

JOBS FOR JUNE IN THE VEG GARDEN



1. Gooseberries and elderflowers appear at a similar time towards the end of the month and make a delicious combination in jam – the natural pectin in the flowers helps the jam to set. Elderflowers can be picked and frozen too if you don't have time to use them whilst they're flowering.
2. Hate to say it yet again..... But keep weeding. It's much easier to pick small weed seedlings out than big roots once they've established.
3. Keep checking your plants and be on the lookout for pests and diseases. Remember to look on the undersides of leaves too. Start netting brassica crops.
4. Consider mulching plants once they're beyond the seedling stage. Not only will weeds be kept at bay but also it will help to insulate the soil – keeping it cooler and damper in the summer. Organic mulches include garden compost, straw, wilted comfrey and dry grass clippings.
5. Keep thinning vegetables as they grow.
6. If you're lucky enough to have a greenhouse or polytunnel make sure it's adequately ventilated. Fungal diseases can build up quickly. Damp down the floors, borders or staging two or three times a day if possible until late afternoon, but no later to give it time to dry off before nightfall. (This will also help to keep red spider mite at bay as they thrive in dry conditions).



7. Earth up Maincrop and second early potatoes once or twice more. Stop when the tops have grown large enough to touch those in the rows either side.

8. Keep building your compost heap, building it up in thin layers as you go along. Consider turning it if you're able to re-activate it.

9. If you like to feed your plants, you can begin now.

Globe artichokes, peppers, aubergines, chillies, peas and tomatoes can be given a high potash organic liquid feed (comfrey leaves are perfect for this, but if you don't have access, look out for organic tomato or seaweed feed).

10. Continue to look out for plants that may need training or tying in to poles. It's much easier to do it when the plants are small, rather than waiting until it collapses under the weight of a full crop.

What you can sow outside now...

Lots of veg can be planted directly outside into the soil from now on (check the [links](#) for suppliers of seeds) including:

French (kidney) beans, runner beans, beetroot, borage, carrots, chicory, dill, curled endive, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, parsley, pea, radish, swede and turnip. If you're planting for winter storage and you have a choice, sow beetroot, carrot and swede in positions that they won't be exposed to sun all day – they'll be less likely to bolt.

Transplant to final position when they have four or five leaves:

Sprouting & heading broccoli
Savoy cabbages
Brussels sprouts
Kale
Kohlrabi

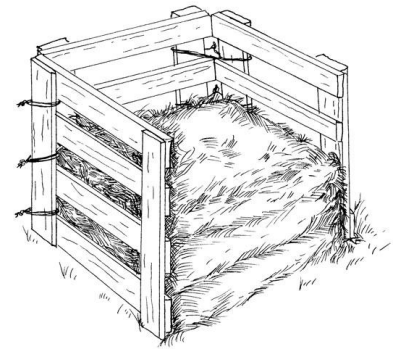
Transplant leeks when they're about 15 – 20cm high (pencil thickness).

French (kidney) beans & Runner beans can be planted out now.

Continue to sow successionaly Beetroot, Carrots, Lettuce, Pea, Radish, Swede, and Turnip and summer spinach.

Tomatoes can be staked and planted out once the first flower trusses are showing preferably in a sheltered but sunny position.

Tips for June



HOME COMPOSTING

To improve garden soil organic matter such as compost or manure needs to be added regularly. Farmyard manure is not always easy to come by but all households provide waste that can be easily composted. If you've had a go at making compost in the past but it turned to slime or didn't break down, don't give up – have another go. So how to start...?

Making a heap

Research undertaken by the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) has shown that the bigger the surface area of the compost heap (1 sq. metre was the minimum) the better, and the heap should not be too high. A low wide heap works best. Old pallets screwed together can make ideal compost areas, and if you have room for 2 or 3, all the better. (When the first bin of compost is ready, it can be moved to a new bin which will enable you to start a fresh bin of waste rather than piling it on top of the bin that's ready.) Concrete blocks, walls, wire netting stapled to posts, wooden boards can all be used to construct the bins. The heap can be covered with old carpet or underfelt, or any semi porous material. Compost bins are available from recycling centres and although small and tidy, most do not fill the criteria above. However any compost is better than none!

Bins and heaps perform better with a porous lid rather than a solid one - there are fewer flies, as they don't become trapped.

The research also found that worms in the bin love paper that's mixed with grass and kitchen waste and that it's the work they do, rather than the heat, that makes successful compost. Always make the heap directly on the soil otherwise the worms can't get into it. It also works best if it's kept moist.

What to use

The most important thing is to use the correct ratio of Browns (paper, cardboard etc.) to Greens (kitchen and garden waste). Anything from 1:1 to 3:1 works well. This can be all mixed together and doesn't need layering.

- Tissues, paper towels, any crumpled or balled paper, cereal boxes, egg boxes can be used. Torn up and crumpled wet newspaper composts faster than dry.

- Kitchen waste that includes any vegetable peelings, washed egg shells, tea leaves and coffee grinds. Cooked vegetable waste can be used but may attract vermin. Avoid using citrus fruit peelings. Don't use leftover meat or meat products.
- Grass clippings can be added, but no more than 6in deep or it will turn into slime.
- Hedge clippings and all prunings – will compost faster if they are shredded.
- Leaves. If you set the lawnmower on its highest setting, the collector bag will pick them all up for you.
- Ash from (untreated) wooden fires – in thin layers only.
- Seaweed and animal manures.

There's no need to use an activator but a sprinkling of lime can help to make the compost less acidic, which will benefit the worms.

Don't use

Pernicious weed roots such as ground elder, couch grass and docks. Although they contain lots of nutrients, the heap will not be hot enough to kill off the seeds. Tie them up in a plastic bag with some grass clippings, leave them for six months and then add them to the heap. Plant material that has disease, insecticides or herbicides, or any plastic, metal or glass should not be added.

So good luck! It will take about a year to produce good compost using this method, and apart from the potential benefits of making your own, you will notice almost immediately that the rubbish you send off to the landfill will be less.