



Pretoria Road allotments, Patchway, Bristol

Fruit & Vegetable growing for March

March is the month when things really start to move in the growing season. In fact the start of the year used to be Lady Day. The feast of Annunciation, 25th March until 1752 in Britain when we adapted the Gregorian calendar and started our year on 1st January. From an agricultural viewpoint, it would have made sense to have stuck with the old system, starting the year on the spring equinox., in link with the seasons.

Sowing & Planting in March on the Vegetable Plot

If the weather is cold but otherwise reasonable, you can steal some time and start early by cloching and fleecing. Although expensive glass cloching have been around for many years, nowadays we can get cheap polythene tunnel cloches and even cheaper Horticultural fleece. Place the cloche or fleece a week or two before planting and the soil will have warmed up nicely as well as being dry and easy to work.

Water well into the soil prior to sowing and replacing the cloche. Do remember to water weekly or more frequently in sunny weather under cloches.

To hold down fleece without tearing, save plastic 2 litre milk containers and fill with sand or water although water tends to leak. The smooth surface will weigh down the fleece but not damage it. It's surprising how just a layer of fleece can raise the temperature of the underlying soil.

Plant out your onion and shallot sets. If growing onions from seed started earlier in the year under cover these can also go out now. You can also direct sow onions, thinning to the eventual spacing. Cloching will help them establish and also stop pigeons from pulling them up.

March is the right time to establish an asparagus bed if you are starting from crowns. Do make sure you get it in the right position as it will be there permanently. Mid-march should let you start planting out those potatoes you had chitting. If you want some really early potatoes, start some in a black polythene sack in the greenhouse or tunnel. Punch drainage holes in the sack and use a multipurpose compost.

Fruit





Planting & Pruning

There is still time to finish planting bare rooted fruit trees and bushes, especially raspberries and other cane fruits. Early this month you can still prune apple and pear trees while they are still dormant. There is also time to prune gooseberries and currants. With currants shorten the side-shoots to just one bud and remove old stems from the centre of the bushes. They'll benefit from some general-purpose fertiliser like fish, blood & bone. Trees will appreciate some wood ash spreading under them.

Contact the committee: allotmenteer@outlook.com

growpretoria-patchwayallotment.com

Calendar of events 2018

<p>January 2018</p>	<p>February 2018 Seed Exchange held on Saturday 24th February from 10.00am to 3.00pm</p> 	<p>March 2018 Easter Fun Day held on Saturday 31st March from 11.00am to 3.00pm</p> 
<p>April 2018</p>	<p>May 2018</p>	<p>June 2018</p>
<p>July 2018 Patchway Festival - Lottie open to public – BBQ, table top activities and scare-crow competition Date 14th July 10.00am to 5.00pm</p> 	<p>August 2018</p>	<p>September 2018</p>
<p>October 2018</p>	<p>November 2018 To be agreed at future date</p> 	<p>December 2018</p>

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Under Cover in Green house, Cold frame and Polytunnel

Sow in Heat

Windowsill or a propagator in the green house will come into use now to start off your tomatoes, peppers, aubergines and cucumbers.

Under Cloche

Many of the crops you can sow directly will also benefit from cloching., especially given the severe temperatures we had or start them off in modules in a cool greenhouse or cold frame and then planted out later.

Harvest

Any leeks left standing should come up now – you can freeze them for use in soups and stews or make concentrated leek & potato soup to freeze and thin out when used. Parsnips too should come up in early March before they try and regrow. They'll store for a month or so in damp sand but the plant knows it is growing time again. If you turn them into mash, perhaps with carrots, they'll freeze well taking up little room.

Current / Future Events

At the Committee meeting in November it was agreed that in 2018 we would organise four events throughout the year. These events will be a seed exchange event, Easter fun day, Patchway Festival and Bonfire Night.

We had a seed Exchange day on Saturday 24th February. Both, Kelly and Diana kindly organised refreshments and cakes for the event and Les and Ray provided some seeds and plants for sale. As the weather was so very cold on the day, only a few people turned up for the event, which was a bit of a disappointment, but understandable due to the severe weather conditions.

The next event is the Easter Fun Day that is taking place on Saturday 31st March from 11.00am to 3.00pm. There will be an Easter Bonnet Competition, Easter Egg hunt, Throw the Wellie, Guess the number of sweets, Face Painting with a Butterfly or Tiger Design. Also, a Barbeque and Refreshments, including homemade cakes. Everyone is welcome to our Community Open Day, which is in aid of Allotment funds and promotion of home grown fruit and veg. The Easter fun day event Donations are kindly given by Flingers, Tesco's & Morrisons.

Can all Plot holders please make an effort to support this important Allotment Community event that has been enjoyed over the years and has some interesting events that should make a good fun day for everyone. Also, can you please let your family and friends be aware of the event and encourage them to attend.

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