

May in the allotment

VEGETABLES

SOW OUTDOORS

- * Runner beans
- * French beans (can be sown until the end of June)
- * Beetroot
- * Broccoli
- * Winter cabbage
- * Savoy cabbage
- * Calabrese
- * Carrots (intermediate or long-rooted varieties)
- * Cauliflower (sow autumn varieties to harvest in Autumn, sow winter varieties to harvest next spring)
- * Chicory (forcing varieties)
- * Kale
- * Kohlrabi
- * Lettuce, endive
- * Courgette, marrow, pumpkin can be sown in late May
- * Peas
- * Radish
- * Spinach (summer varieties e.g. King of Denmark)
- * Spring onions
- * Swede
- * Turnip (early varieties e.g. Purple-top Milan)

SUCCESSIONAL SOWINGS

Many vegetables can be sown at regular intervals to ensure a constant supply of fresh produce. These include beetroot, french beans, carrots, peas, lettuce, endive, radish, spinach and turnip.

SOW UNDER COVER

- * Sweetcorn

PLANT OUT OUTDOORS

- * Brussels sprouts
- * Summer cabbage and red cabbage
- * Celery and celeriac
- * Leeks

PLANT OUT IN GREENHOUSE

- * Aubergine
- * Peppers
- * Tomatoes
- * Cucumber (greenhouse varieties)

HARVEST

Radish, asparagus, rhubarb, spinach, peas, lettuce, leek, kale, winter cauliflower, spring cabbage, sprouting broccoli, chard.



To receive *Gardening Tips* send your email addresss to roslynmckendry@pan-uk.org

Men under threat?

A new scientific report from the Chem Trust highlights the dangers of exposing pregnant women to hormone disrupting chemicals in consumer products, and focuses on the risks they pose to baby boys and the reproductive health of men. It concludes that exposure to the cocktail of chemicals in our environment is likely to account for a proportion of the birth defects of the genitalia in baby boys, which are linked to under-masculinisation.

- Undescended testicles affect as many as 1 in 17 boys. These boys are at greater risk of low sperm counts and testicular cancer.
- Malformation of the penis, where the opening is not at the end, has increased in parts of Europe.
- Young men's sperm counts appear to be lower than their fathers. In some EU countries, one in five young men has sperm counts so low that it is likely to affect their ability to father a child.
- Testicular cancer is the most common cancer of young men and has doubled in incidence in many countries every 25 years for the past 60 years.

Scientists now think these defects may have their origins in the womb. Testosterone, the male hormone, is needed to form a normal penis and to make the testicles 'drop' whilst the baby is in the womb. Some chemicals can block testosterone, and may harm male reproductive health.

Which chemicals?

- some phthalates found in vinyl flooring, shower curtains, plastics, soft tubing
- some parabens used as a preservative in personal care products
- triclosan, an anti-bacterial chemical, used in soaps, toothpaste
- bisphenol A used in babies' bottles, tin can linings, mobile phone and computers
- penta-BDE, a brominated flame retardant
- many pesticides including some pyrethroids, linuron, vinclozolin, chlorpyrifos-methyl, prochloraz, procymidone and fenitrothion

Chemical Cocktail in Consumer Products Threatens Baby Boys and Men's Reproductive Health - 13 May 2009, available at www.chemtrust.org.uk

FRUIT

- * Put up codling moth traps to prevent codling moths from mating and laying eggs in your apples
- * Birds love to eat soft fruit so prepare nets or fruit cages to put round fruit bushes
- * Pull out unwanted raspberry shoots to thin them out
- * Strawberries planted late should not be allowed to flower in the first year so pick off any developing flowers

OTHER TASKS

- * Propagate perennial herbs by taking cuttings
- * Horsetail, bindweed, dandelions and other perennial weeds are growing now. Dig out their roots and make sure they do not set seed and spread
- * Keep mowing the grass every week
- * Sow new grass before the weather gets too hot
- * Pinch off tops of broad beans to discourage blackfly which love the succulent tips
- * Cover carrot plantings with fleece to keep carrot root fly away

SLUGS

Digging over the soil in wintertime brings slug eggs to the surface where they are more likely to be killed by frosts. The characteristic pearly white eggs are about 3mm in diameter and found in clusters. They can often be spotted while digging and killed.

In spring the warm showery weather provides good conditions for slugs to grow and multiply. No single method of control will be completely effective. Try several different strategies. Here are a few suggestions

- * Hunt for slugs at dusk or dawn with a flashlight.
- * Encourage slug eating animals such as frogs by building a pond
- * During the day slugs congregate in moist dark places. Create suitable hiding spots and then gather slugs from them. Many people find over-turned grapefruit halves work well.
- * The parasitic nematode *Phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita* specifically attacks slugs. These can be bought from several different suppliers as a powder to be mixed with water and applied with a watering can. The ground must be sufficiently warm and moist as nematodes will quickly dry out and die. The microscopic nematode worms infect slugs and kill them in about a week. Your plot should then remain slug-free for about 6 weeks. The nematodes are relatively expensive and you need to be careful to follow instructions when applying them.
- * Remove debris from your plot. This will reduce suitable slug hiding places.
- * Place beer traps around the edges of beds. These can be hand-made out of yoghurt cartons by cutting 'windows' near the top of cartons for slugs to crawl through. Place sugary beer or milk in the pot, replace the lid and sink into the ground with the 'window' just above ground level.
- * Slugs do not like crawling over copper so pot plants can be protected by placing copper tape around the pots. Make sure the slugs cannot reach your pot plants by crawling up drooping stems or leaves.
- * Raise seedlings indoors and plant out when they are bigger and more able to sustain attack.
- * Slug killing products containing aluminium sulphate and ferrous phosphate are thought to have minimal impact on wildlife. Aluminium sulphate dissolves in water so will not last long in showery weather. Ferrous sulphate will have a longer-lasting effect.



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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