



December Newsletter

Chill December brings the sleet,
Blazing fire, and Christmas treat.

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

Your Committee wishes you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy
New Year

December is the darkest month with the shortest day of the winter solstice on the 21st when the days will be slowly getting longer, however; unfortunately the cold winter months of January and February are still to come. It is very much the time of renewal and starting rather than ending, it is said that the gardening year ends on 31st December and starts on 1st January. As the days get longer and the light levels increase we can look forward to spring that isn't too far away

I hope that we are all continuing to benefit from the fruits of our labours over the last year. Many brassicas, cabbages, cauliflowers and Brussel sprouts along with root crops; carrots, parsnips and beetroot, not to mention leeks may still be harvested from the garden or allotment. Along with others on my allotment we are harvesting Charlotte potatoes that we planted in October.

On the subject of potatoes it is worth visiting the Potato House web-site. A family owned business supplying heritage, unusual and different varieties of potatoes <https://www.potatohouse.co.uk/which-potato-should-i-grow/#family> The web-site provides advice on everything potatoes along with a 'Potato to Eat' service. Presently there is a 10% discount on orders over £15 by using the following promotion ALLOTGARDEN10 valid until March next year.

Whilst they do not beat the value of those sold by our Store they are good in providing a back-up.

Society News:

The Store closed on the 19th November for stock taking and a Christmas break for those Committee members who have given up their Saturday mornings for the past year to

Seasonal Jobs to be getting on with:

As I mentioned the gardening year starts on the 1st January and there continues to be jobs to be done both in the greenhouse/polytunnel and outside but needless to say if working outdoors ensure you are well wrapped up against the cold. My leeks are growing well and I shall be sowing some onions in the next couple of days. Traditionally shallots are planted on the shortest day and harvested on the longest I shall plant mine in pots during January. As soon as I receive my potatoes I shall plant a number of Arran Pilot in bags inside the polytunnel for any early crop.

I have attached the guide to seasonal jobs published in Issue 4 of the National

seasonal jobs to do...

...December/January/February

SCAN HERE TO VIEW A WHOLE YEAR OF MONTHLY JOBS! →

December

GREENHOUSE

- Keep an eye on plants that are being overwintered in greenhouses, vent the house carefully on days where the sun shines, never too much that the temperature drops drastically, but just to allow for the air to circulate and rid the inside atmosphere of excess moisture.
- Check overwintering plants often, removing dead material to prevent fungal problems.
- This is a great time to thoroughly clean greenhouses, polytunnels, cold frames with warm soapy water and a little disinfectant.
- If grapes are grown, they can now be pruned, reducing all fruiting laterals to two or three buds from the main rod.

FLOWERS

- Check over stored dahlia tubers, gladioli corms etc. for rot or rodent damage. Remove any that are damaged.
- Dead-head winter bedding to prolong the display.
- Where young shoots for spring bulbs are already showing through, keep well weeded.

FRUIT

- Clear any debris from rhubarb beds, and source some fresh manure for forcing early next month. Keep turning the fresh manure for a few weeks.
- Continue to prune fruit trees, especially apples and pears.

December

VEGETABLE

- Regularly check all stored crops and remove any that show signs of decay.
- If sea kale is grown, clear around the crowns of debris and lightly prick over the soil in readiness for forcing.
- If chionodoxa is grown, lift some roots and take into a warm dark place for forcing.
- Check over tall growing brassicas, such as Brussels sprouts, kale and sprouting broccoli; they may require staking if you have not already done so.
- Whenever the soil is dry enough, carefully hoe through rows of overwintering vegetables like onions, garlic, and spring cabbage.

FRUIT



January

GREENHOUSE

- Very much the same as last month. Remember to ventilate a little on mild days, though cautiously, and always ensure houses are closed up again in mid-afternoon to trap in any warmth from the winter sun.

FLOWERS

- Continue to dead-head winter bedding.
- Sow sweet peas if not done so in autumn.

FRUIT

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January

VEGETABLE

- Sow onions and leeks under cover, especially if required for exhibition/showing.
- If space is available, a few early potatoes can be planted in large pots and kept in a greenhouse or polytunnel. No extra heat is required, but a little heating will certainly speed things up.
- Feed and mulch asparagus if not done last autumn.
- If a slightly heated greenhouse is available, Dwarf French beans can be sown, 4 or 5 to a decent size pot for early crops.
- Continue to check over stored crops.
- Continue as last month to force chionodoxa.
- If grown, sea kale can now be forced, covering crowns with large pots, buckets or proper forcing pots if available, then fresh manure heaped around to provide heat.

FRUIT

- Rhubarb can start to be forced now, as for sea kale above.
- Finish all pruning this month at the latest. Ensure all trained fruit such as fars, cordons, espaliers etc. are well tied in.
- If the month is mild, the earliest buds may begin to swell on gooseberries, plums etc. These may require protection from birds.

February

GREENHOUSE

- Only the hardest seeds should be sown in an unheated house. Many seeds will do better by waiting a month to six weeks before sowing. However, seeds of some hardy annuals for cut flowers can be sown.
- The remarks on venting etc. from last month remain the same.

FLOWERS

- If you wish to increase your stock of dailies, the tubers can now be taken from storage and thoroughly checked over. Any damaged areas should be cut away with a sterile sharp knife. The tubers can then be stood up in large trays reasonably closely and compost then put over, leaving the top of the tuber exposed. Kept warm and humid, young shoots will soon appear; these can then be taken as softwood cuttings, which will soon root in a propagating frame.
- Pinch out sweet peas.
- Sow calendula, cornflower,

FRUIT

- Complete planting of new trees, bushes, canes etc.
- This is the last window for pruning autumn fruiting raspberries - all canes that fruited last year should be cut down to ground level. They can then be weeded, given a general purpose fertiliser then mulched.
- Where early fruiting strawberries are grown, some can now be covered with cloches to produce an earlier crop.

February

VEGETABLE

- Where soil is free draining and the plot very sheltered, broad beans can be directly sown under cloches. Where the soil is heavier and naturally wetter and colder, sow under cover.
- Early cauliflower can be sown under cover.
- Plant Jerusalem artichokes into well prepared soil.
- Lift remainder of last year's parsnips, sweeties etc. if not already done so.
- Plant a self-blanching celery undercover for an early crop.
- Sow more early potatoes in pots in colder districts; in milder areas, the earliest planting can be made outside under cloches.
- Sow early tomatoes if good conditions can be provided to germinate seedlings.

FRUIT

- Keep overwintering onions, garlic and spring cabbage weeded.

February

VEGETABLE

- From a clean, light sand and thorough rub over with linseed oil to give them many more years' service. A general tidy through of sheds and stores is always a good idea, and often a good way of finding otherwises' lost 'items'!
- Check over supplies of canes, nets and so on, and repair or replace as necessary.
- Greenhouses, polytunnels, cold frames and cloches should be checked and cleaned if you have not done so already. Clean glass allows much better light penetration, and the reasons for destroying pests, diseases and fungus are obvious. If heaters or propagators are used, these should also be checked over and all pots and trays should be washed in readiness. Stock up on seed labels and so on.
- On a particularly cold or wet day, sit down with a catalogue or two and start to make lists for required seeds, bulbs, tubers and whatever else you intend to grow throughout the year.
- All winter digging should be completed by the end of the month.

FRUIT

- California poppy and other hardy annuals outside in milder districts, or in a cool greenhouse in colder areas.

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