

## What to do in... May

**Flowers** - Plant up any baskets and containers with bedding using quality compost and good drainage, Place the old compost into the compost bin ready for next season. Plant out container-grown roses and shrubs. Tie in new growth on climbing plants, such as clematis, wisteria and honeysuckle, Pick off faded flowers from camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons, taking care not to damage developing new leaves. Prune overgrown Clematis montana after flowering, cutting lanky growth back hard to promote new shoots from the base. Lift and divide congested clumps of primulas and polyanthus. Trim winter-flowering heathers, removing faded flowers and tidying up their shape Pick off faded flower heads from hyacinths, to prevent them wasting energy setting seed. Support oriental poppies, lupins and delphiniums with canes to prevent them flopping.

**Alotment** - Pick rhubarb stems as they develop, and water clumps with a generous helping of liquid feed. Watch out for signs of powdery mildew or disease on fruit trees and bushes, and treat with a fungicide. Erect supports for climbing beans, using tall canes or hazel stems. Place card collars around the stems of brassicas to prevent an attack of cabbage root fly. Sow pots of herbs such as parsley, coriander and basil. Plant out early potatoes, onion sets and shallots. Regular planting of all salad and vegetables should be done fortnightly to allow season long harvesting.

**Greenhouse and conservatory** - Remember to open doors and windows during the day to allow good circulation and start hardening off any bedding plants grown from seed. Plant tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and peas in growing bags or large pots, training them on to canes or wires for support. Bring pots of strawberries into the greenhouse to produce early flowers and fruit. Watch out for pests, checking under leaves and on shoot tips for signs of whitefly or red spider mite. Treat immediately, or introduce biological pest controls. Regularly water crops in pots and growing bags, daily if needed in warm weather. Plant trailing bush tomatoes, such as 'Tumbler', in hanging baskets. Feed young plants weekly with a solution of liquid fertiliser. Pot up rooted cuttings and young plants that have outgrown their pots. Move young plants into cold frames to acclimatise them to cooler conditions during the day.

**General** - Dig out lawn weeds, such as daisies and dandelions. Watch out for greenfly and blackfly developing on shrubs, perennials and roses, and spray with a soft soap solution if infestations are bad. Check your RCD works for all outdoor power tools such as mowers and hedge cutters. Scoop out floating pond weed and algae from pools. Apply moss killer to lawns, then, after a few days, scarify to rake out the dead matter. Wipe teak oil or other nourishing wood treatment on to wooden garden furniture to condition it for summer. Treat timber fences, trellis and posts with preservative. Lift large waterlilies from ponds, divide and replant them. Clean pond pumps and filters, and make sure they are working properly. Hand weed alpine and rock gardens.