

What to do now in April.

- 1) Its "all systems go" now in the vegetable garden. Anything you could have planted in March can now go in but without the bother of cloches and fleece.
- 2) Plant the rest of your Potatoes: the "second earlies" and "maincrop" varieties. Keep them frost free at all times so be alert for late Spring frosts. Cover any foliage with fleece to protect it.
- 3) It is a busy sowing month. Many of our popular vegetables can be sown now. It is still too early for frost tender vegetables like Tomatoes, Courgettes, French and Runner Beans. In the second half of the month you can start off some Bean plants in pots under cover ready for planting out in the second half of May.
- 4) Peas. Early Peas can be sown. To avoid Mice etc eating the seeds after you have planted them you can spray the soil above them with an animal repellent. Old gardeners used to soak them beforehand in paraffin. Soaking peas in water for 24 hours before sowing assists in their germination (Beans also). Young pea shoots are tasty greens for birds so cover them with a net cloche if you can.
- 5) The best time to Hoe your soil between your crops is when it looks like it doesn't need hoeing. A sharp Hoe will eliminate hundreds of tiny weed seedlings just as they are germinating.
- 6) Look out for slugs and other pests. Beer traps work well with slugs. I have found them to be very discerning creatures in trials I have undertaken. The better the Beer, the more you catch. Real Ale works much better than value Bitter.
- 7) The introduction of Horticultural Fleece and Mesh has revolutionised gardening over the last ten years. So many of our crops are afflicted by birds and insects which either eat them or spread disease. So more people today cover their crops with fleece or mesh. Fleece is used during the colder part of the year to keep the plants warm. Don't use it during the summer. Mesh is a finely spun plastic netting which is laid over the crop. It lets in light and water, provides some shade and shelter, but most importantly keeps out the insects. It is invaluable for covering low growing Brassicas, Lettuces and for surrounding Carrots to keep off the Carrot Fly. Surround your Carrots with a 2 foot high wall of mesh: this will deter the carrot Fly which is a low-flying creature. Mesh and Fleece can be obtained from all mail order organic gardening suppliers. Fleece lasts a year or two: mesh will last for many years if well looked after.
- 8) Plant Strawberry plants now if you forgot to do so in the Autumn.