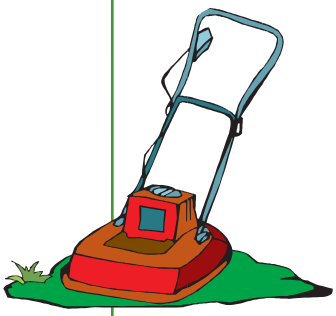
April in the allotment

VEGETABLES

SOW OUTDOORS

- Beetroot and turnip
- Peas and broad beans
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Chard
- Endive
- Kale
- Kohl rabi
- Leeks
- Lettuce
- Spinach and perpetual spinach
- Radish



SOW OUTDOORS UNDER COVER

- French beans
- Squash (e.g. courgettes, marrows, pumpkins)
- Greenhouse cucumbers (e.g. Conqueror, Telegraph)
- Lettuce
- Sweet Corn

SOW UNDER HEATED COVER

- Aubergine
- Celery
- Outdoor cucumbers (e.g. Burpless Tasty Green)

PLANT OUTDOORS

- Globe artichoke
- Jerusalem artichoke tubers
- Chitted potatoes (second earlies and maincrops)
- Onion and shallot sets
- Asparagus (remove perennial weeds before planting crowns)

PLANT IN GREENHOUSE

- Aubergine
- Peppers
- Tomatoes

Skin cancer linked to indoor pesticides

An Italian study published this month provides the first suggestions of a link between indoor pesticide use and melanoma (a form of skin cancer). 287 melanoma sufferers were compared with 299 healthy volunteers. All participants were interviewed to find out how frequently they used indoor pesticides. The study found that frequent use of indoor pesticides (four times a year or more) doubled the risk of melanoma relative to infrequent use (once a year or less). People exposed for 10 years or more were at greater risk than those exposed for a shorter time.

Previous studies have indicated that people exposed to pesticides at work (such as farmers and pest controllers) are at greater risk of melanoma. This is the first time that indoor pesticide use by householders has been linked to this disease.

The greatest risk factor in developing melanoma is exposure to strong sunlight. This new study is small but suggests that exposure to pesticides may also contribute in some cases.

Fortes C, Mastroeni S, Melchi F, Pilla MA, Alotta M, Antonelli G, Camaione D, Bolli S, Luchetti, Pasquini P, The association between residential pesticide use and cutaneous melanoma, European Journal of Cancer, 2007, 43, 1066-1075.

FRUIT

PLANTING

- Fruit trees are coming out of dormancy so all bare-rooted fruit trees should already have been planted.
- Strawberry can be planted in March/April, but it is best to remove flowers in the first year.

OTHER FRUIT TASKS

- Compost around the base of fruit trees, particularly young trees
- Weed around the base of young fruit trees. Weeds compete for nutrients and affect how well young trees get established.
- Sow melon seeds under cover to plant in the greenhouse in May. Cantaloupe varieties do best in unheated greenhouses.
- Hand-pollinate peaches and nectarines (using a soft paint brush) as they flower early when there are not many pollinating insects.
- Strawberries can be forced to flower by covering them with cloches. You may need to hand-pollinate the forced plants.

Carrot Root Fly

When planting carrots it is worth taking steps to protect them from their main pest, the carrot root fly (*Psila rosae*). These small black flies (8mm in length) lay eggs in the soil near carrots. After about a week cream coloured larvae emerge and begin feeding. First symptoms of attack are a reddening of the carrot leaves which then begin to wilt. Tunnels eaten by the larvae are visible on the carrot.

There are usually two generations of flies with eggs first laid by over-wintering adults in April/May and a second generation laid in July/August. Carrots growing in the ground at these times are vulnerable to attack and more damage is caused by the second generation.

Preventing damage from carrot root fly

- Cover the crop with a barrier to prevent the flies from laying eggs near carrots. Fleece works well but remember to bury the edges of the fleece to prevent the flies from getting in. Mulching the ground with a layer of grass clippings will also make it more difficult for the flies to lay eggs.
- When in flight the carrot root fly stays low so surrounding the carrot bed with a barrier of polythene extending at least 60cm high can deter them.
- It is thought that carrot root flies detect carrots by their smell which is particularly strong during thinning. Various strategies may minimise this smell
  - Planting several rows of onions or garlic between each row of carrots. Rosemary, sage or wormwood may also work.
  - Sow sparsely to avoid having to thin seedlings.
  - Dust with calcified seaweed to disguise the smell.
  - Remove thinnings and other waste from the area.
- Time plantings so roots are not in the ground during egg laying periods.
- Sow a resistant variety. 'Carrot F1 Fly Away' and 'T&M Fly Away' have resistance to larval attack. 'Sytan' is also less susceptible to larval attack.
- Avoid particularly susceptible varieties such as 'Autumn King'.
- Carrot root flies are not strong fliers so planting in an exposed, windy site can prevent their attack.

This troublesome pest can affect related crops (in the apiaceae family) such as parsnips, celery, celeriac, parsley, coriander.

OTHER TASKS

- Place growbags in the greenhouse to warm up
- Harvest the remainder of the winter-harvest crop and compost any debris
- Propagate perennial herbs such as rosemary and lavender. Cut a few inches below a shoot tip, remove the lower leaves from the cutting and place the cut end in perlite in a humid, shaded environment. The relative success rate of rooting and the time required depends on which species is being propagated.
- Grass will grow rapidly in April/May so it is time to get the lawnmower out of the shed and into action

PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK *UK*

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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