting. Plant them 10-15cm apart, allowing 30cm between rows. Plant them just below the soil surface, with just the tips showing, in moisture-retentive, fertile soil, ideally with plenty of well-rotted organic matter such as garden compost.

When to plant onion sets

Onion sets are usually available to buy for spring planting but a small number can also be planted in autumn in the UK. In spring, plant onion sets from mid-March to mid-April. There's a wide variety to choose from, including popular 'Red Baron', 'Sturon' and 'Hercules'. Spring-planted onion sets are ready to harvest from late summer.

Those suitable for autumn planting are more tolerant of cold conditions and can therefore be planted from October through to March. Common autumn-planting varieties include 'Autumn Champion' and 'Electric'. An advantage of planting onion bulbs (sets) in autumn is that they take up space that would otherwise be left unplanted, and getting them in the ground before Christmas saves you a job in spring. Autumn-planted onion sets tend to mature a few weeks sooner than spring-planted sets, typically from early summer.

Onions typically need about 100 days of growing to produce decent sized bulbs. You can get away with planting them as late as mid-May to get 100 days of growing before light levels fall in autumn, but bear in mind they will be smaller than earlier planted bulbs when you come to harvest them.

How to care for onion crops

In spring, apply a nitrogen-rich fertiliser to autumn-planted bulbs to give them a boost. Water well during dry spells and remove any [flower](#) heads that appear, as these divert the plant's energy from bulb development, to seed production. Onions are shallow rooting, so hand weed instead of hoeing between the rows.

Growing onions: problem solving

You may need to cover the sets with horticultural fleece, to stop birds from pulling them up.

protect crops the following year, by growing them under fleece. Companion planting parsley among your onions can also ward off onion fly.

Onion-neck rot can be a problem in wet summers. Telltale signs are brown marks and fluffy grey mould. Don't overcrowd when planting, and dry bulbs thoroughly before storing.

Growing onions: problem solving

You may need to cover the sets with horticultural fleece, to stop birds from pulling them up.

Drooping yellow foliage is the first sign of onion fly larvae, but by then they'll already be eating their way through the bulb by the time you notice the damage. You can protect crops the following year, by growing them under fleece. Companion planting parsley among your onions can also ward off onion fly.

Onion-neck rot can be a problem in wet summers. Telltale signs are brown marks and fluffy grey mould. Don't overcrowd when planting, and dry bulbs thoroughly before storing.

When to harvest onions

As a general rule, autumn-planted onions grown from sets are ready to harvest from early summer, and spring-planted onions grown from sets, as well as those raised from seed, are ready to harvest from late summer. Never harvest onions before their leaves have turned yellow and stopped growing, although it's best to harvest them before the foliage turns brown and completely dies down.

Gently loosen the soil with a fork and lift the onions out of the soil, and leave them to dry on a drying rack or similar, before storing.

Take care not to damage or bruise your onions as you harvest them, as damaged onions don't store well. Use any damaged onions immediately.

How to prepare and use onions

Peel and chop onions for soups, stews, pickles and sauces. Sweeter varieties, such as red onions, are best for using raw in salads.

How to store onions

Spread onions and shallots out on newspaper or racks to dry. They're ready when their outer skins rustle when you touch them. Hang or [string](#) them in nets in a cool, dark, dry place. They should last for months.

Advice on buying onions

- Decide if you want seeds or sets. Sets are easier to grow but are more expensive to buy
- If buying sets, ensure you buy autumn- or spring-planting sets for planting at the right time
- Discard any sets with signs of mould or softness before planting

Great onion varieties to grow

'Red Baron' – a beautiful red onion with a nice flavour that's sweet enough for salads and s superb grilled or roasted. A reliable cropper and it stores well. Plant sets in spring.

- 'Setton' – a good keeper and easy to peel, with a strong but sweet flavour.

Onions are well rounded and often used for the show bench. Plant sets in spring.

- 'Snowball' – a white-fleshed onion with mild, succulent flesh that's perfect for sandwiches and salads. The bulbs store well. Plant sets in autumn.

- 'Autumn Champion' – a great all-rounder, this onion has a mildish flavour but is very robust. Plant sets in autumn.

- 'Electric' – this gorgeous red onion is perfect for using in salads and also pickles well. Plant sets in autumn.

- 'Senshyu Yellow' – a very reliable Japanese over-wintering onion, bearing pale brown bulbs that store well. Plant sets in autumn.

Summer Berries Jam

Summer Berry Jam



Prepare

over 2 hours

Cook

30 mins to 1 hour

Serve

750ml/1¼ pints

Capture the best of summer's fruit with this quick jam recipe. Try it with any combination of strawberry, raspberry, blueberry and blackberry.

Ingredients

- 750g/1½lb mixed berries including strawberries, raspberries, blueberries or blackberries
- 100ml/3½fl oz water
- 400g/14oz jam sugar

Method

1. Wash and remove any stalks from the fruits. Place in a pan with water and bring to the boil. Leave to simmer for 10-15 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the sugar, stir until it has dissolved and boil for a further 15-20 minutes.
2. Transfer to any sterilised airtight jars (a couple of clip jars are perfect) to cool. Once cooled, cover and chill in the fridge where it will thicken and become more jam-like. It will keep for up to 2 months.
3. Spread the jam over hot, buttered toasted teacakes, crumpets, scones or a jam sandwich.
4. The jam adds a fruity tang stirred into natural yogurt, or you can gently heat it and serve with ice cream or on pancakes with thick cream.

Recipe tips

Prepare the jam jars by washing in hot soapy water and leaving to dry in the oven at 130C/250F/Gas ½ for 10-15

minutes. Stand the lids in a pan of boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain and allow to cool before handling. Fill the jars while still warm.

Try adding the scraped seeds of a vanilla pod to the pan with the sugar for a delicious vanilla flavour.

The Secret History of Gardening Tools You Probably Own



Every gardener has a collection of tools that feel timeless. But many of the items tucked into your shed or tote carry stories that go back centuries. From humble sticks used to plant seeds to knives forged in Japan's mountains, the tools we use today are part of a long tradition of ingenuity, necessity, and sometimes downright quirky invention.

Let's take a closer look at the secret history of a few gardening tools you probably already own – and uncover the surprising stories behind them.

The Trowel – From Masonry to Garden Beds

The [garden trowel](#) might look like a simple hand shovel, but it has roots in ancient masonry. Early trowels were designed for spreading mortar between bricks and stone. Gardeners quickly recognized its potential for scooping soil, setting bulbs, and tucking in seedlings, and the design made a seamless leap into horticulture. Remarkably, the basic shape hasn't changed much in hundreds of years – proof that some designs are nearly perfect from the start.

Master Gardener Tip

Choose a trowel forged from stainless steel metal. It won't bend at the neck and will give you years of dependable use.

The Dibber – A Tool With a Name as Old as Dirt

The dibber is one of the oldest and most charmingly named garden tools. At its simplest, it's a pointed stick used to poke planting holes for seeds or seedlings. The word "dib" comes from old English, meaning to poke or dab, and wooden dibbers dating back centuries have been uncovered by archaeologists. Medieval farmers relied on them to plant crops quickly and evenly – a practice that continues in vegetable gardens today.

Little-Known Fact

During Britain's "Dig for Victory" campaign in World War II, dibbers were widely promoted as essential tools for planting crops in home gardens to support the war effort.

The Pruning Shears – A French Revolution in Gardening

[Pruning shears](#), also called secateurs, were born in 19th-century France. Originally used in vineyards, they allowed growers to tame grapevines and improve yields with precision. Early shears were heavy, forged tools that spread quickly across Europe as gardeners realized their value. Today, no rose, shrub, or fruit tree is complete without a pair of pruning shears in the gardener's pocket.

Master Gardener Tip

A quick swipe with a sharpening stone before each use keeps blades razor-sharp. Cleaner cuts mean less plant stress and a lower risk of disease.

The Watering Can – From Tin Pots to Iconic Haws Designs

Before the watering can, gardeners relied on buckets, gourds, or even cupped hands to deliver water to plants. The first true watering cans appeared in the 17th century, fitted with spouts for easier pouring. By the late 19th century, John Haws patented his iconic design in England,

revolutionizing the way water could be distributed evenly and gently. [Haws watering cans](#) remain prized today not only for their performance but also for their beauty – turning a functional tool into a design classic.

Little-Known Fact

The term “watering can” first appeared in print in 1692, making it one of the earliest gardening tool names still in everyday use.

The Hori Hori – A Japanese Knife Turned Gardener’s Best Friend

Among modern gardeners, the [Hori Hori](#) is one of the most beloved tools – but its story starts in Japan’s mountains. The name means “to dig,” and the knife was originally used by foragers to harvest edible plants and roots. With its sharp, dual-edged blade, the Hori Hori easily cuts through roots, weeds, and soil. Over time, it spread across the gardening world and is now considered an indispensable all-in-one tool.

Master Gardener Tip

Mark depth lines on your Hori Hori blade with a permanent marker or a shallow file notch. You’ll have a built-in measuring tool for bulbs, seeds, and transplants.

Carrying on the Tradition

Every tool in your garden is more than just metal and wood – it’s part of a story. From the dibber’s medieval simplicity to the Hori Hori’s foraging origins, each tool connects you to generations of gardeners who came before. The next time you reach for your trowel, shears, or watering can, remember you’re not just gardening. You’re carrying on centuries of tradition, keeping history alive with every seed you plant and every rose you prune.

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



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