



March Newsletter

March brings breezes loud and shrill,
Stirs the dancing daffodil...

~Sara Coleridge (1802–1852), "The Months"

Society News:

The Store opened at the end of January and the majority of members picked up their seed and potato orders. Sales of compost have gone well in preparation for the new growing season. There remains onions, beans/peas, shallots and a few bags of potatoes for sale.

The web-site continues to be a great asset to the Society. The number of 'How to Grow' articles continue to increase and these articles are a great asset to both new growers and as a refresher to those more experienced.

The Society's Facebook Group has presently 65 members. It is a private group for Society members only and those wishing to join will need to be members of the Society and agree the standard Facebook rules. We intend that this should be a vehicle for Society news and discussion of allotment and gardening matters.

The AGM will take place on Wednesday 5th April, the Agenda and reports will be forwarded to members shortly. Should any member wish to either join the Committee or place an item on the Agenda they must inform the Secretary 14 days before the meeting. Any proposal should be proposed and seconded by current members. Membership renewal began on 1st January.

We have two very interesting talks planned for the new year:

- Following the AGM on 5th April Gavin Towers will give us a talk on everything to do with potatoes. Gavin has worked in the potato industry for many years and his experience is second to none. A talk not to be missed for those wishing to improve their knowledge of our most important crops. A buffet will be provided.

- On 26th July Nick Smith who is the Show Director for the Harrogate Flower Shows will give a talk titled 'The Show must go on.' This is a brilliant talk by an excellent presenter who outlines the origins of the Harrogate Flower Shows and the Northern Horticultural Society. Providing a fascinating insight into the organisation of both the early and late flower shows. This most interesting and outstanding presentation. A buffet will be provided.

We are hoping to organise a visit to Harrogate Spring Flower Show on Thursday 20th April. The cost of the trip is £37.50 per person and includes travel to and from the Showground and entry to the Show. For the trip to go ahead we need 49 members/guest to sign up to enable the coach to be booked.

The Annual Flower and Produce Show will be held on 9th September 23 and includes extra dahlia classes and a new class in both the Floral Art and Children's sections calling for a flower palette comprising seven distinct varieties of bloom, no more than two blooms of any one cultivar, no foliage. Staged on a palette. Blooms to be grown by the exhibitor. The Children's class at our last show was a picture and we hope that this new class will encourage our younger members and not to mention our seasoned growers to plant and grow flowers for this class. The Schedule is on the web-site and can be accessed by the following link: <https://www.northlincolnhorticulturalsociety.co.uk/annual-show>

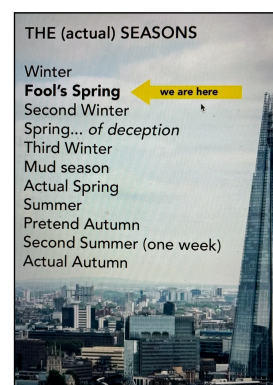
Dates for your diary:

5 th April.	Society AGM followed by a talk on growing potatoes by Gavin Towers. Buffet
20 th April	Trip to Harrogate Flower Show.
TBN	Plant Sale - from the Store when plants are available
23 rd June	Summer Solstice Evening. Buffet.
26 th July.	Talk - "The Show must go on" by Nick Smith Harrogate Show Director. Buffet
9 th Sept.	Annual Flower and Produce Show

Seasonal Jobs to be getting on with:

As the days get longer and the ground begins to warm up there are a number of jobs that we can be getting on with, but remember the 'Ice Saints,' on average the last frost in Lincoln is around the first week in May - so don't be caught out. Should you have planted your potatoes then heel/cover them up with soil if the leaves are showing.

I have attached the guide to seasonal jobs published in Issue 1 of



the National Allotment Society's ALG magazine. Should you wish to read the full magazine please use the following link. <https://online.flipbuilder.com/cwao/vpwd/>

seasonal jobs to do...

...March, April and May



March

March is the month when the world wakes up, as days slowly lengthen again, and the clocks go forward at the end of the month. In warmer districts, many sowings can be made this month, although it may still be better to delay a month to six weeks in colder areas. Early direct sowings of suitable varieties of peas and broad beans can be made under cloches in sunny sheltered positions. Seed beds should be made ready and covered with cold frames early in the month for direct sowings.

Where greenhouses are in use, careful ventilation must be made on warm days, just enough to allow excess moisture and condensation, which can easily lead to fungal problems, to escape. Also, try and keep watering to a bare minimum and not splash over staging, flooring etc. especially in unheated houses.

- VEGETABLE:**
- Under cover, either in a greenhouse or cold frame, sow early cauliflower, broccoli and celery.
 - Sow broad beans (direct in mild



- districts, undercover in cold districts).
- Sow onions and leeks if not done already.
 - Make up new hoseradish and asparagus beds, either with new plants, or divisions of old.
 - Sow spinach in very sheltered position, or under cloches.
 - Towards end of month, sow carrots under cloches.
 - Plant earliest potatoes under cloches.

- FRUIT:**
- Last window for planting new strawberry beds.
 - Where peaches, apricots or nectarines are grown, the early blossom can be destroyed by frosts



so cover with fleece or similar when frost is forecast, but remove early the next morning once the frost has lifted.

- Check ties on all newly planted fruit trees and check no newly planted trees or bushes have worked loose in winter winds and frost - re-firm if this has happened.

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- GREENHOUSE:**
- Where a heated greenhouse is available, sow tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, melons and aubergines.
 - Keep all young seedlings as close to the glass as possible to prevent legginess.
- FLOWER:**
- Plant out autumn sown sweet peas, or, if not already sown, sow direct in sheltered plots - prevent against mice.
 - Bring dahlias out of storage, pot up and move to greenhouse.
 - Sow hardy annuals direct into prepared soil in sheltered plots - cheap, easy to grow and great for attracting pollinating insects.

April

Daylight begins to lengthen, but the weather can often still be unpredictable. Sharp showers can do a lot of damage to young plants and soft new growths. Many areas will still be seeing frosts overnight, but that should start to ease off slightly and certainly lift sooner. Where the soil was winter dug and left rough, the action of frost, and snow should have done wonders to break down the large lumps. When the soil begins to dry on the surface, areas can be trod and raked down to a fine tilth ready for direct sowing in the coming weeks.

Although the greenhouse will start to require more regular ventilation, try to only use the roof vents, as side vents and doors will let in cool draughts which will not do young plants and seedlings any good.



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Where young plants are in cold frames, these should also be ventilated a little through the day to acclimatise them to the outside air but should still be closed of an evening. As the weather slowly improves, early signs of pests can often be found - be vigilant and deal with them at the earliest stages before they become infestations.

If not already done so, check pH in beds that are to grow brassicas. Lime if the test shows the soil is on the acidic side.

- VEGETABLE:**
- All plants in frames will require more ventilation.
 - Prepare celery and bean trenches.
 - Make successional sowings of salad

onions, lettuce, radish under cloches or frames.

- Plant new potatoes early in the month if not already done so, and second earlies towards the end of the month.

- Early potatoes already planted and showing above the soil may require frost protection - draw a little soil over any growths.
- Sow Kohlrabi.
- Feed spring cabbage and over wintering onions, garlic, shallots etc.

- FRUIT:**
- Watch for 'Big Bud' on blackcurrants - dispose of badly affected plants or pick off buds on lightly affected.
 - Keep any new growth on trained fruit

trees well tied in.

- Remove grease-bands from fruit trees if used.

- GREENHOUSE:**
- Ventilate greenhouses freely on warm days, and damp down a little in the mornings.
 - Keep all seedlings pricked out and potted on before they become root bound.
 - Sow tomatoes, cucumbers, melons etc.
 - Keep a close look out for pests.
 - Sow courgettes, squashes, pumpkins, vegetable marrows.

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- FLOWER:**
- Stake sweet peas if not already done so. Plant out any remaining plants.
 - Pot up and start dahlias if not already done so.
 - Plant out gladioli corms for successional flowering.

May

May often feels like one of the busiest months of the year, though it can still be unpredictable. Keep a close watch out for late frosts and ensure that greenhouses are still closed well before temperatures drop. As always, keep a close eye out for early pest damage, especially aphids and snails who will relish young tender vegetables!

As the temperatures start to slowly rise, so the weeds will once again resume growth, and as ever if the ground is dry enough, keep the vegetable beds

well hoed. Also, keep preparing beds by lightly treading down after the winter has worked on the rough dug soil before giving the surface a thorough raking down.

Many seeds can now be sown, especially in milder areas, but, for those in naturally cooler districts, it may be better to still wait a little longer.

Now is a good time to make up a batch of liquid manure feed. Collect horse droppings and tie into a hessian sack. Place the sack in a water barrel and

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allow to steep for a couple of weeks. This can then be diluted and watered on as required but avoid applying it to seedlings or young plants.

- VEGETABLE:**
- Sow carrots, beetroot, spinach, leaf beet, salad onions, radish, lettuce, peas, summer and autumn cabbages, cauliflowers, broccoli, calabrese, Brussels sprouts, turnips, maincrop peas - a long list this month!
 - Start to harvest asparagus.
 - Sow sweetcorn - under cover in cooler areas, direct if not.
 - Plant out courgettes etc. at end of the month.
 - Plant maincrop potatoes.
 - Plant out celeriac and celery.

- Earth up early potatoes.
- Stake peas and erect climbing bean frames. Sow beans under glass or direct at the end of the month.
- Sow dwarf French beans and late broad beans.

- FRUIT:**
- Mulch strawberry beds with straw or similar.
 - Thin canes on autumn fruiting raspberries.
 - Keep all new growth tied in on trained trees, canes etc.
 - Mulch fruit trees with well-rotted manure, compost or leaf-mould to lock in moisture and keep weeds at bay.

- GREENHOUSE:**
- Move plants out of greenhouse to harden off.
 - Plant tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, melons, aubergines etc. in available space.
 - Keep plants well-watered and damp down more often.

- FLOWER:**
- Plant out dahlias at the end of the month.
 - Direct sow annuals at the end of the month for cut flowers - cosmos, cornflowers, lekapur, helichrysum, scordiflorum are all easy to grow and produce a lot of stems for cutting over a long period.
 - Plant more gladioli.

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