



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



Comparison of UK supermarket performance on pesticide problems

PAN UK is often asked by members of the public and journalists 'which UK supermarkets are the best on pesticides'? An assessment of what different retailers are doing on pesticide issues has just been published on PAN UK's website. It looks at the actions, commitments and policies of the main supermarkets in the UK based on information published on their websites.

The assessment clearly shows three companies doing most to address different issues of concern on pesticide use and contamination of food: The Cooperative; Marks and Spencer; and Sainsbury's. At the other end, Aldi, Lidl and Morrisons appear to be doing nothing. In the middle, Asda, Somerfield, Tesco and Waitrose are making some efforts but could go a lot further, particularly on removing specific hazardous pesticides from use and reducing residues in their food.

The assessment covered whether each company: publishes residue testing results; takes action on residues beyond legal compliance; prohibits or restricts specific hazardous active ingredients; takes action to reduce overall pesticide use; promotes alternatives to pesticides; provides technical support for growers to reduce reliance on pesticides; provides information for consumers on pesticide issues; and engages with consumers to tackle unnecessary use of pesticides for cosmetic appearance of fresh produce. PAN UK hopes that publishing this comparison will show which companies are taking the most positive steps for change and encourage individual consumers and concerned citizens to push other companies to follow their lead.

View the comparison at <http://www.pan-uk.org/Supermarkets>

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, especially young ones.
- * Weed around the base of young fruit trees to help them get established.
- * Sow melon seeds under cover to plant in the greenhouse in May. Cantaloupe varieties do best in unheated greenhouses.
- * Hand-pollinate peaches/nectarines (use a soft paint brush) - they flower early when there are not many pollinating insects.
- * Strawberries can be forced to flower by covering them with cloches. Hand-pollinate the forced plants if necessary.

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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