

# short cold days and long dark nights.....

The winter months provide a good time to catch up with unfinished tasks and to prepare for next spring. Think about ordering seeds and seed potatoes, tidying out the shed, cleaning the greenhouse, collecting plastic water bottles to make mini-cloches, cleaning plant pots, repairing frames, and planning your crop rotation for next year.

## VEGETABLES

### Sow indoors

Sow lettuce, radishes, round varieties of carrots, spinach, salad onions and turnips. Place on a windowsill or in a propagator.

### Plant outside

Garlic cloves can be planted, e.g. Thermidrome and Printantor.

### Harvest

Jerusalem artichokes, perpetual spinach, brussels sprouts, winter cabbage, savoy cabbage, carrots, celeriac, celery, chicory (non-forcing and forcing varieties), endive, spinach, kohlrabi, lettuce, kale, leeks, parsnip, radish, salsify, scorzonera, swede, turnips.

## FRUIT

- \* Plant rhubarb crowns
- \* Cover established rhubarb to force early shoots
- \* Cut down canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries which have finished fruiting and burn to prevent fungal diseases spreading.
- \* Plant bare-rooted fruit trees and bushes this month.
- \* Support young trees with stakes and ties.
- \* Winter prune young apple and pear trees.
- \* Place grease bands around tree trunks to prevent winter moths from climbing trees and laying eggs (see over).

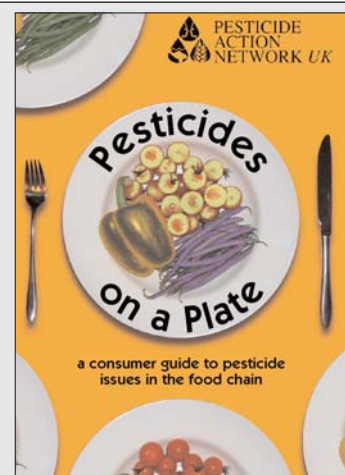


To receive *Gardening Tips* send your email address to [roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org](mailto:roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org). These can also be downloaded free from our website at [www.pan-uk.org/gardening.htm](http://www.pan-uk.org/gardening.htm)

### Pesticides on a Plate: a consumer guide to pesticide issues in the food chain

This consumer guide gives a simple overview for a non-technical audience on pesticides and the hazards they pose, with a focus on pesticide residues in food and how to avoid them. It also discusses how farmers and farm workers can be affected, particularly in developing countries, and the costs society pays for pesticide problems. The guide then looks at the role of supermarkets in our dependency on pesticides and how food supply chains could work to reduce pesticide use. Good news stories give examples of how pesticides can be reduced in agriculture and give plenty of ideas for individual action, from selecting food with the lowest levels of residues, to getting involved in lobbying on pesticide policy. The booklet can be downloaded from the PAN UK website and is suitable for community groups, students, consumer groups and the public, with lists of resources and further reading.

*Pesticides on a Plate: a consumer guide to pesticide issues in the food chain. 2007. Download from [www.pan-uk.org/Projects/Fairness/](http://www.pan-uk.org/Projects/Fairness/) or send a stamped addressed A5 envelope to PAN UK to receive a hard copy.*



## GENERAL TASKS

- \* Cover bare ground with leaves, weed cloth, straw or similar to prevent soil erosion. Beds to be dug first in spring can be covered with polythene so prevent them from becoming waterlogged. This will allow them to be dug earlier. Don't dig the soil if it is wet and sticks to boots/tools as this destroys its structure.
- \* Collect fallen leaves and store. Leaves break down to form leaf mould, an excellent soil supplement.
- \* Collect remaining crop residues or other organic matter and add to the compost heap.
- \* Put out bird seed and fat balls to feed the birds.
- \* Cover compost bins to keep the rain out and heat in.
- \* Set up water butts to collect rain water from roofs.
- \* Remove yellowing leaves from winter brassicas.
- \* Check stored crops removing any showing signs of rot.
- \* If your pond freezes frogs can be deprived of oxygen. Floating a small ball in it will keep a small area clear.
- \* Protect cauliflowers curds by bending their inner leaves over them. This keeps them white and delays their opening.
- \* Net winter brassicas to protect them from pigeons.
- \* Earth up spring cabbages to protect from high winds.



### Winter moth

Winter moths (*Operophtera brumata*) are unspectacular in appearance. The males are grayish brown and about 10 mm long with 25 mm wingspans. The females have almost no wings. They survive through the summer and autumn as pupae in the soil with adult moths emerging between November and January. The wingless females climb up the trunk of fruit trees (and other deciduous trees) to mate and lay their eggs. These hatch into caterpillars which grow up to 25mm in length and are pale green with paler lines running lengthwise along their bodies. They move with a characteristic looping action due to the fact that they only have two pairs of clasping legs on their abdomen. From late March the caterpillars feed off tree leaves, completing their feeding by early June when they drop down to the soil to pupate.

Damaged tree leaves initially have small holes and are loosely bound with silk threads. Damage becomes more noticeable in mid-summer when the leaves are fully expanded and the holes have enlarged due to leaf growth. Blossom and developing fruitlets can also be damaged. At least two other moths, the mottled umber moth (*Erannis defoliaria*), and the March moth (*Alsophila aescularia*) have wingless females with a similar lifestyle but the winter moth is most significant as a garden pest.

Although significant commercial losses have been recorded trees can tolerate some leaf loss. In fact, established trees can lose up to 25% of their leaves and still bounce back. However, it is more important to protect young trees.

Winter moth damage can be reduced by taking a few relatively easy precautions.

- ◆ Grease bands should be placed around the trunks of fruit trees before the adults begin to emerge in November (don't forget to place them around tree stakes too). They should be about 45cm (18in) above soil level and will trap the females as they climb. Winter moth activity declines after January but some species with wingless females are active until April, so grease may need to be reapplied from time to time. Ready-prepared sticky papers can be used on smooth barked trees while a ring of grease can be applied directly to trees with fissured bark. Both products are available from many garden centres or by mail order from companies such as The Organic Gardening Catalogue (0845 130 1304), Agralan (01285 860015) and Growing Success Organics Ltd (01722 337744).
- ◆ From November through January in the evenings you may find the wingless females with a cloud of male moths around them. Remove any you find.
- ◆ Look inside buds and leaf clusters for eggs or caterpillars and crush any you find.



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

To receive monthly gardening tips send email address to:

Roslyn McKendry  
Pesticide Action Network UK  
Development House  
56-64 Leonard Street  
London EC2A 4LT  
Tel: 020 7065 0905 Direct 020 7065 0912  
Fax: 020 7065 0907  
roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org  
<http://www.pan-uk.org>