



# AWSLG MAY 2026

## Welcome to your plot

May is the month every allotment holder has been waiting for. The hungry gap is closing, the polytunnel is bursting with promise, and the soil is finally warm enough to welcome the tender crops you have been coaxing along on your windowsill since March. This is the month when the allotment shifts from preparation into full production mode — and it is glorious.

But May also demands respect. The last frost in Croydon can arrive surprisingly late, and a single cold night can wipe out weeks of careful cultivation. The RHS advises being alert to late frosts throughout May and covering tender seedlings with cloches or fleece whenever the forecast dips. Check the forecast. Keep your fleece close. And then enjoy every extraordinary minute of this most generous month.

By the end of May, your plot will look unrecognisable compared to just eight weeks ago. Potatoes earthed up, beans climbing their supports, courgettes unfurling their great leaves, and the first harvests of asparagus, radishes, and early salads arriving on your table. This is what all the planning and patience were for.

## COMMITTEE CORNER

Updates from the committee are posted on the allotment notice boards each month. Committee member names can also be found displayed on the boards on site. If you have a question or concern, do stop and take a look or email [awslg.ltd@gmail.com](mailto:awslg.ltd@gmail.com).

### WATER USAGE

You will have noticed that Peter and his team have now turned the taps back on. We kindly remind all plot holders that mains water is a valuable resource, and we ask everyone to use it carefully and responsibly.



Please consider using a watering can rather than a hose wherever possible.

Not all plants require daily watering, so do check before you water.



We strongly encourage you to collect as much rainwater as you can. Water butts are ideal, and all sheds should have guttering fitted so that rainwater can be captured and stored for use on your plot.



Please report any leaks, dripping taps, or faults immediately to Peter, our Ground Steward, or to a member of the Committee so that repairs can be arranged promptly.

REPORT LEAKS TO PETER AND THE COMMITTEE

Thank you for helping us manage water sustainably across the site. Please refer to March AWSLG Newsletter for more guidelines.

### THE SKIP

#### - **NO DUMPING**

We apologise that the skip has not regularly been opened, however we request that you do not dump your waste in the metal collection point.

An email will be sent to all plot holders when we are able to open the skip- this is dependent on the collection of the skip when it is full and the return of an empty skip

## TOGETHER WE KEEP OUR ALLOTMENTS THRIVING!

### QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Contact the Secretary or any Committee member **Email:** [awslg.ltd@gmail.com](mailto:awslg.ltd@gmail.com)

# Members & Community News

## DATES FOR YOUR MAY DIARY

All events are open to members and their guests — no need to sign up, just turn up.

### Volunteering & Community

**Saturday 2 May** — Tidy-Up Morning Tea provided. A wonderful way to log your voluntary hours whilst doing something practical and sociable for the whole site.

### Social Events

#### **Monday 4 May** — May Day Celebration • Community Event

Join us on the Canteen Green for a relaxed community get-together, with a sizzling BBQ, homemade cakes, and refreshing drinks. It's a lovely chance to catch up, meet new faces, and enjoy some time together outdoors.



### Knit and Natter Group

The Knit and Natter Group meets on the **second Friday of each month** from 2 pm until 4 pm in the hall. The **next session is on Friday, 8 May**. All are welcome for a natter, a knit, and cake. No experience necessary.

Pattern: <https://www.hobbycraft.co.uk/ideas/how-to-knit-your-own-bunting.html>

## This Month's Growing Guide

May is the month when your allotment transforms almost overnight. Everything accelerates in the warmth and long daylight hours, and the list of jobs grows accordingly. Prioritise ruthlessly, get your tender crops in the ground after the last frost, and keep on top of weeds before they get out of hand.

### PRIORITY JOBS THIS MONTH.

#### LISTED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE — FOCUS ON THE TOP JOBS FIRST

##### 1. Plant out tender crops after the last frost

This is the big event of May. After the last frost has passed and you have a settled warm forecast, plant out your tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, and sweetcorn. Harden them off for 10–14 days first — outdoors during the day, indoors at night. Plant on a mild, overcast day rather than in strong sunshine to reduce transplant stress. Water the well and protect it with cloches or fleece for the first few nights.

##### 2. Sow French beans and runner beans outdoors

Once frost risk has passed, sow French beans and runner beans directly outdoors. Runner beans need supports in place before sowing — put up your wigwam or row of canes first. Sow runner beans 15 cm apart at the base of supports, 5 cm deep. Sow dwarf French beans 10 cm apart in rows 45 cm apart. Both crops grow rapidly once the soil is warm and will give prolific harvests from July onwards.

##### 3. Sow sweetcorn outside in blocks

Sweetcorn is wind-pollinated, so it must be grown in blocks rather than rows to ensure good pollination and full cobs. Sow in blocks with 45 cm spacing, two seeds per station, removing the weaker seedling once established. Sweetcorn grown in a block of at least 4×4 plants pollinates reliably; grown in a single row it often does not.

##### 4. Earth up potatoes and watch for blight

Continue earthing up potatoes as they grow — the RHS advises earthing up when shoots are about 23 cm tall, drawing soil up to leave only the top 5 cm showing. This prevents tubers turning green and encourages more development. Keep an eye on the forecast for warm, humid conditions that favour potato blight; if you see dark patches on leaves with yellowing edges, act immediately.

# This Month's Growing Guide

(continued)

## 5. Stake your peas

Peas grow quickly now and need support urgently. Use pea sticks (twiggy branches), netting, or pruned twigs pushed into the ground alongside the row. Left unsupported, pea plants flop, reduce yield, and become difficult to harvest.

## 6. Sow for winter: Brassica seedbed

May is the time to sow your winter brassica seedbed — Brussels sprouts, purple sprouting broccoli, winter cabbages, and kale for harvesting from autumn onwards. Sow thinly in a prepared seedbed outdoors, or in modules under cover. These plants will be transplanted to their final positions in June and July.

## WHAT TO HARVEST NOW

Asparagus (from established crowns — harvest spears when 15–20 cm tall), rhubarb, the first radishes from April sowings, spring onions, overwintered salads, lettuce from April sowings, Swiss chard, perpetual spinach, and — thrillingly — the very first early potatoes from mid-to-late May onwards.

## PEST & DISEASE WATCH

May brings an explosion of pest activity. Key threats this month: slugs and snails (devastating on tender young plants — consider biological controls or beer traps); aphids building up on broad beans (pinch out the soft growing tip of each plant once covered in blackfly); flea beetles making small holes in brassica seedlings — water effected plants well to help them continue growing despite the damage; cabbage white butterflies laying eggs on brassicas (check the undersides of leaves for yellow egg clusters and remove them immediately); and asparagus beetles — pick off by hand. Pigeons and parakeets & crows remain a constant threat to brassicas and peas.

### 💡 Succession sowing:

May is when the succession sowing habit really pays off. Lettuce, radishes, spring onions, and salad leaves sown every fortnight mean continuous harvests right through summer rather than a brief glut. Little and often is always the better approach.

## WHAT TO SOW & PLANT NOW

### Sow outdoors directly:

- French beans (after last frost)
- Runner beans (after last frost, with supports in place)
- Sweetcorn — in blocks, 45 cm spacing, two seeds per station
- Courgettes, squash, pumpkins (after last frost)
- Cucumbers — ridge varieties outdoors after frost
- Beetroot, carrots, Swiss chard — continue succession sowings
- Salad leaves and lettuce — every fortnight
- Radishes — every two weeks
- Spring onions, kohlrabi, turnips
- Winter brassica seedbed: Brussels sprouts, purple sprouting broccoli, kale, winter cabbage

### Plant out after hardening off:

- Tomatoes — stake immediately, pinch out sideshoots on cordon varieties
- Courgettes — allow plenty of space, they spread considerably
- Cucumbers, squash, and pumpkins
- Sweetcorn (if sown under cover in April)
- Brassica transplants from April sowings

### Under cover:

- Basil — needs warmth, keep in the polytunnel until June
- Ridge cucumbers for planting out in early June

## PEST & DISEASE WATCH

Brings an explosion of pest activity.  
Key threats this month:

- **Slugs and Snails**, with beer trap and biological control
- **Aphids on broad beans**, with hand pinching tip
- **Flea beetles** on brassica seedlings - with water can
- **Cabbage white butterflies** laying eggs - with leaf
- **Asparagus beetles**, with hand picking



# New to Your Plot

Welcome to your first May! This is quite simply the most exciting month on the allotment calendar. Everything is going in the ground, the first harvests are arriving, and the plot looks completely transformed. Here is how to manage the excitement without making costly mistakes:

★ **THE GOLDEN RULE FOR MAY:** *Wait for the last frost before planting tender crops outdoors. In Croydon, this typically falls in mid-to-late May, but the exact date varies each year. Check your local forecast. One frost-free night is not enough — look for a settled warm spell before committing tomatoes, courgettes, beans, and squash to the ground.*

## THE MOST IMPORTANT THING: TIMING

May is all about timing. Plant tender crops too early and a frost kills them. Plant too late and you miss part of the growing season. The rule is simple: wait until you have a settled forecast with no frost before planting tomatoes, courgettes, runner beans, and squash outdoors. In Croydon, this typically occurs in mid-to-late May. When in doubt, wait another week. A tomato planted in warmth in late May will quickly overtake one damaged by frost in early May.

## WHAT NOT TO DO IN MAY

- **Don't plant tender crops before the last frost.** Check the forecast every time. One warm week does not mean frost season is over.
- **Don't neglect watering after transplanting.** Newly planted crops need consistent moisture to establish roots. Water daily for the first week after planting out, even if it has rained.
- **Don't let weeds get away from you.** Hoe between rows once a week in dry weather. Five minutes of hoeing now saves hours of digging later.

## YOUR FIRST BIG SUCCESS THIS MONTH

Plant a courgette! A single courgette plant, properly spaced and watered, will produce more courgettes than you can eat from June through September. It is almost impossible to fail with a courgette. When you harvest your first one — still firm, deep green, and slightly warmed by the sun — you will understand exactly why people love their allotments so much.

## YOUR FIRST MAY JOBS (IN ORDER)



1. **Earth up potatoes regularly.** Every time shoots grow to around 23 cm tall, draw soil up around them. This is one of the most important jobs on the plot right now.
2. **Pinch out broad bean tips.** If your broad beans are covered in blackfly, pinch out the soft growing tip of each plant. This removes the most aphid-rich part and encourages pod development.



3. **Plant out your courgettes (after frost).** Courgettes are one of the most rewarding beginner crops — give each plant at least a square metre of space. Water in well.
4. **Sow runner beans.** Push runner bean seeds 5 cm deep at the base of your supports, 15 cm apart. They germinate quickly in warm soil.
5. **Harvest your first radishes.** If you sowed in April, check by gently pulling — if they feel firm and round, they are ready. Seed to plate in four weeks: deeply satisfying.

## MOWER HIRE

### MOWER HIRE FUNDAMENTALS.

Efficient mowing ensures a tidy and productive plot. Clean, well-maintained mowers are shared equipment.

Look after them for all to enjoy.

Plan your mowing schedule to make the most of your plot.



**ENQUIRE  
SATURDAY &  
SUNDAY MORNINGS.  
NEXT TO THE OFFICE  
BETWEEN 10AM & 11AM**

# Grower's Tips

## **TOMATO GROWING: GETTING THE DETAILS RIGHT**

Tomatoes planted out this month will determine your entire summer harvest. Plant cordon (indeterminate) varieties deeply — up to the first set of leaves — as the buried stem develops extra roots. Pinch out all sideshoots as they appear in the junction between stem and leaf stem. Begin feeding with a high-potash liquid feed (tomato food) once the first truss of flowers appears. In the polytunnel, ventilate freely to aid pollination — tap flowering trusses gently to distribute pollen.

## **ASPARAGUS: THE LONG GAME**

If you have an established asparagus bed, May is your harvest window. Cut or snap spears when they are 15–20 cm tall. Once spears begin to develop feathery fronds, stop harvesting and allow the foliage to grow freely until autumn — this replenishes the crown for next year's harvest. Feed with a general fertiliser after the harvest season ends.

## **DEALING WITH BLIGHT BEFORE IT STARTS**

Potato blight loves warm, humid weather — exactly what May and June often deliver. Monitor forecasts for 'blight alerts' (warm nights above 10°C combined with high humidity). If alerts are issued, consider applying a copper-based fungicide spray as a preventative on potato and tomato foliage. Ensure good spacing between plants for air circulation, and keep earthing up. The difference between a full crop and losing it to blight is often just a week of vigilance.

## **INTERCROPPING: MAKING EVERY INCH COUNT**

May's rapid growth creates intercropping opportunities. Sow fast-maturing crops between slow-growing ones: radishes between parsnips (harvested before parsnips need the space), lettuce between brassicas, and spring onions between rows of leeks. This approach maximises productivity from limited plot space — particularly valuable on Croydon's standard-sized plots.

# Feeding Your Plot: A Guide to Fertilisers

May is when feeding really matters. Your soil has been working hard since March, tender crops are going into the ground, and fast-growing plants in pots and growing bags are depending on you for nutrients. This is the right moment to understand what fertilisers do, when to use them, and when not to.

## **WHAT PLANTS ACTUALLY NEED**

All plants need three key nutrients from the soil: Nitrogen (N), which drives leafy, green growth; Phosphorus (P), which supports healthy root development; and Potassium (K), which encourages flowering, fruiting, and resilience. These are the NPK figures you see on fertiliser packaging. Many fertilisers also contain calcium, magnesium, sulphur, and trace elements that plants need in smaller quantities.

## **DO YOU ALWAYS NEED FERTILISER?**

Not necessarily. The RHS is clear that most UK soils adequately feed plants without routine fertiliser applications, particularly where organic matter — compost, well-rotted manure — is added regularly. Our heavy Croydon clay, often naturally fertile, holds nutrients well. Feeding the soil with organic matter first is always the priority.

However, fertilisers genuinely earn their place in specific situations: fast-growing vegetables and fruiting crops; plants in containers and growing bags where roots are restricted; plots where the same ground has been cropped intensively year after year; and any plant showing signs of nutrient deficiency — pale or yellowing leaves, stunted growth, or poor fruiting.



# Feeding Your Plot: A Guide to Fertilisers

(continued)

## THE MAIN TYPES EXPLAINED

### Balanced General Fertilisers

Products such as Growmore (NPK 7:7:7) or Fish, Blood and Bone provide a broad range of nutrients and are useful for forking into beds a week or two before sowing or planting. The RHS recommends applying a general fertiliser before seed sowing or planting out for most vegetable crops. Use for: beds before planting potatoes, onions, and brassicas.

### High-Nitrogen Fertilisers

Nitrogen drives leafy growth, making these feeds ideal for brassicas, spinach, lettuce, and chard — crops you are harvesting for their leaves. Chicken manure pellets are a popular organic option. Dried blood acts more quickly. Use with care: too much nitrogen produces lush, soft growth that is more vulnerable to pests and poor weather and encourages leaves at the expense of fruit and roots.

### High-Potash Fertilisers

Once flowering crops — tomatoes, courgettes, cucumbers, beans, peppers, and chillies — start showing their first flowers, switch to a high-potash feed. Tomato feed (liquid) is the standard choice, applied every fortnight once flowers appear. High potash encourages bud formation, fruit set, flavour development, and resilience. This is the single most impactful thing you can do for your tomato yield.

### Organic Slow-Release Fertilisers

Pelleted chicken manure, fish, blood and bone, and composted manure all release their nutrients gradually as soil organisms break them down. This gentle, sustained release suits most vegetables and is far less likely to cause the problems associated with over-feeding. The Allotment Shop stocks stable manure and chicken manure pellets — both excellent choices.

### Homemade Liquid Feeds

Comfrey liquid (made by steeping comfrey leaves in water for four to six weeks) is one of the best free fertilisers available — naturally high in potassium and ideal for tomatoes, courgettes, and other fruiting crops. Nettle tea (nettles steeped in water for two weeks) provides a useful nitrogen boost. Both are pungent to make but cost nothing and are excellent for the environment.

### ★ What to Avoid

More is not better. Overfeeding with nitrogen produces lush, sappy growth that attracts aphids and is more prone to disease. Never apply fertiliser to dry soil or drought-stressed plants — water first, then feed. Never mix fertiliser with lime: a chemical reaction between them renders both ineffective. Avoid fertilising after the growing season ends, as nutrients simply wash away.

Type	Best for	When to apply	Key benefit
Balanced (Growmore / Fish Blood Bone)	All vegetables before planting	Fork in 1–2 weeks before sowing or planting	Broad nutrient base, sets up beds well
High-nitrogen (chicken pellets, dried blood)	Brassicas, leafy crops, spinach	Spring and early summer; avoid in the late season	Drives strong leafy growth
High-potash (tomato feed, comfrey liquid)	Tomatoes, beans, courgettes, cucumbers, peppers	Fortnightly from the first flower onwards	Better fruit set, flavour, and yield
Slow-release organic (manure, pellets)	All vegetables, especially heavy feeders	At planting time or as a top dressing	Steady feed, improves soil structure
Homemade (comfrey tea, nettle tea)	Any vegetable, especially fruiting crops	Weekly during the growing season, when available	Free, sustainable, no packaging

💡 **The golden principle:** Feed the soil first with organic matter — compost and manure. Use fertilisers to supplement, not replace, good soil preparation. A well-fed soil produces healthy plants that need far less intervention throughout the season.

# Nature & Wildlife Garden Watch

May is the peak of the breeding season in the Wildlife Field and across the entire allotment site. The air is full of birdsong, the hedgerows are in full leaf, and the first wildflowers of summer are opening. It is quite extraordinary.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO THIS MONTH

- Avoid hedge cutting and major tidying of rough areas until August — birds are breeding and disturbance can cause nest abandonment.
- Sow wildflowers among your crops: borage, calendula, cornflowers, and phacelia are brilliantly attractive to pollinators and fast to grow.
- Leave dandelions flowering in unused corners — one of the most important early nectar sources for queen bumblebees.
- Put out shallow water dishes at ground level — May can be surprisingly dry, and hedgehogs and ground-feeding birds need fresh water daily.

### ♥ Nature note:

The froglets emerging from the Wildlife Field pond this month will spread across the allotment, eating slugs and other pests as they go. A single frog can eat hundreds of slugs per year. The pond is not just a wildlife feature — it is part of your plot's natural pest management system.



# From Plot to Plate

A Plot-to-Plate Recipe

## Asparagus with Brown Butter and a Poached Egg

### Ingredients:

Fresh asparagus spears,  
40 g unsalted butter,  
1 large egg,  
A squeeze of lemon juice,  
Flaked sea salt,  
Black pepper.

### Instructions:

1. Bring a wide pan of salted water to simmer. Snap tough ends off asparagus. Cook 3-4 minutes, then drain.
2. Melt 40 g butter in a small pan. Swirl as it foams and turns nut-brown. Remove from heat and add lemon juice.
3. Poach an egg in the asparagus water. Arrange asparagus on a warm plate.
4. Lay the poached egg on top. Spoon brown butter over. Season with flaked sea salt and black pepper.


May is asparagus season, and there is no finer way to celebrate your harvest than this simple, beautiful dish. It takes 12 minutes, requires almost no skill, and is genuinely restaurant-quality. If you have an established asparagus bed, this is your reward.

**Chef's Note:** For a richer flavor, add a few toasted almonds or pine nuts to the brown butter just before serving.

**Top tip:** The asparagus water doubles as excellent soup stock — cool it, strain it, and use it as the base for a risotto or a simple asparagus soup with a little cream. Nothing from your plot need go to waste.

## ALLOTMENT GUIDELINES & NEWS

### Bonfires & BBQs

As we head into the warmer months, the committee advises that no bonfires are to be lit on your plots, Saturday 25 April onwards.  This helps keep the site pleasant for everyone and ensures our neighbours can enjoy their gardens without smoke drifting over.

If you are having a BBQ on your plot, we ask that you be mindful of your plot neighbours — keeping smoke to a minimum and being considerate of those nearby.

### Dogs & Children on Site

Dogs must be kept on leads at all times — no matter how friendly they are. This applies to all areas of the site without exception. Children must be supervised at all times. The site is a working environment with tools, machinery, and uneven ground. Please keep a close eye on younger visitors for their own safety and the safety of others.

### Shared Wheelbarrows

Our wheelbarrows are shared equipment and in high demand during busy periods. Please return the wheelbarrow as soon as you have finished using it — someone else may well be waiting. A little consideration goes a long way.

### Fertilisers & Advice at the Allotment Shop

The Allotment Shop is fully stocked with fertilisers for the growing season. If you are unsure which product is right for your crops, the team at the shop is happy to advise. Do pop in — it is one of the best resources on site, and every purchase supports the society.  
**Opening hours:** Saturdays & Sundays 10.30 am–12.15 pm, plus Saturday afternoons 2.30 pm–4.15 pm

**TOGETHER WE KEEP OUR ALLOTMENTS THRIVING!**

**QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?**

Contact the Secretary or any Committee member **Email:** [awslg.ltd@gmail.com](mailto:awslg.ltd@gmail.com)