

APRIL - Jobs to Do

Flower Garden:

- Plant **summer-flowering bulbs**, such as **Gladioli (**although wait until early June if you are planning on entering one in the Autumn Show, as you should allow roughly 100 days from planting to flowering);
- Encourage your **bulbs** to put their energy into next year's display by removing the faded flowers promptly before the bulb wastes energy making seeds. Liquid tomato feed will also help give them a boost;
- Sow **hardy annuals** such as **Pot Marigolds, Nigella (Love-in-a-Mist), Larkspur, Candytufts, Cornflowers** and **Nasturtiums** where you want them to flower; Also try **Linaria** as an alternative for Lobelia, especially in hanging baskets, but can also be sown in the ground;
- Sow fast-growing **half-hardy annuals**, such as **Alyssum, Cosmos, Dahlias, French Marigolds** and **Phlox** in an unheated greenhouse or coldframe;
- Erect **supports** such as bamboo canes, twine or twigs around tall perennials and plants that tend to flop such as **Lupins, Delphiniums, Campanulas, Chrysanthemums** and other flowering border plants which become top-heavy when in flower and are easily flattened by windy weather;
- Watch out for **red lily beetle** on both **Lilies** and **Fritillarias** and either remove by hand or spray with Provado Ultimate Bug Killer (available from the Trading Centre);
- Prune spring-flowering **shrubs** such as **Flowering Currant, Forsythia, Kerria japonica** and **Winter Jasmine** after flowering, cutting back a third of the oldest stems to just above ground level. If the plant's too big, shorten flowered stems to just above a strong side-shoot;
- **Lavatera** benefits from cutting back hard in April - cut all last year's shoots back to the base of the plant; new shoots will soon appear which will carry this summer's flowers;
- Cut back hard **Cotinus** to get larger leaves;
- Lift large **Sedums** and divide;
- Keep a lookout for **self-sown plants** such as **Aquilegia, Alchemilla, Foxgloves, Primroses** and **Bronze Fennel** which tend to pop up everywhere. If you have some to spare, pot them up and bring them along to our Plant Sale being held in the Barn on Sunday 21 May (more information on this is in the Spring Newsletter);
- Take **cuttings** from tender plants, such as **Coleus, Diascia, Fuchsia, Pelargonium, (Trailing) Petunia** and **Verbena**, removing shoots from the base of the plant with a sharp knife, cutting just below the bottom pair of leaves. Trim the end of the cutting and dip it into rooting hormone. Put the cuttings into moist, gritty compost and place them in a heated propagator if you have one, or on a sunny windowsill;
- Foliage-feed the first new growth on **Roses** and continue to do so every 3-4 weeks to avoid the appearance of blackspot and mildew later in the season; A handful of slow-release organic blood, fish and bone spread evenly about the roots will set up the health of your plants.

- Add **slow-release fertiliser** (a selection is available from the Trading Centre) to plants in **containers** and **hanging baskets** (when planting them up).

Vegetable Garden:

- Plant out **second early Potatoes** in the first half of the month, **maincrop Potatoes** in the second half;
- Add **organic matter/grass cuttings** (provided you haven't fed your lawn recently) to the trench when planting out your **Potatoes** – this is supposed to minimise the occurrence of scab;
- Add **Potato fertilizer** (available from the Trading Centre) when planting out your potatoes or alternatively, when earthing up;
- Earth up **first early Potatoes** – if there is a frost prediction, a covering of fleece once the shoots are through should help protect them;
- Plant out any remaining **Onion sets** in soil that has been firmed and raked, and preferably manured for a crop from the previous year;
- Sow **Outdoor Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Basil, Chillies, Peppers** and **Aubergines** in gentle heat if not done in March;
- **Courgettes, Marrows, Melons, Squash, Pumpkins** and **Sweetcorn** are best sown in gentle heat in individual pots or modules rather than trays towards the end of the month;
- In a coldframe or sheltered spot, sow **Brussels Sprouts, Calabrese, Kale, Summer Cauliflowers, French and Runner Beans** and **Lettuces**;
- Sow **Beetroot, Broad Beans, Early Carrots, Chard, Kohl Rabi, Lettuces, Dill, Rocket, Parsnips, Peas, Radishes, Spinach, Spring Onions** and **Turnips** outdoors in pre-prepared seed beds (provided the soil has reached 6°C);
- Plant out **hardened-off Broad Beans, Summer and Autumn Cabbages, Summer Cauliflowers, Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Lettuces** and **Peas**;
- Net **Brassicas** to protect them from pigeons ;
- Plant **Asparagus** crowns;
- Add a dressing of **calcified seaweed** (available from the Trading Centre) to your **Asparagus** bed this month or next;
- Use **grass cuttings** as a **mulch**, or to warm up the soil before sowing or planting out (provided you haven't recently added any fertilizer to your lawn)
- Sow a **green manure** on spare grounds, such as Phacelia, which has a lovely purple flower which attracts the bees (available from the Trading Centre). Try also scattering the seed in your flower beds for a colourful display.

Fruit:

- Lay a bed of straw around **Strawberries** to keep the developing fruit away from slugs;
- Mulch **Fruit Trees** and **Bushes** to ensure they are well mulched to help keep weeds down and keep moisture in, but make sure the mulch doesn't lie against stems, canes or trunks as this may encourage diseases and cause the stems to rot;
- Feed **Blackcurrants** and **Blackberries** with a high-nitrogen feed such as a Nitrate of Chalk and high Potash feed or a general-purpose feed like Growmore, Blood Fish and Bone or Chicken pellets (available from the Trading Centre), as they will be putting on a growth spurt around now and will appreciate being fed;
- Plant out **Rhubarb**.

Lawn:

- Reseed any **bare patches** or sow a new lawn; Cover the seed with netting to protect it from birds;
- Rake out **moss**;
- **Feed** the lawn.

General:

- Repot **houseplants** and start feeding them.