

JOBS FOR AUGUST IN THE VEG GARDEN

Harvest herbs before they flower. Take cuttings of Sage and Thyme.

Keep watching out for blight on potatoes. If you catch it early before it reaches the tubers, stems and foliage can be cut off and disposed of in the bin (some local authorities will still allow some garden waste to be burnt) – don't compost them though or the spores will over-winter).

It's recommended that potatoes are left in the ground undisturbed for 10 days prior to lifting. Consider planting blight resistant varieties next year.



Potato Blight

Brassicas (cabbages etc.) will benefit from earth being pulled up around the stems as you weed. Avoid adding fertilisers high in nitrogen on from late August onwards - the plants will become sappy and more prone to frost damage.

Be vigilant against caterpillar damage. Pick the eggs off the leaves or caterpillars as soon as you see them (children love this job) and consider covering the plants with mesh or fleece if you haven't already done so.

Keep thinning carrots. If you live in an area prone to carrot root fly, try thinning on a wet day in light rain. The flies are attracted to the smell but they don't travel above 60cm, so make a barrier with horticultural fleece to keep them away. Spent coffee grounds spread along the row is also said to put them off.

If tips of onions are turning yellow, loosen them with a fork to start them drying. After a few days, lift them out with a fork and dry out completely before storing (see Articles).

Feed squashes with a liquid fertiliser high in potash (such as tomato feed). Courgettes don't freeze well so consider preserving them by cooking them first then freezing – ratatouille or courgette & chocolate cake would make a lovely lunch and desert (see [Dee's blog](#) for some recipe ideas).

Don't leave your soil bare for too long. Either plant up with more vegetables, cover with a mulch of well-rotted organic matter, or consider sowing a green manure such as Winter Vetch – a quick growing crop for late sowing that will suppress weeds and fix nitrogen.

Prune all raspberry canes that fruited this summer as low as you can. The stems that are left will bear next summer's fruit. Remove suckers and dead or diseased canes.

Tip: suckers can be cut from the parent plant with a spade, lifted and re-planted.

Finally - weed, weed, and weed! They always seem to grow faster than our edible crops and will compete for nutrients.

Plant Now:

Strawberry plants (available from garden centres now) or propagate runners by planting them in a pot of compost or soil and cutting them from the parent plants when they have rooted.

Suggested Vegetables to Sow Now:

Kale
Coriander
Rocket
Perpetual Spinach
Radish
Swede
Broad Beans

Beetroot
Lettuce
Swiss chard
Spinach
Carrots
Red Cabbage
Spring Cabbage

Tip for August

Plant **Comfrey** 'Bocking 14' (*Symphytum*) from rooted cuttings. Seeds can be planted in April. This is a sterile variety so won't self-seed.

Comfrey is a perennial plant that roots deeply and is full of nutrients, including potash (which is great for flowers and fruit). It can be invasive if you choose a self-seeding variety. The leaves can be placed green under potatoes, put directly into bean troughs, added to the compost heap or used to make comfrey tea.

To make Comfrey tea, collect some leaves and heap together into a porous fabric such as net curtain or muslin.

Secure using string and tie to a cane that can be balanced over the top of your container (you can use anything from a bucket to a water butt).

Fill up with two or three times the quantity of water, and leave for a week or so.

Use the tea regularly as the longer the leaves are left in the water to break down, the stronger it will become (*just think of how strong our tea becomes if we leave it too long*).

