

## **Gardening tips for March**

My great nephew was in the garden the other day, he had found a slug under a flowerpot and was trying to eat it. “What does that taste like” I enquired; “worms” was his initial reply then added “with added goo”. March is a good time for slugs, just as the plants start waking up with new buds all fresh and tender, the slugs also wake up and make sure they get stuck in before you have time to do anything about them. Time to set the beer traps or better still, drink the beer yourself and accept that slugs are a nuisance to be tolerated or if you are feeling adventurous buy some nematodes to control them like a professional.

Now it is plant buying season again, remember to always check the labels in the garden centres, as with any of your purchases, buy British if you can.

### **The kitchen garden**

Visiting the local farmers’ market, I was buying organic fruit and vegetables for my wife. I asked the stall holder if the produce had been sprayed with any poisonous chemicals, no was his reply, you will have to do that yourself!

Planting tomato seeds is a sure sign that summer can’t be that far away. Plant your chosen varieties in pots and place on a windowsill at about 21C to germinate.

So, is the climate really changing and if so, should we be doing anything different in the kitchen garden? One suggestion is to improve the soil structure with greater levels of organic matter so that soil can retain more water in times of drought and is better suited to drain in a deluge. If you choose to ‘no dig’ your plot then apply a thick mulch with your chosen organic matter and plant into it.

### **The flower garden**

The first month of spring, good to get winter behind us, gardens are looking all things bright and beautiful with their profusion of flowering bulbs. Snowdrops were good this year, now is your chance to plant new ones. Plant snowdrops in the green is a common expression but what does it mean? Basically, green snowdrops are leafy snowdrops, just past their flowering best and then dug up to transplant if you already have loads or to buy from growers. The main reason for planting snowdrops in the green is to give the plants time to establish before they come into flower again the following winter. Dry snowdrop bulbs do not keep well and are prone to drying out or rotting. Another benefit is that it’s easy see exactly where you have planted them – if you plant the tiny dry bulbs in autumn, it’s very easy to forget where they are,

risking them being dug up accidentally. When planting ensure they are deep enough so that the white part of their stem is in the ground and plant separate bulbs about 10 cm apart so they have chance to grow into a clump over the coming years.

Dahlias are great value for money, they fill space in the borders, the flowers come in just about any colour and shape and have a long flowering season, from late spring to the first frost in autumn/winter. If you have a green house, plant tubers now and keep frost free otherwise wait a month to get them going. If planted in large pots they can be placed where needed in the borders but they will need regular watering.

### Lawns

Don't forget National First Mow of the Year Day on Mothering Sunday! This is the customary start to the year's slog of lawn maintenance. As always take it easy at first with a high cut and subsequently when cutting grass always leave it looking green.

### Ponds

I was once informed to never clean a pond filter because it washes away the beneficial bacteria that are involved in the filtration process. Things would appear to have moved on since, filters are often separated into mechanical and biological filtration. The mechanical filtration parts can be washed as often as necessary to keep a good flow of water, the spongy biological part less often but if washing, only do so in pond water and while you are at it remove a few gallons or pond water and replace from stored rainwater if you have it.

A date for your diary. See separate notice regarding the gardening association first show of the year (page xx).

For previous editions of gardening tips, membership details and to ask garden related questions please go to [www.gardenreg.org](http://www.gardenreg.org).

Keep gardening.

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