

Gardening tips for April

Seed packets at the ready; April can be a busy month sowing seeds indoors or out depending on the weather.

The veg patch

Most root crops can now be sown outdoors; this is really your last chance to get your parsnips in. Chillies, peppers, cucumbers, courgettes, pumpkins, other squashes and French and runner beans sow indoors for planting out next month.

If you have been chitting your main crop seed potatoes now is the time to plant outdoors either in the ground or in large pots. If planting in a large pot, only fill 1/3rd with compost and pot up as the shoots break cover and keep going until your pot is full. This labour-intensive method of growing potatoes should provide for a higher yield.

Plant shallots, onion sets and leeks outdoors.

Brassicas Special

It should now be warm enough to sow Brussels sprouts, calabrese, sprouting broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage of all kinds directly outdoors into the ground prepared as described last month. If you have already started them off in pots indoors, they can be planted out with some protection depending on the weather.

Tomatoes

This your last chance for planting tomato seeds, any later and their growing season will be too short to ripen fruits, especially if planted outdoors. An alternative is to wait until St George's day, 23rd April and buy tomato plants at the gardening association's Plant Stall and Coffee Morning, Village Hall, Buck Green from 10 am.

The flower garden

This month sees the return of annual weeds, so get your hoe out, just a few minutes a day will work wonders. If your weeds are a bit more of a challenge such as bind weed, the hoe is useless. Digging out the white laces of root is the only answer, always try to get as much out as possible. Every small piece left in the ground is a new plant, what a bind.

Make the most of your roses by treating them to some good old, rotted manure. If they are climbing roses tie them into their supports. Flowering normally

occurs at the top of the upright stems so try bending them and tying down, this can encourage flowers along the bent stems.

Start planting up hanging baskets, this is more rewarding than buying ready planted and expensive alternatives from garden centres. Add slow-release fertiliser and water-retaining gel to your planting compost, the hope being the display is better and lasts for a long time.

Summer bedding is now in the garden centres, leave it there and buy your plants next month.

Do you have any of your general plant feed such as pelleted chicken manure left over from last year? Now is the time scatter around the borders and lightly hoe into the soil surface.

The water garden

Pond fish will have started looking at you by now asking for food. Mr Chips my Ghost Koi has been doing this for a couple of months so the water is warming up.

Lawns

You must have cut your lawn at least once by now! If not give it a light trim and reduce the cutting height in small stages for the next 2 or 3 cuts, this will ensure the grass stays green rather than looking like the wicket at Lords cricket ground. If you have mossy patches (on the lawn that is, I'm not a doctor) or old or dead thatch, lightly rake with a spring-tine rake to remove old plant debris. This can also be done to rake out dead moss a couple of weeks after applying a chemical moss killer. Go easy on the lawn fertilizer otherwise you'll end up with a forest and after you have managed to cut it you will be back to square one.

For previous editions of gardening tips, membership details and to ask garden related questions please go to our website www.gardenreg.org.

Keep gardening.

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