

Gardening tips for May

The days are getting longer and should be getting warmer, the risk of frost reducing, so May can be hot, gets you in the summer mood; there can also be frosts at night, so whatever you choose to do in the garden, be ready with the watering can and frost protection and always look out for nesting birds before starting your gardening jobs.

The veg patch

Plant out half-hardy annuals or direct sow broad beans, broccoli, sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, peas and radishes courgette, squash and pumpkins. 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. When you do plant them, give them a good soaking so that they go into the ground nicely moist.

Try succession sowing of salads. In other words, sow some now and more in a couple of weeks and sow [sic] on but remember where you have sown seeds otherwise seedlings will try their best to grow up through your footprints.

If your potatoes have broken cover, earth up around the tender shoots to protect from late frosts and better still, increase yield.

Brassicas Special

How are your brassica doing? You need a large plot for brassicas and when newly planted it looks like a waste of space. This will soon fill in as the plants grow, however, in the meantime, you can grow flowers in amongst them, such as nasturtium and French marigolds. You can also intercrop with salad stuff like radish, lettuce, spinach and chard but these will get shaded out as the brassica leaves grow, so get planting now.

Tomatoes

Keep tomatoes indoors until the end of the month before planting out. If planting in a greenhouse, deter white fly by planting Basil and or marigolds as their companions.

The flower garden

Having waited and waited, you can now plant out your summer bedding at the end of the month. Garden centres should be full of summer bedding by now but make sure you buy your plants before returning customer whose bedding was frosted in April.

Time to plant up containers and hanging baskets and keep frost free until the end of the month. To help keep plants hydrated, try adding moisture retaining crystals to the compost; you could also try putting a plastic pot in the bottom of the container before filling with compost, this will act as a reservoir.

Cut back dead foliage and stems on perennials to make way for fresh new growth and add the cuttings to the compost heap.

Lift and divide overcrowded clumps of daffodils and other spring flowering bulbs.

Divide Primulas after flowering, divide Hostas as they come into growth. Trim back Aubretia, this encourages fresh growth and more flowers.

Put plant supports in place for herbaceous plants before they get too tall.

Check for Lilly Beetle and try your best to control it either by picking them off infested plants or treating the plants with a systemic insecticide. If using insecticide on any plant, do so in the evening and only apply to foliage and never to flowers.



Lawns

The mowing season is in full swing. Over the past few weeks, you have gradually reduced the height of the cut and now someone has invented “No Mow May”. This is one for wildlife, if you want to see how many flowers can grow in your lawn and therefore a valuable source of nectar, give it a go. Alternatively, if a perfect lawn is your thing, wait until the nicest day of the weekend, and for the neighbours to be sitting out enjoying their garden, usually around lunchtime or early evening, and then get the mower out. They will appreciate that you take so much pride in the garden.

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Keep gardening.

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