



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

Composited off the Internet
By Gareth Richards

Fruit & Vegetable Growing Guide for April

By April spring should be well and truly underway, the soil warming up nicely and everything growing away. Don't be complacent though, it's been known for a cold snap with snow to strike even in the sunny south of England. Keep an eye on the weather forecasts and a hand on the horticultural fleece and insulation materials.

Sowing & Planting in April on the Vegetable Plot

If March has been difficult and you've not managed to get much done, you're going to have a busy April. With onions you're really pushing it so if they're not planted make it one of the first jobs of the month

The weeds won't be slow and it's time to sharpen your hoe. A sharp hoe is the best friend a gardener can have. Just slide it back and forth slightly below the surface of the soil and you'll stop the weed seedlings in their tracks.

There's an old saying "Hoe when you can't see a weed and you'll never see a weed" which is very true. Hoeing keeps the top soil broken up so in times of drought water cannot get to the surface by capillary action and evaporate. When it does rain a hoed surface will prevent the precious water running off and ensure it goes down to where it's wanted.

Things to Sow in April

Beetroot

Peas

Broad Beans

Broccoli

Brussels Sprouts

Cabbage

Cauliflower

Kale
Chard
Kohl Rabi
Leeks
Spinach
Rocket
Lettuce
Radish

Covering your carrots with a fleece and ensuring the edges are buried will stop the carrot root fly from gaining entry to lay eggs by your carrots. The eggs hatch into larvae that burrow into the carrot root, killing the plant or at least ruining the crop.

Plant Outdoors
Onion & Shallot Sets
Globe Artichokes
Jerusalem Artichokes
Asparagus.

Easter, a variable feast that usually falls in early April is the traditional potato planting time. If you have a comfrey bed and it has sprung back, the first cut laid in the trench under the potatoes will provide nutrition to get them off to a good start.

On the subject of comfrey, if you make a comfrey tea it will help you to a great crop when you use it on your potatoes. Many novice growers wonder why they have small crops of potatoes and most often this is just down to lack of food for this hungry crop. See feeding potatoes

Under Cover in Greenhouse, Coldframe and Polytunnel
Aubergine (but a bit late)
Celery
Outdoor Cucumbers
Tomatoes (outdoor varieties)

A good tip in a windowsill is to stick some silver cooking foil onto cardboard and place on the inside to reflect light back onto the seedlings. This will help prevent the seedlings being drawn.

Sow Outdoors Under Cloche

French beans

Lettuce

Sweetcorn

Alternative Method for Growing Sweetcorn

I like to pre-chit my sweetcorn, I lay the seeds on a layer of damp kitchen paper and then place a layer of paper over in an airtight box. An old ice-cream carton or a Tupperware type box is ideal. Check carefully each day and as soon as the small white sprout appears, plant the seed about half to an inch deep in a 3" pot of general purpose compost in the greenhouse.

When the shoots appear about an inch high, plant out under cloche being careful not to disturb the root (sweetcorn hates root disturbance) under a cloche. Sweetcorn needs a lot of nitrogen and a teaspoon of dried blood per plant or water with urea (this is a chemical, I do not mean pee on them!)

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

Strawberries can be planted out now, it's best to remove flowers in the first year as you conserve strength for growth and gain larger crops in subsequent years. An easy way to gain strawberry plants is to plant the runners into pots and when rooted cut the runner. The plants don't last forever so you need to rotate them every three to five years.

Hand pollinate peaches and nectarines. Tickle the flowers with a small paint brush to spread the pollen. Cover if a cold spell threatens.

A good layer of compost around the base of fruit trees will ensure they have the nutrition to provide another good crop for you.

Gardener's Pests

I've mentioned the carrot root fly but the gardener's worst enemy is awakening. The evil slugs and snails are coming out to eat entire rows of succulent young seedlings overnight so take action now.

Harvest

We're in the 'Hungry Gap' between the last of the winter crops and start of the early crops but there are still a few things available, late sprouting and chards for example plus you may have some early salad crops like radishes and fast lettuces from the greenhouse border.

Spring cabbage, broccoli, very early peas, greenhouse potatoes are all possible for experienced growers. Outdoors salads that may be around: claytonia and corn salad.

Check Stored Potatoes

Do re-check your stored crops. On a fine day, empty out the potato sacks and check for any rotten potatoes. If you've strung onions, watch out for the odd rotten one and remove it before it spreads.

Growing in a Polytunnel in April

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

April is one of the busiest months and one filled with immense responsibility. All your crops are now sown and you care for them as if they are your little babies. You certainly can't book a holiday during April because your seedlings in trays need to be watered every day and possibly twice if it's hot.

Sowing in the Polytunnel

Direct sowing into beds

You can sow radishes and baby turnips directly into the beds if there is space available.

Planting into polytunnel beds

You can now plant out the seedlings you raised earlier on your heating bench: calabrese, mini cauliflowers, celery, chervil, coriander, courgette, dill, French beans, kohlrabi, lettuce, oriental salads and scallions.

Sowing into modules/pots (18-20°C)

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

Basil (Sweet Genovese) – 4 seeds per cell

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

Courgette (Defender F1) – 1 seed per 7cm pot

Cucumber (Passandra F1 & Styx F1) – 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

Melon (Emir F1) – 1 seed per 7cm pot

Sweetcorn (Sweet Nugget F1) – 1 seed per 7cm pot

For planting outside

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

Brussels sprouts, cabbage, calabrese, cauliflower, chard, chervil, coriander, courgette, dill, endive, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, parsley, perpetual spinach, pumpkins, scallions, squash, swede and turnip.

Harvesting from the Polytunnel

In April you'll get your first rewards from your tunnel or greenhouse. You'll be harvesting a whole range of exciting, delicious and healthy crops:

Early Hispi cabbage, lots of lettuce, radish, scallions, baby turnips, kohlrabi, salad rocket and other oriental salads, spinach, chard, strawberries and even some baby potatoes.

General greenhouse/polytunnel jobs

Water more frequently now.

Ventilate as much as possible.

Prick out celery and celeriac seedlings into modular trays.

Pot on aubergines, peppers and tomatoes into 10cm pots using good potting compost.

Most of the overwintered crops (oriental salads, spinach and chard) will have bolted by now and should be pulled.

Keep a watch out for pests, especially aphids on a variety of crops and leatherjackets and cutworms on newly planted lettuce. Spray aphid susceptible plants with a garlic spray every ten days.

Prick out and pot on plants as necessary.

Towards the end of the month lower the temperature of your propagator to 15°C to harden off your tomatoes, peppers etc. before planting them into the beds next month.

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.

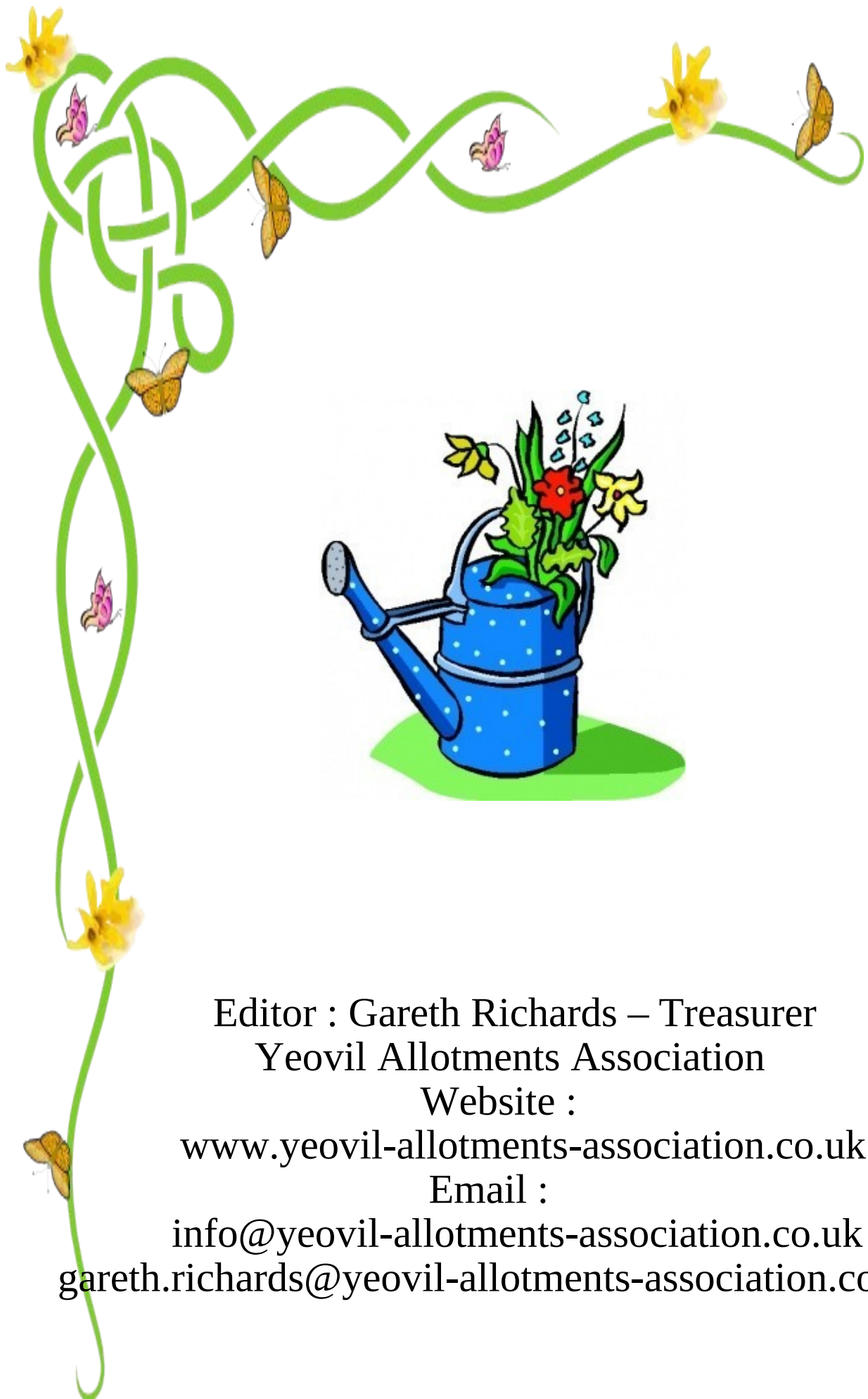
We also have our own website at :

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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