

What to do now in March.

- 1) It's your last chance to get the soil ready for the season so finish your digging. Earlier rough dug ground can be broken down into a smoother seed bed with your Hoe and Rake. If you use organic fertilizers like Blood, fish and bone then apply them now as they take time to be incorporated into the soil.
- 2) If you suffer from annual weeds then try the "stale seed bed" method to help get rid of them. Prepare the ground and leave it until the weeds have germinated and are an inch or so tall: then hoe them off on a sunny day. Keep your Hoe sharp. Perennial weeds must be dug out.
- 3) If you want to start some early sowings use the sunniest patch of your allotment. It helps to cover these early crops with cloches or fleece. A soil thermometer is a useful tool. As a general guide, it's not worth planting much until the soil is at least 8 degrees C. Possible crops for early sowing include: Radish, Spring Onions, Lettuce, Carrots, Broad Beans and Peas. Make sure the variety you sow or plant is suitable for early sowing.
- 4) Plant your early potatoes at the end of the month if the weather is suitable. *Keep them frost free at all times.* Covering them with fleece helps to give them a good start. Dig a trench one spade deep, incorporate some very well-rotted manure and Potato fertilizer (or Vitax Q4) in the bottom, and plant first earlies 12 inches apart along the bottom of the trench. Cover with 4-6 inches of soil.
- 5) Onion and Shallot sets can be planted this month. Don't just push them into the soil. Dig a small hole and just cover them with soil.
- 6) Jerusalem Artichokes can be planted. Plant them in the same way as Potatoes.
- 7) Begin to harden off any Brassica plants you may have sown in your greenhouse earlier in the year. Either use a cold frame or stand them outside on mild days and bring them in again at night. They need to acclimatise themselves gradually to outside conditions. Do this over 2-3 weeks.
- 8) Remember that there is not a lot of nutrient in potting compost. Generally, assume that there is only one month's supply. If your seedlings are standing in their pots for longer than that then remember to add liquid feed when you water them. Specialist seed sowing compost has even less.
- 9) Give any over-wintering crops a feed if you have not already done so. Chicken pellets are very suitable or any other high Nitrogen fertilizer.
- 10) Sow your Tomato seeds under cover in pots.
- 11) Sow Leeks in pots ready for transplanting out in May.