

March in the allotment



The pace is hotting up in the allotment with lots of jobs to do this month. Big tasks including getting your early potatoes in the ground and getting some crops seeded. Remember to protect any vulnerable seedlings, shoots, or early fruit blossoms from late frosts.

VEGETABLES

PLANT OUTDOORS

- * Jerusalem artichoke tubers
- * Chitted early potatoes
- * Onion sets
- * Shallot sets
- * Asparagus crowns



SOW OUTDOORS

- * Beetroot
- * Broad beans
- * Brussels Sprouts (sow an early variety now to harvest in September e.g. Peer Gynt, Oliver)
- * Kohl rabi
- * Leeks
- * Lettuce (sow outdoors from mid-March)
- * Onions
- * Radish (sow summer varieties e.g. French Breakfast, Sparkler, Scarlet Globe)
- * Shallots
- * Parsnip
- * Peas e.g. Feltham First, Meteor (sow now for a May/June crop)
- * Perpetual spinach
- * Early turnip e.g. Purple top milan

SOW OUTDOORS UNDER COVER

- * Summer cabbage e.g. varieties Greyhound, Hispi, Primo, Derby Day, Stonehead, Minicole, Winnigstadt
- * Carrots (sow short-rooted varieties now for a June/July crop e.g. Amsterdam Forcing, Early Nantes)
- * Peppers
- * Lettuce
- * Spinach (summer varieties e.g. King of Denmark, Medania)

SOW UNDER HEATED COVER

- * Aubergine
- * Celery and celeriac (sow now to plant out in May/June)
- * Greenhouse Cucumbers
- * Tomatoes (sow now to plant out in May)

HARVEST

Perpetual spinach (leaf beet), swiss chard, early sprouting broccoli, brussels sprouts, winter cauliflower, celeriac, chicory, endive, kale, leeks, parsnip, salsify, scorzonera, spinach, swede

New Scottish law protects birds of prey

Persecution of birds of prey remains a serious problem with significant numbers poisoned every year. These crimes are often committed by those interested in preserving game to shoot and the perpetrators use one of a number of highly toxic pesticides.

New Scottish legislation just came into force. From March 14 this year people can be punished by fines of up to 5000 pounds and/or a jail sentence of six months for possessing any one of eight named pesticides. These eight pesticides (aldicarb, alphachloralose, aluminium phosphide, bendiocarb, carbofuran, mevinphos, sodium cyanide, and strychnine) have all been used to poison wildlife in recent years. The new legislation is a welcome new tool in the fight against these crime.

www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2005/02/17105152

FRUIT

- * Finish planting bare-rooted fruit trees
- * Perpetual varieties of strawberry can be planted in March/April, such as aromel, rapella
- * Bare-rooted canes of raspberry, blackberry, hybrid berry, blackcurrant, gooseberry can still be planted
- * Grapes can still be planted
- * Plant rhubarb from crowns
- * Prune apple trees
- * 2 to 3 year old plum trees can be pruned similar to apple trees
- * Prune gooseberries, raspberries
- * Compost around the base of fruit trees, particularly young trees
- * Strawberries can be forced to flower by covering them with cloches. You may need to hand-pollinate forced strawberry plants coming into flower using a small paint brush

OTHER TASKS

- * Place growbags in the greenhouse to warm up
- * Harvest the remainder of any winter-harvest crops and compost the debris
- * If you plant asparagus crowns it is time to prepare the ground well. Dig the bed deeply incorporating plenty of compost and removing all perennial weeds. Asparagus need good drainage so if you have a heavy clay soil you can include pea shingle to improve drainage and you may consider making a raised bed.
- * Warm up soil by covering with plastic, fleece or cloches. An extra one or two degrees could really help bring on a crop.



Gooseberry Sawfly

The larvae of the gooseberry sawfly is one of the most serious pests of gooseberries. They are pale green and caterpillar-like, are up to 25 mm long and most have dark spots and dark heads. They eat their way through gooseberry leaves and can rapidly defoliate and entire bush by the time the berries ripen. Red and white currant bushes are also affected. The larvae do not eat berries, however, damage from sawfly in one year can weaken the plant and reduce the gooseberry harvest in the following year.

Three species cause damage. The common gooseberry sawfly *Nematus ribesii* is the most frequent offender, but the lesser gooseberry sawfly *Nematus leucotrochus*, and the pale gooseberry sawfly *Pristiphora pallipes* can also cause damage.

The sawfly overwinter as cocoons in the soil. In April they hatch into adult flies who lay their eggs on the undersides of leaves in a characteristic pattern along the leaf veins. The pale green/white eggs are about 1 mm in diameter and are laid on leaves low down in the centre of the bush so eggs and larvae are initially not easy to spot. After hatching the larvae eat their way upwards and outwards. Damage is initially seen as small holes in leaves which expand until the whole leaf has been eaten. After feeding for about 3 weeks the larvae drop into the soil and form cocoons. There may be three generations a year with the larvae active in May to June, July, and then again from August to September. The cocoons either hatch into adult flies or in the autumn they remain as cocoons in the soil over winter hatching the following spring.

To prevent gooseberry sawfly damage

- ◆ Inspect gooseberry and currant bushes regularly from mid-Spring onwards picking off and squashing any larvae, eggs, and badly infested leaves.
- ◆ Clear debris from around the base of gooseberry bushes in the Autumn. Exposing cocoons will help birds find and eat them.
- ◆ If sawfly are a regular problem it may be easier to grow gooseberries as cordons to make regular inspections easier.



Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) is an independent non-profit organisation working nationally and globally with individuals and organisations who share our concerns. PAN UK projects enable us to work effectively towards specific targets to enable us to:

- ◆ Eliminate the hazards of pesticides
- ◆ Reduce dependence on pesticides
- ◆ Promote alternatives to pesticides

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