

# Time for harvest

## VEGETABLES

### SOW OUTDOORS

- \* spring cabbage (to harvest next spring)
- \* chicory (non-forcing varieties, e.g. sugar loaf)
- \* chinese cabbage
- \* endive
- \* kohlrabi
- \* lettuce
- \* parsley
- \* beetroot
- \* turnip
- \* french beans
- \* peas
- \* radish
- \* carrot

### PLANT OUT OUTDOORS

- \* broccoli/calabrese
- \* cauliflower
- \* kale
- \* leek
- \* cabbage (winter and savoy)

## FRUIT

- \* A lot of cane fruit ripens. Water well while berries are swelling.
- \* Apple trees can be summer pruned.
- \* Summer prune red currants, white currants and gooseberries. Sideshoots from this year should be pruned to 3 or 4 buds. Remove shoots which are crossing or growing into the middle.
- \* Summer-fruiting raspberries should be pruned after harvest. Old canes should be untied from supports and cut down to ground level. This year's canes should be tied to supports.



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## HARVEST

**VEGETABLES** - globe artichokes, broad beans, french beans, early runner beans, swiss chard, perpetual spinach, beetroot, summer cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, greenhouse cucumber, kohlrabi, lettuce, courgette and other summer squash, onions, shallots, garlic, peas, potatoes (first earlies), radish, spinach, greenhouse tomatoes.

**FRUIT** - blackcurrants, gooseberries, rhubarb, some strawberry varieties, summer-fruiting raspberries, red currants, cherries, peaches.

## Toxic manure poisons UK gardens

Home and allotment gardeners across Britain have seen crops wither or become deformed after using manure from farms sprayed with the herbicide aminopyralid. Dow AgroSciences, which manufactures aminopyralid, has posted advice on its website: 'As a general rule, we suggest damaged produce (however this is caused) should not be consumed.' Aminopyralid is not licensed for use on food crops and carries a label warning farmers not to sell manure that might contain residue to gardeners.

Problems with the herbicide emerged late last year, when some commercial potato growers reported damaged crops. The contamination appears to have come from grass treated with the herbicide 12 months ago to kill broad-leaved weeds such as dock and thistle. The grass was probably made into silage and fed to cattle during the winter months. The herbicide then passed through the animals and into manure that was later sold. Horses fed on hay that had been treated could also be a channel.

Bryn Pugh, legal consultant at the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners, is preparing claims for some members to seek compensation from manure suppliers. But it was extremely difficult to trace each batch of manure 'It seems to be everywhere. From what I know, it is endemic throughout England and Wales. We will be pressing the government to ban this product,' he said.

Dow is planning a major publicity campaign to reiterate warnings to farmers over usage, and to encourage allotment holders to check the provenance of manure that they put down in an effort to prevent the problem escalating.

Tell-tale symptoms of crop damage include distorted foliage, with cupping of leaves and fern-like growth. There are no remedies once damage has occurred and susceptible crops include potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, carrots and lettuce. It is best to turn over the soil in the area several times to incorporate the plant tissue allowing it will decompose and the chemicals to be degraded by soil microbes. The plant residues need to be given time to break down. The advice is not to replant for a year.

*Home-grown veg ruined by toxic fertiliser, Caroline Davies, The Observer, 29 June, 2008*

## GENERAL TASKS

- \* Mulch beds with organic matter to preserve moisture - particularly important for seedlings which don't have extensive root networks.
- \* Pinch out sideshoots of tomatoes and growing tips after the fourth tress has set. This forces plants to focus on ripening tomatoes.
- \* Fertilise tomato plants weekly and keep them well-watered. Dryness around the roots prevents tomato plants from taking up sufficient calcium and can cause blossom end rot.
- \* Fertilise onions and keep them well weeded; plants in the onion family (alliums) don't compete well with weeds.
- \* Check the undersides of brassica leaves for the eggs or caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly. Squash any you find.
- \* Protect carrot sowings from carrot rootfly.
- \* Protect potatoes from blight by covering soil with a thick mulch.
- \* Prevent greenhouses from getting too hot by opening doors on hot sunny days and hanging shade cloth on the sunny side.
- \* Keep up with weeding and make sure no weeds go to seed.
- \* Protect summer cauliflowers by bending them over the flower heads to prevent them from opening up too early.
- \* Pinch out tops of climbing beans once they reach the tops of their supports. They will develop more sideshoots and more beans.
- \* Water runner beans well to encourage the flowers to set.



### Tomato and potato blight

Tomato and potato blight are both caused by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans*. Spores of the fungus survive over winter on infected potato or tomato plants from the previous season. They then spread with wind and rain and can germinate when humidity remains above 89% for 11 hours and temperatures above 10°C for 48 hours.

Symptoms may first appear in early summer as brown/black spots on leaves which spread to other parts of the plant. Spores falling on the soil from potato plants will infect tubers. The tubers then turn brown and often rot. Tomato plants have similar symptoms and tomato fruit will turn black.

The disease is very serious and can lead to total loss of both potatoes and tomatoes. To reduce the likelihood of infection.

- ◆ Plant resistant varieties
  - Potatoes - Many potato varieties show some blight resistance, e.g. Remarka, Verity, White Lady, Arran Victory, Spunta and Stirling
  - Tomatoes - Ferline F1 shows moderate blight resistance although will succumb eventually during a heavy infestation
- ◆ Good hygiene. Don't leave tomato plants/potato tubers in ground from the previous year and remove infected plant material immediately (bag it or burn it off site, only compost if you're sure your compost heap gets very hot).
- ◆ Consider you planting times. The earlier you plant your early potato varieties the less likely they will be infected by blight from a neighbours crop.
- ◆ Grow tomatoes in a greenhouse (they will get blight much less frequently).
- ◆ Treat with Bordeaux Mixture - see box.

### Bordeaux mixture

This is a mix of copper sulphate and lime used to control bacterial and fungal diseases. Its name comes from the Bordeaux region of France where vineyard workers first noticed downy mildew disappearing from sprayed grapes.

The toxic components are the copper ions. Although copper ions can accumulate in organisms they are only taken up from solution. Copper sulphate dissolves in neutral/acidic water but is relatively insoluble in alkaline conditions. As bordeaux mixture contains lime which is alkaline the copper sulphate does not dissolve readily. When it is sprayed on plants the copper sulphate stays on the surface of leaves and is not washed off readily by rain.

Copper is a micronutrient essential in small quantities for plants and animals, but moderately toxic in large quantities. Care should be taken to ensure bordeaux mix is wiped off tomatoes before eating. Concern about the possibility of copper building up in the environment and about potential harm to farm workers has caused some organic certifiers to restrict the use of copper-based fungicides. Soil Association certified growers must apply each time they wish to use it and the Soil Association monitors its use.



## PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK UK

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

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