

## STAA Newsletter April 2019

Hello all Sheet and Tilmore Allotmenters,

The year is moving on fast and everything is starting to grow. Time to dust off that hoe and get the dibber out.

Early potatoes are on the way and everything is coming back to life again. Another exciting growing season is upon us.

Ros Smith would like to say thank you to everyone for promptly picking up their Kings Seed and potato orders this year.

Our wonderful Shed-Meister Abi has recently undergone some serious surgery and we would all like to wish her a good and speedy recovery.

If you are not a member of STAA (£5) then you won't be benefitting from all the stock available from Abi at the Shed on Mill Lane, Sheet (stock list and opening times inside); half price seeds from Kings Seeds (its not too late to order); 10% discount from Southern Fruit Trees; public liability for your plot and other wonderful things. See website for details. <http://sheetandtilmore.weebly.com/>

Every year prizes are awarded for Best Newcomer (entry mandatory), and best kept plots (entry voluntary). Now come on – it's a £50 CASH first prize but you have to be *in it to win it*. So do enter and let's give our Chairman a bit of judging challenge this year – he is getting off far too lightly at the moment. Just contact your membership secretary.

**DOGS on PLOTS** - A reminder please, that ALL dogs on plots must be KEPT ON A LEAD. There have been far too many occasions now where people are finding great big dog turds in the middle of their onions. It would be a shame if we have to bar dogs.

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Any inclusions for next newsletter or comments: [Alison@wsnorman.co.uk](mailto:Alison@wsnorman.co.uk)

## ALLOTMENT FEVER

I must go down to my plot again, to the lonely shed and the slugs,  
And all I ask is my barrow works and there aren't too many bugs.  
Oh the weeds are thick, there's an icy wind and the rain is lashing down,  
I wish I'd bought my waterproofs, I think I'm going to drown.

I must go down and dig those beds, get all that blinking bindweed,  
And the mares tail; and the couch grass and the docks before they seed.  
Or make a call, to Doug and all, to rotovate the lot  
Is it bad, and is it sad, to just pretend I've dug my plot?

I could spray it with a pesticide, whilst wearing haz-mat gear  
Though knowing me I'd get my beans, like next door did last year  
My grass is long, the paths have gone, my edges a disgrace  
It won't be long before I cannot even show my face

I must go down and fix that shed, its leaking like a sieve,  
The felts ripped off and the windows broke, thanks to Hurricane Viv.  
There's a wild call and a clear call of that there's no denying;  
It's him at work on the plot next door – good grief, I think he's crying.

It's getting dark, my torch is lost and someone's locked the gate  
My wellies leak, I smell of pooh, it's really getting late  
I'm trapped inside, panic rising, all in all, unsurprising . . .  
. . . up there, alone, it sounds extreme – but no-one will ever hear you scream.

## Amazing 2018



Helena's display with Bobs glorious marrows at the Steep Show Oct 2018.



Free hot dog/burger & beer at the open BBQ – held at Tilmore in 2018.



The glory that is the Sarpò Mira blight resistant potato.



**Plant Swap – Tilmore**  
Thanks to Mike & Helen for plot use



When we ruled the world!

Me & Anthony sweeping the board at Pumpkin Club.

You secret is safe with me!  
I shall never tell anyone how your manure delivery blocked the path for over a week!



Do be careful when hacking at tomatoes with a very small, very sharp penknife . . . massive thanks to Bob who took me to the hospital! Apparently it wasn't as bad as I thought but what do they know.



The awesome Potato Fair – the Ikea of potatoes.



The lovely new noticeboard at Sheet.



The Mill Lane Shed now has a new roof and has been lovingly renovated. Massive thanks to Steve Elliot who gave up his time to do this.

## ManureFest – Vanessa Harvey

STAA members received an early Christmas present in December, after the Committee voted to buy them a huge pile of well-rotted manure. On two successive weekends, three digger-loads of the black stuff were delivered first to the Tilmore and then to the Sheet site.

If I thought the weather was against me at the Tilmore delivery, I hadn't reckoned on the monsoon-type deluge that greeted me at Sheet. Farmer, Steve Redman, thought he was delivering to Adhurst and I made my way through a huge flood in Waterworks Lane (apt name) to head him off and lead him to Mill Lane.

The mountainous heaps were soon diminishing, as delighted members lined up to collect their initial allotment of five barrows each (although some had the sense to wait until it stopped raining).

Regular manuring of plots helps to improve the structure of the soil, meaning that it stands up better to drought, introduces nutrients to depleted ground and helps to suppress weeds.

Some vegetables do not benefit from being grown in recently manured soil, namely roots: beetroot, carrots and parsnips. Most other vegetables will do well in manured soil. It was a surprise to me that turnips and swede are in fact brassicas, not roots and celeriac (a relation of celery) is a greedy plant and likes a bit of manure, as do potatoes.

Many, many thanks to all the committee members who braved the weather to help with distribution on both weekends.



Thanks to Vanessa for organising this wonderful new venture and to all the committee members who gave up their time to make this happen.

Sheet Parish Council expressed concerns about the ManureFest, namely, what was going to happen to all the left-over manure.

Like left-over cheese, or left-over wine, it became clear after only about 6 hours that left-over manure was something that only existed in legends.

## Are you in good condition and fertile? By Abi Grute

No, I am not being personal . . . I mean your soil!

Having been restricted to light duties lately, I have a bit of time on my hands and took the opportunity to wander round the Tilmore site to see what my neighbours were up to. What was very apparent is that the majority of us have a compost heap or three, (extra points in the allotment judging for that) and that many of us were delighted to barrow some free manure from the supply organised by Vanessa from the allotment committee.

This set me to thinking is one better than the other and how do I make sure my efforts adds nutrients to the soil as well as improving its' structure? Certainly adding either compost or manure to the soil can be a great 'organic' option if you are a not a fan of synthetic plant fertiliser. Both improve soil structure and water retention, but which is best?

So some reading later it seems that both are beneficial but they work in different ways...

Manure which has been allowed to rot down for at least six months is a rich source of nutrients and beneficial bacteria. It is high in nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and other micronutrients, which are released slowly for use by plants. The high nitrogen content encourages soil bacteria to breakdown other composting materials. The down side of manure is that it can be full of weed seeds, contain traces of pesticides, antibiotics and other medications all of which may affect plant growth. The general consensus appears to be that manure rapidly adds beneficial nutrients but does not improve the soil structure as much as compost.

Well-made compost has a lower direct nutrient content than manure but does stimulate soil fungi, bacteria and earthworms which all produce trace nutrients for eventual up take by plants. It appears that the main benefits of compost are that it tends to be PH neutral and it improves the structure of the soil itself. This occurs because it causes soil particles to clump together this prevents water 'run off' in sandy soil and slows the rapid drying that is associated with clay soil. Like manure, the quality of the finished product depends upon what has been added to the compost mix, whether a 'hot' or 'cold' method of composting has been used and if the heap has been protected from rain. Cold composting does not destroy weeds seeds or pathogens, unlike hot composting methods, however hot composting reduces the nutrient content of the final product.

There are many other ways of adding nutrients to the soil organically and this can also be done using salts and plant fertilisers, many of which are stocked by the Trading Association Shed.

Did you see what I did there? Ok time to confess, it's a shameless plug for what is stocked in the retail shed!

The shed stocks a range of fertilisers and trace elements and I thought it may be useful to understand how and why they may be used.

<p><b>Sulphate of Potash</b></p>	<p><b>Boosts flowering and ripening of fruit</b></p> <p>Fast acting Sulphate of Potash improves both the strength and vigour of plants. Containing the essential nutrient potassium, Sulphate of Potash provides plants with greater resistance to weather and disease, as well as promoting the development and colour of flowers and increased fruit yields.</p> <p>Particularly beneficial to tomatoes, cane fruit and blueberries.</p> <p><b>NPK 0-0-48</b></p>	<p>Sulphate of Potash can be hoed or raked into the surface of the soil, or used as a top dressing. Apply once or twice during the growing season.</p> <p><b>Application rate 35g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<p><b>Sulphate of Ammonia</b></p>	<p><b>Encourages leafy green growth</b></p> <p>Sulphate of Ammonia is a quick acting, nitrogen fertiliser. Promotes only above ground growth and rich green foliage. It is especially beneficial for crops such as brassicas, lettuce, spinach, rhubarb, leeks and onions.</p> <p><b>NPK 21-0-0</b></p>	<p>Sulphate of Ammonia should be applied evenly at the recommended rate and hoed into the top surface of the soil. If the soil is dry, it should be well watered in.</p> <p><b>Application rate 35g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<p><b>Sulphate of Iron</b></p>	<p><b>Increases acidity of soil</b></p> <p>Sulphate of Iron is commonly used to reduce the alkalinity of soils, helping make available the natural elements and nutrients essential to the healthy cultivation of plants that thrive in acid conditions.</p> <p>All calcifuge (lime-hating) plants such as azaleas, magnolias and conifers, as well as many ericas and alpinas, can benefit from a regular top dressing of Sulphate of Iron.</p>	<p>Before planting, work into the soil. For established shrubs and plants, apply as a top dressing during the growing season and lightly hoe in.</p> <p><b>Application rate 35g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<p><b>Magnesium Limestone</b></p>	<p><b>Increases alkalinity of soil</b></p> <p>Magnesium Limestone (Dolomite) is commonly used to reduce the acidity of soils, helping make available the natural elements and nutrients essential to the healthy</p>	<p>Apply every 4-6 weeks during the growing season from March to the end of August. Water well before and after application.</p>

	<p>cultivation of plants that thrive in alkali conditions.</p> <p>Often used for roses and It is also excellent for preventing club root in brassicas.</p>	<b>Application rate 20g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Phostrogen</b>	<p><b>Improves vegetable, fruit and flower quality</b></p> <p>Provides the perfect balance of nutrients containing a number of vital nutrients such as Iron (Fe) and Magnesium (Mg) in addition to Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium (NPK).</p> <p><b>NPK 14-10-27 plus trace elements</b></p>	<p>In the spring apply as a soil dressing, and then repeat in the summer.</p> <p><b>Application rate 70g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<b>Growmore</b>	<p><b>A popular, general purpose fertiliser for all around the plot</b></p> <p>Promoting heavy crops of fruit and vegetables, balanced vigorous plants and beautiful flowers. Growmore contains three major nutrients which are essential for strong plants.</p> <p><b>NPK 9-7-7</b></p>	<p>Growmore can be used prior to planting and then applied as a top dressing, often re-applied at 8-10 week intervals. Should be applied evenly and forked or hoed into the top surface of the soil.</p> <p><b>Vegetables – Before planting Application rate 135g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p><b>Vegetables – Established plants. Application rate 70g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p><b>Potatoes – before planting Application rate 210g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p><b>Fruit, trees, shrubs &amp; borders Application rate 135g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p><b>Flowers Application rate 135g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<b>Blood, Fish &amp; Bone</b>	<p>A traditional, organic-based general purpose fertiliser. Blood, Fish and Bone contains three major nutrients essential for strong and healthy growth.</p> <p>Contains nitrogen to encourage strong growth and healthy, rich green foliage</p>	<p>Applied throughout the growing season, Blood, Fish and Bone can be used prior to sowing or planting or as a top dressing. Although it should be watered in, try not to use before rainfall.</p>

	<p>Slowly and steadily releases phosphate to promote vigorous root growth</p> <p>Added Potash promotes flower colour and improves ripening in fruit and vegetables.</p> <p><b>NPK 5-5-6</b></p>	<p><b>Prior to planting</b> <b>Application rate 140g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p><b>Top dressing around established plants</b> <b>Application rate 70g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>
<b>Early Bird Poultry Manure</b>	<p><b>Promotes strong, healthy growth in all plants and improves clay and sandy soils</b></p> <p>Heat treated and highly concentrated manure that is wholly organic, weed free and fully composted for easier spreading</p> <p>Unsuitable for lime-hating (ericaceous) plants, such as <a href="#">rhododendrons</a>, <a href="#">azaleas</a>, <a href="#">camellias</a>, <a href="#">blueberries</a> and heathers.</p> <p><b>NPK 4-2-1</b></p>	<p>Chicken pellets can be used to fertilise soil from February to November, and should be applied every 4-6 weeks during the growing season all around the garden.</p> <p><b>Application rate 150g per 1M<sup>2</sup></b></p>

**Please remember that all chemicals have harmful side effects and should be stored and administered safely.**

And finally ... one of our lovely organic and proactive allotmenters has suggested we may like to consider a communal compost heap on our allotment sites. What could be better than combining our collective allotment waste in order to return quality compost to our hard working plots ? The benefits are endless!

In order to set up such a scheme we would need support from the council, to register our site as managing waste and plenty of volunteers to sort and turn the compost. Do we have enough interest between us to make it work?

If this is something you would like to be involved with, in any capacity, please register your community spirit and interest on our allotment website.

**Thank you Abi – for shedding some light on the complexities of all these different soil enhancers.**

SHED OPENING TIMES 2019

## Sheet and Tilmore Allotment Association Shed (Situated in Mill Lane, Sheet)

Allotment supplies at wholesale prices all on your doorstep.  
Available to all association members.

Composts, fertilisers, grow bags, soil conditioners, large selection of seed potatoes, 5ft, 6ft and 8ft bamboo canes.

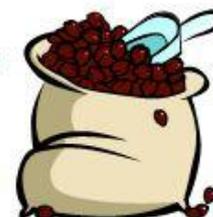
**SUNDAYS from 10.00am to 11.00am**

March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, March 31<sup>st</sup>,

April 7<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>

May 5<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>

June 2<sup>nd</sup>



Not an Allotment Association Member?  
Come to the Shed and join whilst you visit.

Not able to visit in opening hours?  
Contact abigrute@hotmail.com

**Don't forget to bring a bag to put your spuds in!**

### Shed Retail Prices

#### Fertilizers

Magnesium Limestone	£4.65	Per 7lb
Gromore	£2.75	Per 7lb 22.00 Per bag
Blood, Fish & Bone	£2.35	Per 7lb 18.50 Per bag
Sulphate of Potash	£5.90	Per 7lb
Sulphate of Ammonia	£2.60	Per 7lb
Sulphate of Iron	£3.20	Per 7lb
Phostrogen	£1.95	Per 7lb
Early Bird Poultry Manure	7.65	Per 15kg
HP6 Strawberry Fertiliser	2.50	Per 3kg
HP9 Root veg Fertiliser	2.50	Per 3kg
HP11 Grn Veg Fert	2.50	Per 3kg

#### Stock Seed Potatoes

Accord & Lady Christl	1 <sup>st</sup> early	£2 Per 2 Kg
Charlotte	2 <sup>nd</sup> early	£2 Per 2 Kg
Desiree	Main	£2 Per 2 Kg
Cara	Late Main	£2 Per 2 Kg

#### Compost

Grobags	3.00
Growise Multi 50L	5.00
Potting 75L	8.80
All Purpose 75L	9.80
Multi Purpose 56L	6
Manure 50L	5

#### Miscellaneous

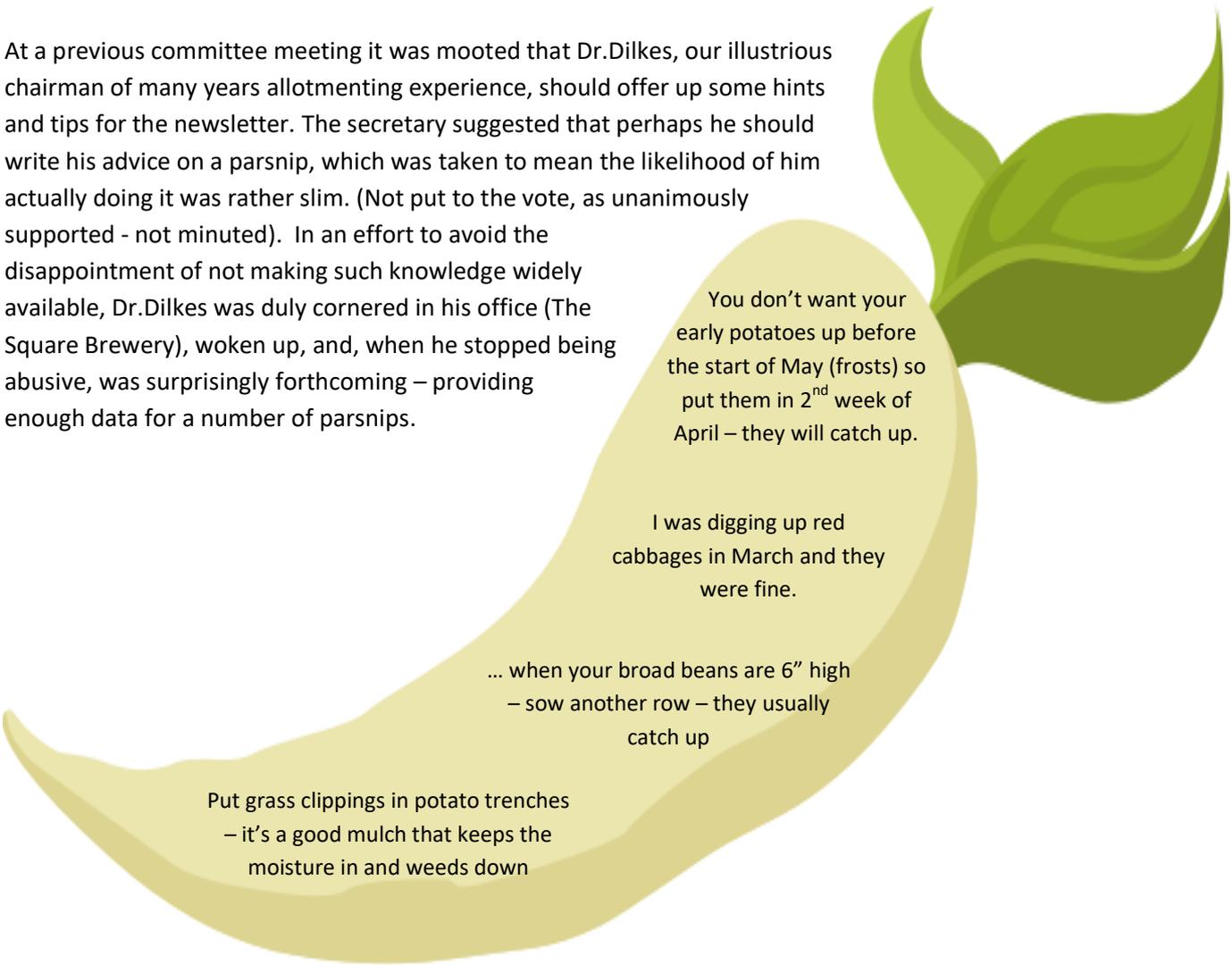
Bamboo Canes - 8 foot	£0.85
Bamboo Canes - 6 foot	£0.55
Bamboo Canes - 5 foot	£0.35
Seed Trays - full size	£0.20
Seed Trays - 1/2 size	£0.15

#### Killers

Slug Pellets 800G	2.50
Slug Pellets - Organic	£3.10

## The Chairmans Parsnip of News

At a previous committee meeting it was mooted that Dr.Dilkes, our illustrious chairman of many years allotmenting experience, should offer up some hints and tips for the newsletter. The secretary suggested that perhaps he should write his advice on a parsnip, which was taken to mean the likelihood of him actually doing it was rather slim. (Not put to the vote, as unanimously supported - not minuted). In an effort to avoid the disappointment of not making such knowledge widely available, Dr.Dilkes was duly cornered in his office (The Square Brewery), woken up, and, when he stopped being abusive, was surprisingly forthcoming – providing enough data for a number of parsnips.



You don't want your early potatoes up before the start of May (frosts) so put them in 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April – they will catch up.

I was digging up red cabbages in March and they were fine.

... when your broad beans are 6" high  
– sow another row – they usually catch up

Put grass clippings in potato trenches  
– it's a good mulch that keeps the moisture in and weeds down

## Abuse your chilli plants

A man has smashed the record for growing the hottest chillies in the UK - by shouting at them.

Matt Simpson, 43, grew the super hot British peppers by stressing them throughout the whole growing process.

He denied them water, pretended to be a predator by ripping bits off - as he believes the heat is a natural defence against being eaten - and even shouted at them.



Matt Simpson grew the super-hot 1,590,000 Scoville-unit chilli in a poly-tunnel in Horningsham, Wiltshire

Mr Simpson was tempted to get someone from the Army to shout at the plants but decided otherwise, saying 'that would have been embarrassing'

Mmmm – what, more embarrassing than that shirt?

## The weed mantra . . .

- It's only another type of green manure
- A weed is just something growing in the wrong place
- Shows my soil is good (tricky as we all know a determined weed will grow on a plastic bag)
- Plant as much as you can and crowd the weeds out
- Cover dug soil with black plastic or cardboard – slows weeds, warms soil and makes me look like I have a plan

**THE COMMITTEE**

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	Peter Knight	Sheet 36		<a href="mailto:peter.k.knight@btinternet.com">peter.k.knight@btinternet.com</a>

## RHS Sowing and planting advice April/May/June

APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideal time to plant pot-grown fruit trees and bushes.</li> <li>• Chit and plant out second early potatoes in the first half of the month, main crop potatoes in the second half.</li> <li>• Sow seed outdoors for beetroot, carrots, Swiss chard, summer cauliflower, kohlrabi, lettuce, leeks, radish, turnip, spring and pickling onions, peas and perpetual spinach in well-prepared soil.</li> <li>• Try sowing unusual vegetables such as salsify, Hamburg parsley, or scorzonera.</li> <li>• Sow seed indoors of marrows, courgettes, pumpkins and squash. Also sweet peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, celery, celeriac, salads and globe artichokes.</li> <li>• In very mild areas sow dwarf French beans and sweet corn outside under cloches or fleece at the end of April. In cooler areas wait until May.</li> <li>• Sow a seedbed of brassicas to provide transplants of sprouting broccoli, cauliflowers and cabbages for planting out in June or July.</li> <li>• Transplant broad beans grown in pots.</li> <li>• Plant shallots, onion sets and garlic.</li> <li>• Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers.</li> <li>• Plant asparagus crowns.</li> <li>• Pot up tomato seedlings when they develop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant out alpine strawberry seedlings sown in early spring.</li> <li>• Sow French beans, runner beans, squash, cucumbers and pumpkin seeds directly into prepared beds outside. Be alert to late frosts (for which a covering of horticultural fleece should provide sufficient protection).</li> <li>• Sow sweet corn outside in blocks, at least 45cm (18in) spacing, with two seeds per hole. The strongest seedling can be selected later.</li> <li>• Sow cauliflowers and purple sprouting broccoli for harvesting next winter.</li> <li>• Try sowing some unusual vegetables such as kohlrabi (like a large white above-ground turnip), scorzonera and salsify.</li> <li>• Witloof chicory can be sown this month, to have some ready for forcing next winter. Sow in drills directly outside.</li> <li>• After all risk of frost has passed, plant out tomatoes, courgettes and pumpkins that were previously sown under cover.</li> <li>• Other young plants can be planted out once conditions are suitable, and once they've been hardened off (acclimatised to the colder outdoor conditions) for 10 to 14 days.</li> <li>• Brussels sprouts for next winter should now be ready for transplanting after early or mid-spring sowing.</li> <li>• Plant out artichokes that were previously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transplant outdoor melons under cloches, pinching out the growing point.</li> <li>• Move forced strawberries outdoors.</li> <li>• Continue sowing salad crops, such as beetroot, Chinese cabbage, pak choi and radish. Leafy salad crops may do better when sown in partially shady sites since hot dry weather can lead to bitter tasting leaves.</li> <li>• Sow French, runner and broad beans, peas, squash, sweetcorn, and outdoor cucumbers directly into prepared beds outside.</li> <li>• French beans are best sown in traditional rows, 45cm (18in) apart, at 15-22cm (6-9in) spacing.</li> <li>• Sweet corn works best planted in blocks, at least 45cm (18in) spacing, with two seeds per hole. Any seeds sown earlier under cover can now be planted out into the same block pattern. Sow before mid June and only in southern districts.</li> <li>• Runner beans need well-prepared ground and suitable supports (often a frame or wigwam of bamboo canes tied together with twine) for the shoots to twine around and grow upwards.</li> <li>• Courgettes, marrows and pumpkins can still be sown outdoors in early June in southern districts.</li> <li>• Although most winter brassicas need to be sown earlier in the season, calabrese, turnips and kohlrabi can be sown now for an autumn crop.</li> </ul>

<p>true leaves above the more rounded seed leaves.</p>	<p>sown under cover.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-blanching celery can also be planted out towards the end of the month.</li> <li>• Ridge cucumbers can be sown indoors now, for planting out in early June.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start treating potatoes and tomatoes against blight.</li> <li>• Celeriac and celery can be planted out early this month. A well-prepared site with lots of organic matter dug in is essential.</li> <li>• Outdoor ridge cucumbers can be planted out early this month. They benefit from a site that has been enriched with lots of organic matter to help retain water.</li> <li>• Plant vegetables sown indoors earlier in the season, including winter brassicas and sweet peppers. Peppers can only be planted out when all risk of frost has passed, and ideally beneath cloches.</li> <li>• Gaps between winter brassica plants can be used for quick-maturing catch crops, perhaps radishes or gem lettuces.</li> <li>• Plant out artichokes that were previously sown under cover. They can be grown as perennials (in which case they need 90cm spacing), or as biennials (45cm spacing is sufficient).</li> </ul>
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*Editors' Note: In my dreams... Lifted from <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/in-month/april> etc.*