

What to do in... April

Now the season really starts to get going, the threat of frost has not gone but the ground is certainly warming and the daylight is lengthening...yippee!

Flowers - Plant out perennials in groups of three, five or seven for maximum effect. Sprinkle fertiliser around clumps of tulips to boost flowering. Sow hardy annual flowers directly into beds where you'd like them to bloom. Prune Himalayan honeysuckle (*Leycesteria*). Pick off dead flower heads from spring bulbs. Protect emerging shoots of delphiniums and lupins from slugs and snails using a barrier such as copper tape for pots or garlic granules.

Allotment - Sow sweetcorn in deep modular seed trays under cover to plant out in early June. Plant out onion sets grown in pots under glass. Feed fruit trees and bushes. Warm soil with cloches or sheets of polythene for early sowings. Plant out maincrop potatoes. Plant asparagus crowns. Sow the following crops this Month if conditions are suitable: beetroot, parsnips, turnips, onions, peas and mangetout, broad beans, lettuce and salad leaves, spinach, radish, rocket, mizuna, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts.

Glasshouse and conservatory - Buy plug plants and young bedding to grow on for baskets, pots and bedding displays. Thin out heavy fruit sets on peaches and nectarines, leaving fruits about 10cm apart. Sow annual climbers, such as cup-and-saucer vine (*Cobaea*), nasturtium and morning glory (*Ipomoea*). Grow an early crop of dwarf French beans in a large pot. Start feeding young plants about 3-4 weeks after potting up in fresh compost. Pot up rooted cuttings and seedlings. Open doors and windows on warmer days, remember to close if going out to deter buglars... they might not be into gardening but could use the conservatory for access into your home!

General - Freshen up the garden by cleaning patios and terraces with a pressure washer, to remove winter grime. Sow new lawns, choosing a grass mix that suits the type of lawn you want. Snip plain green shoots off variegated shrubs. Cut lawns on dry days if grass is growing strongly. Dig out couch grass, ground elder, bindweed and other problem weeds. Place plant supports over clumps of tall-growing perennials such as lupins and delphiniums

Above all get out in the garden this month and take a look at your local nurseries and garden centres for some inspiration.

Article by Alison Bolger of www.thistlemillnursery.com