



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

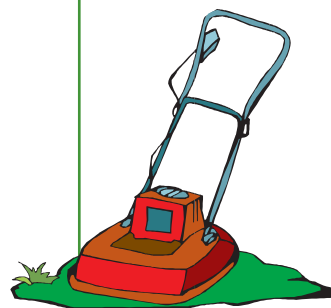
- * Aubergine
- * Outdoor cucumbers (e.g. Burpless Tasty Green)
- * Celery

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



Breast cancer linked to chemical exposure

Around 1 in 10 women in Europe will develop breast cancer. This figure cannot be improved without reducing exposure to certain chemicals, according to a report launched in the European Parliament on 2 April. *Breast cancer and exposure to hormonally active chemicals*, was written by Professor Andreas Kortenkamp, of the University of London, who coordinated a cluster of international research projects on endocrine (hormone) disrupting chemicals between 2002 and 2007.

“Good laboratory and epidemiological evidence exists suggesting that man-made chemicals which mimic oestrogen contribute to breast cancer,” says Professor Kortenkamp. “We will not be able to reduce the risk of breast cancer without addressing preventable causes, particularly exposure to chemicals.”

Since 2005, 200 international scientists, including Kortenkamp, have signed the Prague Declaration, which expresses scientific concerns related to the risks posed by chemicals in everyday use, particularly those that interfere with human hormones.

Over the past 20 years, breast cancer has increased dramatically throughout Europe, with incidence in some countries increasing by more than 50% or even doubling in the last 20 years. Elizabeth Salter Green Director of CHEM Trust says: “There is a misconception that breast cancer is an inherited disease and therefore inevitable. This is a quite simply a myth, most cases of breast cancer are acquired over a women’s lifetime, and so most are preventable.”

European Parliamentarians could play a pivotal role in reducing breast cancer. “They need to wake up to what needs to be done,” Ms Salter Green says. Chemicals and cosmetics need to be more tightly regulated and pesticide regulation reformed.

Scientists deliver wake-up call: “Reduce chemical exposure to reduce breast cancer”, HEAL Press Release 2 April, 2008.

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.

Wireworms

Wireworms are the larvae of the garden click beetle, *Athous haemorrhoidalis* and the common click beetle, *Agriotes lineatus*. They attack the underground parts of plants, damaging roots, tubers, corms and stems. Potatoes are particularly susceptible but they also attack beetroots and carrots. When numbers of wireworm are high they may also attack the roots of strawberries, brassicas, beans, tomatoes and many seeds/seedlings.



Photo: www.oisal.org

Damage can occur all year but is concentrated in spring and autumn. Small holes 2-3mm across appear on the outside of tuber or root crops. Cutting them open often reveals a network of tunnels which allow other pests and diseases to gain entry. Slugs and woodlice may be found, and bacterial and fungal rots may develop making the crop unsuitable for storage. On roots and stems small blackened pits can be seen and the plants may suddenly wilt and die. In tomato, wireworm may tunnel into the stems and upwards into the pith.

The female click beetle lays eggs just below the soil surface from May to June. They prefer grassland and weedy soil and so land that is newly cultivated is more susceptible to wireworm than well-cultivated soil. A month after egg-laying small white larvae hatch and feed on both living and dead plant material in the soil. They grow up to 3cm long and develop a tough golden brown skin with three pairs of short legs. The larval period can last for up to four years. Larvae move through the soil profile in response to changes in moisture and temperature. In warm soils (above 10°C) they feed close to the soil surface while in hot or cold weather the larvae move deeper in search of ideal conditions. Most crop damage occurs in the late spring/early summer, and early autumn, as the soil temperatures are most favourable at these times. Eventually the larvae construct pupal cells at about 20 to 30 cm depth in the soil, pupate over winter and emerge during the following summer and early autumn to mate.

Numbers of wireworm can be reduced by

- ◆ thoroughly turning soil in autumn, and before planting, to expose wireworm to their predators such as birds, frog beetles.
- ◆ checking homemade compost before use and expose to predators if necessary.
- ◆ harvesting susceptible crops early if ground is known to be infested with wireworm
- ◆ burying raw potatoes in a number of places about 10-15cm below the soil surface. These should be removed from time to time and any wireworm destroyed
- ◆ Before planting crops bury a net of pre-soaked grain about 10cm down in the soil (a mix of half wheat, half corn pre-soaked for 24 hours to promote germination works well). The soil around the bait can be heated by covering with black plastic. The bait should be removed regularly and wireworm destroyed. More details are available at <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/2003/4-21-2003/trapwire.html>

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 (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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