

## **Gardening tips for May**

### **Ne'er cast a clout 'til May be out**

This may refer to keeping your warm clothes handy because you are likely to need them until the end of May. It is however a useful reminder to look after tender plants such as summer bedding because frosts can still be a problem.

There is much to do in the garden now that the spring sun has brought on a growth spurt. Keep sowing, mowing, weeding and watering and protecting.

#### **The veg patch**

Keeping earthing up the potatoes, all seed potatoes including main crop should be planted by now. Most vegetables including broad beans, broccoli, sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, peas and radishes can be planted outdoors. If planting young plants raised indoors, they need to be hardened off. This means getting them used to cooler temperatures. Therefore, give them protection at night and on cold days to get them used to the idea they are out to stay.

Thin out directly sown vegetables such as carrots and water well. If carrots are left to grow too close together, they remain small.

#### **Tomatoes**

If you have been looking after your tomato seedlings, they may be needing larger pots by now. Alternatively, if you are buying young plants from garden centres buy the healthiest looking plants that haven't been frosted but keep them indoors until end of May.

#### **The flower garden**

Time to plant up containers and hanging baskets and keep frost free.

As bulbs go over and the herbaceous borders grow, now is the time for sowing and planting out. Prune spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia and Chaenomeles to keep them compact. Tie in new shoots of climbing plants including clematis, wisteria and honeysuckle to their supports.

Apply liquid feed to spring flowering bulbs to encourage a good display next year. Don't cut back daffodil leaves until they have started to yellow.

Now that there is more going on in the garden pests have also woken up and taken notice. Here are a few home-grown deterrents to consider rather than going straight for the chemical assault.

Soak nettles in water for a few days, draw off the liquid and spray to control aphids.

Boil wild garlic leaves in water and use the resulting liquid as a spray against aphids. You could try mixing with the nettle water and hope for even better results!

Push twigs of elder tree in the ground around broad beans to keep off blackfly.

Grow basil around tomatoes to protect from whitefly.

Grow onions and/or coriander among your carrots to keep carrot fly away. I plant coriander and find this an excellent deterrent.

### **Herbs**

Try growing some herbs this year. They are good for bees as well as the kitchen. Some easy ones to get you started are rosemary, thyme, chives and sage. Herbs grow well in pots as well as the herbaceous border and add flavour to the garden.

### **Lawns**

Mow the grass weekly. If you like nice straight lines, consider changing the direction of mowing every now and again. This helps to control areas of rougher grass but mainly is supposed to prevent “wash boarding” which is the appearance of a corrugated effect. If this and/or an uneven lawn are problems this can be corrected in the autumn by top dressing with a soil/sand mix.

For membership details and to ask garden related questions please go to our website [www.gardenreg.org](http://www.gardenreg.org).

Keep gardening.

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