

Edible Garden in Spring

March, April and May

Spring heralds the return of longer daylight hours and increased temperatures, an exciting but busy time for vegetable growers. The majority of vegetables are sown during these months.



Long successful harvests require a high degree of organisation and planning. It is a good idea to choose what you want to grow and draw up a calendar of sowing times that you can refer to throughout the season.

General Tasks

Soil:

- Finish preparing the soil for sowing seeds. The aim is to create a fine 'tilth' – a nice crumbly structure that is ideal for germinating seeds.
- Soil can be warmed by covering it with cloches or black plastic a few weeks before sowing.

Plant supports:

- Erect bean poles and pea sticks before planting the seeds or young plants.

Sow:

- Sow a range of crops outdoors, on a windowsill, in a propagator, or undercover (cloche or greenhouse) – see overleaf for more details.
- Thin out seedlings to their required spacing.
- During the seedling stage vegetables are very susceptible to being out swamped by weeds. Hoe and hand weed carefully around young plants.
- When the vegetables are large enough, mulch them with a layer of well-rotted compost. This discourages weeds and helps to prevent water loss.
- If unseasonal frosts threaten towards the end of spring cover tender growth such as early potato shoots with fleece or other forms of protection.

Harvest:

- Continue to harvest overwintering vegetables.
- Lift crops such as leeks and parsnips that have been in the ground all winter before they start to re-sprout.

Pests and Disease

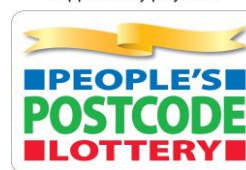
- Inspect plants regularly for signs of pests and disease.
- Protect plants where necessary.
- For example; cover Brassicas (cabbage family) and onions with nets to protect them from birds.



What to Sow in Spring

- Delay sowing if the weather is bad
- Plants can be started off early on the windowsill, in the cold frame, greenhouse, poly tunnel or under cloches
- *Remember:* Gradually 'harden off' plants that are being moved from inside to out

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	Sow outside	Sow undercover (cloche or greenhouse)	Sow in heat (windowsill or propagator)	Plant out
March	Broad beans, early peas	Beetroot, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflowers, carrots, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce, radish, parsnips, chard, turnips	Tomatoes, celeriac, celery, peppers, aubergines and cucumbers	
April	Beetroot, peas, broad beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi, chard, leeks, spinach, rocket, lettuce, radish	French beans, runner beans, sweetcorn, courgette, pumpkin	Aubergine, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes	Globe and Jerusalem artichokes, onion and shallot sets, asparagus and potatoes (mid-April)
May	Beetroot, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflowers, chicory, kale, peas, turnips, lettuce, rocket, radish, spring onion	French beans, runner beans, sweetcorn, courgette, pumpkin		Brussels sprouts, cabbage, celery, celeriac, leeks

- *In addition:* Sow a range of flowers (e.g. marigolds, nasturtiums) to attract pollinators, other beneficial insects and confuse pests.

More information:

The Edible Gardening Project at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

What's on <http://www.rbge.org.uk/whats-on/ediblegardening>

Blog <http://stories.rbge.org.uk/edible-garden-project>

