



AWSLG MARCH 2026

Welcome to March on your plot

March is the month when your plot truly wakes up. The soil is warming, daylight is stretching, and suddenly you are juggling more tasks than you have hours in the day. This is when all that January planning and February preparation pays off — because now you are actually growing. You will be sowing seeds under cover, preparing outdoor beds, planting onion sets, earthing up early potatoes, and still harvesting winter crops. It is a bridging month where winter and spring overlap, and you need to stay flexible. A warm, sunny week can tempt you into sowing everything early, but a sudden cold snap reminds you why patience matters.

Hardy vegetables — broad beans, peas, onions, and early potatoes — can go in now. But tender plants such as tomatoes, courgettes, squash, and beans need to wait until after the last frosts. Use this month to get ahead with hardy crops and prepare thoroughly for the tender ones coming in April and May. A well-organised March creates a productive, manageable summer. Full guidance on what to sow and when is in This Month's Growing Guide below.

COMMITTEE CORNER

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
2025 - 2026

OFFICERS		COMMITTEE MEMBERS	
	Chairman - Plot 80 Tony O'Connor		Michelle Gosnell Plot 171
	Vice Chair - Plot 89 Kin Tse		Norma Allison Plot 305
	Ground Steward Plot 235B Peter Bashford		Sarah Turner Plot 177
	Treasurer - Plot 70 Jill Seagroatt		Wenton Lespierre Plot 31
	Secretary - Plot 300 Jen Tapping		Sergei Berdnikov Plot 340
			Les Jones Plot 53

*Cultivating Community & Knowledge,
Established for the Future.*

HEALTH & SAFETY

The Committee has established a new Health & Safety Sub-Group, dedicated to identifying risks across the site and developing a comprehensive Health & Safety Policy. While this work is underway, please ensure you:

- Know the site's full address
- Keep a first aid kit on your plot
- Carry your phone with you whenever possible

Site Address

**Addiscombe, Woodside & Shirley
Leisure Gardens Limited**

Between 58 and 60 Glenthorne Avenue,
Croydon, CR0 7EZ

PERIMETER PLOT HOLDERS – SECURITY REMINDER

Following the recent break-in, we are taking steps to strengthen site security. We kindly ask all plot holders whose plots border the perimeter to remove any structures or items from boundary walls or fences that could make access easier for intruders.

Your support makes a real difference in keeping our community garden secure.

TOGETHER WE KEEP OUR ALLOTMENTS THRIVING!

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Contact the Secretary or any Committee member **Email:** awslg.ltd@gmail.com

PLOT INSPECTION & ASBESTOS AUDIT

Our first Plot Inspections of the year will take place at the end of March. As part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a safe and well-managed site, the Inspection Team will also conduct an asbestos audit.

If you are already aware of any asbestos on your plot, please let our Ground Steward, Peter Bashford, know. Your cooperation helps us keep the site safe for everyone.



Members & Community News

TRADING HUT (ALLOTMENT SHOP) UPDATE

Opening Hours: Saturday morning: 10.30 am-12.15 pm Sunday morning: 10.30 am-12.15 pm

From 1st March: Saturday afternoons 2.30 pm-4.15 pm

💡 **Remember:** Every purchase at the Allotment Shop helps keep costs down for all members. Support your local shop and your fellow growers!

Why Shop at the Allotment Shop?

March is peak seed-sowing season. Stock up on peat-free compost, seed trays, modules, and vegetable seeds whilst supplies last. Every purchase supports AWSLG, helping keep plot rents down and funding site maintenance.

This month's essentials include peat-free multipurpose compost, seed trays and modules, bamboo canes, netting for brassica protection, onion sets, and seed potatoes.

Knit and Natter

Our new Knit and Natter group met for the first time in February. It was a lovely couple of hours knitting and chatting with new friends. We had some experienced knitters and beginners, so help was on hand.

Do come along for knitting, cake and a natter at our next session on **Friday 13th March, 2-4 pm in the social hall**. We plan to meet on the 2nd Friday of every month.

If anyone has any wool they would like to donate, we are happy to have it. Please leave in the canteen.

Volunteer Opportunities

We need volunteers for:

Allotment Shop (one weekend in three or at busy times)

- Canteen (Saturday and Sunday mornings)
- Saturday Working Party (site maintenance)
- Wildlife Field

♥ **All regular volunteers earn a 10% discount on purchases over £5. Email awslg.ltd@gmail.com if you are interested.**





INTRODUCING THE BOB TAYLOR LIBRARY

The Society has an excellent resource in the Bob Taylor Library, located at the back of the Canteen. It is currently being catalogued, and books will be available for borrowing in March.

The collection covers everything you could need on the plot: managing your allotment through the seasons, propagation and pruning, organic growing, greenhouses and growing under cover, pests and diseases, and much more. There are also encyclopaedias and reference collections available to browse in the Canteen — these are clearly marked and we ask that they stay put so everyone can enjoy them.

Borrowing is simple.

Take any non-reference book for up to two weeks, add your details to the clipboard on the bookcase, and return it during Canteen opening hours on Saturday or Sunday. A returns box will be there if you are not sure where to put things — but the books are colour-coded and the shelves labelled, so it should all be straightforward.

Can you help us grow the collection? We are particularly looking for books on soil structure, permaculture, compost making, no-dig growing, and polytunnels. A donations shelf is waiting — bring yours along and help make this a resource the whole site can be proud of.

It's your library—please feel free to make full use of it!



This Month's Growing Guide

🔊 Correction — Crop Rotation (January & February issues)

A reader rightly pointed out that our crop rotation groupings were inaccurate. The RHS recommends five groups, not four: Brassicas | Legumes | Onions (garlic, shallots, leeks) | Potato family (including tomatoes) | Roots. Tomatoes belong with the Potato family. Courgettes and squash do not need strict annual rotation — simply avoid the same spot too often. We apologise and thank our reader for keeping us accurate.

🔊 Tomatoes belong in the same rotation group as potatoes — move them together to a fresh bed each year, ensuring neither crop returns to the same soil within four years. Never grow them side by side, as both are highly susceptible to blight, and a single outbreak in one crop will spread rapidly to the other, potentially wiping out both at once.

SOW AND PLANT OUTDOORS (HARDY CROPS ONLY)

These crops can be sown directly outdoors in mild conditions this month:

- Broad beans, peas, onions (direct from seed), lettuces, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, salad leaves
- Carrots, parsnips, beetroot (late March when soil has warmed)
- Summer cabbage, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, kohlrabi, turnip

Plant outdoors this month:

- Onion sets, shallot sets, and garlic sets. Push each set gently into prepared soil until just the tip shows, 10cm apart in rows 25cm apart. Net immediately against birds and parakeets, which love pulling them up.
- Jerusalem artichoke tubers
- Asparagus crowns — March is the best month to establish a new asparagus bed
- First early potatoes — from mid-March, once soil is workable. Plant 30cm apart in rows 60cm apart, 10–15cm deep with shoots pointing up. Earth up as shoots emerge.



This Month's Growing Guide

Continued

SOW INDOORS UNDER COVER

Start the following under cover with warmth (15–20°C) this month — these are tender crops that will not go outdoors until May or June:

- Tomatoes (early March) — sow individually in small pots on a warm windowsill
- Sweet peppers and chillies (if not started in February)
- Cucumbers and aubergines
- Celery and globe artichokes
- Salad leaves and lettuce — can also be sown under cover without heat
- Leeks — sow thinly in trays for transplanting in May or June
- Summer cabbage and cauliflower — sow under cover for planting out in April or May

★ THE GOLDEN RULE FOR MARCH:

Be guided by the weather.

Sow outdoors only when the soil is workable and not waterlogged. Hardy crops can go in now — but tender crops such as tomatoes and courgettes must stay under cover until late May at the earliest.



💡 Succession sowing:

Do not sow entire packets at once. Sow small amounts of lettuce, radishes, and salad leaves every two weeks for a continuous harvest rather than a glut — the best way to avoid feast and famine.

PREPARE YOUR SEEDBEDS

Three key protection tasks to tackle this month:

- Protect early outdoor sowings with cloches, mini-tunnels, or fleece to guard against late frosts and cold nights
- Protect brassicas (cabbages, kale, broccoli) from pigeons — and our local parakeets — with fine netting. Both are persistent and will strip young plants overnight.
- Watch for slugs on emerging seedlings. Biological controls (nematodes) are the most effective and wildlife-friendly solution at this time of year.

SUPPORTS AND STRUCTURE

Get structures in place now before plants need them. Put pea supports in place as soon as peas are sown — they grow faster than you expect. Begin preparing runner bean supports and trenches this month, ready for sowing in May or planting out in June.

FRUIT CARE — LAST CHANCE THIS MONTH

March is your last chance to prune apple and pear trees before the buds burst. It is also the final opportunity to plant bare-root fruit trees and canes such as blackcurrants, while they are still dormant. Potted soft fruit bushes — currants, gooseberries, and raspberries — can still be planted as the soil begins to warm.

PROTECT EARLY SOWINGS AND CROPS

Three key protection tasks to tackle this month:

- Protect early outdoor sowings with cloches, mini-tunnels, or fleece to guard against late frosts and cold nights
- Protect brassicas (cabbages, kale, broccoli) from pigeons — and our local parakeets — with fine netting. Both are persistent and will strip young plants overnight.
- Watch for slugs on emerging seedlings. Biological controls (nematodes) are the most effective and wildlife-friendly solution at this time of year.

WHAT TO HARVEST NOW

Do not neglect your winter crops whilst you focus on spring sowing. March harvest in Croydon should include purple sprouting broccoli (still excellent — pick regularly to keep it cropping), spring cabbage, kale, leeks, perpetual spinach, chard, and forced rhubarb. Winter salads under cover should still be producing well.

💡 The hungry gap begins soon

— the period between winter crops finishing and summer crops being ready. Make the most of purple sprouting broccoli and spring greens now. Succession-sown salads under cover will help bridge this gap through April and May.

New to Your Plot

Welcome to your first March! It is the most exciting month on the allotment, but also one of the most overwhelming. The key is to focus on two or three jobs and do them well, rather than rushing to do everything at once.

THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPT: HARDY VS. TENDER

Hardy crops tolerate frost and can go outdoors in March: broad beans, peas, onions, potatoes, spinach, carrots, and lettuce. Tender crops cannot tolerate frost and must stay under cover until late May: tomatoes, courgettes, runner beans, French beans, and squash. Start them in pots on a warm windowsill now, but do not plant them outside yet — a frost will kill them overnight.

WHAT NOT TO DO IN MARCH

- Do not plant tomatoes, courgettes, or runner beans outdoors — frost will kill them
- Do not work in waterlogged soil — if your boots collect mud, come back next week
- Do not try to grow everything at once — choose four or five crops and master those first



YOUR THREE PRIORITY JOBS THIS MONTH

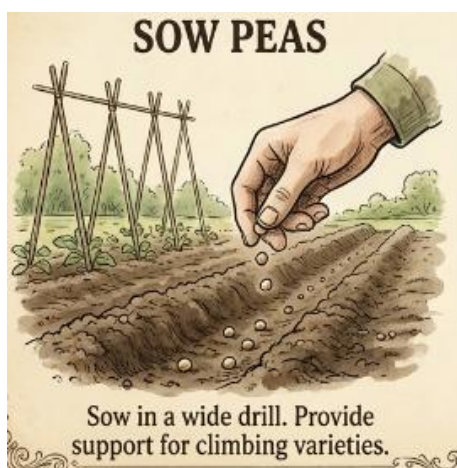
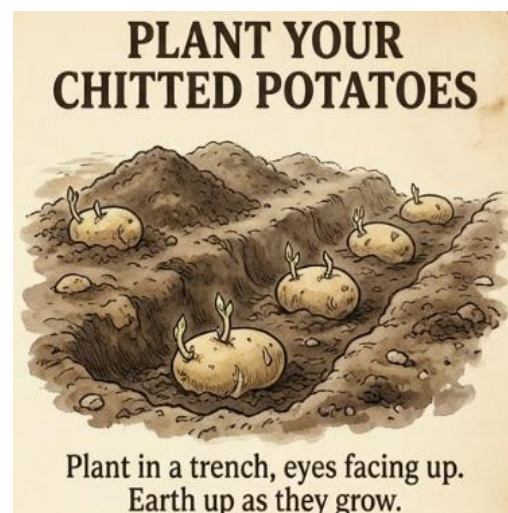


1. Plant onion sets

Buy onion sets from the Allotment Shop. Push each set gently into prepared soil until just the tip shows, 10cm apart in rows. Full planting instructions, including spacing and netting guidance, are in This Month's Growing Guide above. This is genuinely the easiest, most reliable crop on the plot — onions from July onwards, with virtually no effort.

2. Plant your chitted potatoes

If you chitted potatoes in February, they are ready to plant from mid-March once the soil is workable. Plant in trenches 10–15cm deep, 30cm apart in rows 60cm apart. Full spacing details are in the Growing Guide above. When shoots appear in two to three weeks, earth them up to protect from late frosts.



3. Sow peas

Peas are brilliantly beginner-friendly. Sow 5cm apart in rows 5cm deep — or sow in lengths of guttering under cover, then slide the whole row into a prepared trench when they reach 10cm tall. Put supports in place at the same time; peas grow quickly.

Grower's Tips

STAGGER YOUR POTATO PLANTINGS

Rather than planting all your potatoes at the same time, stagger them over three to four weeks. Plant first earlies from mid-March, second earlies from late March to early April, and maincrop from mid-April. This spreads your harvest from June through to October and reduces the impact of a late blight outbreak destroying your entire crop.

Recommended spacings: first and second earlies 30cm apart in rows 60cm apart; maincrop 37cm apart in rows 75cm apart. Label each row with the planting date and variety.



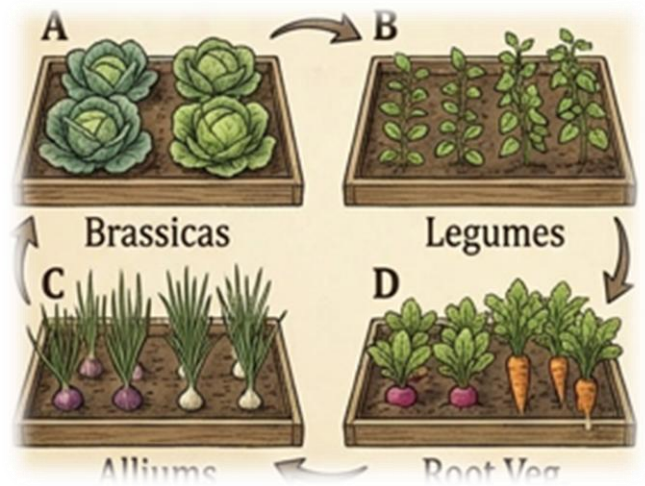
PREPARE FOR RUNNER BEANS NOW

This is the month to plan and build your runner bean supports — before you need them. Prepare supports and trenches now ready for sowing in May or planting out in June. A well-prepared trench filled with organic matter over winter gives runner beans the moisture-retentive growing medium they love. Building structures now also means they are secure before the wind picks up in spring.



USE YOUR CROP ROTATION PLAN

March is when crop rotation becomes real rather than theoretical. Before planting anything, check where each crop group went last year. As noted in this month's correction, the five RHS groups are: Brassicas, Legumes, Onions (including garlic, shallots, and leeks), Potato family (including tomatoes), and Roots. Move each group to one section. Do not follow potatoes with tomatoes, or brassicas with brassicas — soil-borne diseases build up fast. (Please refer to Red Note on Page 3)



ASPARAGUS— NOW OR NEVER

If you have been thinking about establishing an asparagus bed, March is the moment. Plant one-year-old crowns 30–45cm apart in a well-prepared trench with good drainage. You will not harvest for two years, but a well-established asparagus bed will crop for twenty years or more. It is one of the most rewarding long-term investments on an allotment.

Nature & Wildlife Garden Watch

SIGNS OF SPRING February is when nature truly begins to stir. Snowdrops should be flowering in sheltered spots, and you might spot the first crocuses. Hazel catkins are lengthening, and if you look closely, you'll see tiny red female flowers on the same branches. On mild days, butterflies – usually brimstones or peacocks that overwintered as adults – may emerge briefly to feed on early flowers.

WILDLIFE TO WATCH FOR

- **Nesting birds:** Robins, blackbirds, thrushes, and wrens are building nests. The first of March marks the official start of the UK's ground-nesting bird season. Leave undisturbed areas with dry stems, grass, and twigs as nesting material. Listen for territorial birdsong throughout the day — March is one of the most melodious months.
- **Bumblebees and solitary bees:** Queen bumblebees — buff-tailed and white-tailed queens are the most common to spot — are emerging and establishing nests. Watch for them visiting early flowers such as primroses, crocuses, and pulmonaria on warm days.
- **Butterflies:** Brimstones, peacocks, small tortoiseshells, and commas emerge on sunny days — they have overwintered as adults and need nectar urgently from early spring flowers.
- **Frogs and toads:** Peak spawning season. Look for frogspawn (clusters of jelly) and toads pawn (long strings) in the Wildlife Field pond. Listen for croaking on mild evenings.

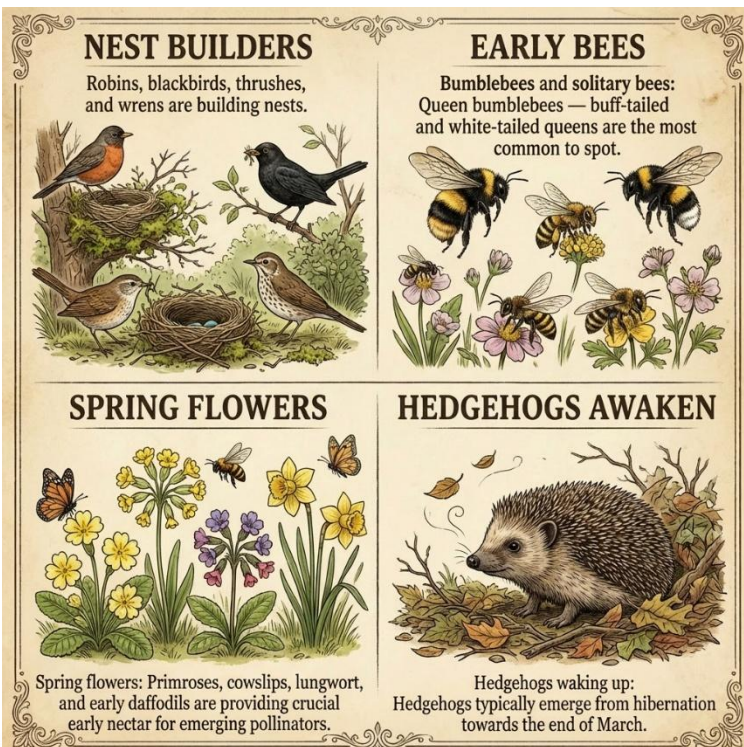
HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Avoid trimming hedges or clearing undergrowth from March through August — nesting birds will abandon nests if disturbed
- Leave small piles of dry grass, moss, and twigs for birds to collect as nesting material
- Keep bird baths and shallow water dishes topped up — birds and hedgehogs both need fresh water throughout March

♥ The frogs spawning in the Wildlife Field pond will become hundreds of froglets by midsummer, spreading across the whole site and eating slugs. Every frog protected in the pond now means less damage to your crops later. Nature is working in your favour.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE WILDLIFE FIELD

- **Spring flowers:** Primroses, cowslips, lungwort, and early daffodils are providing crucial early nectar for emerging pollinators.
- **Leaf burst:** Trees and hedges are coming into leaf. Hawthorn and blackthorn blossom is beginning to appear, providing the first insect food of spring.
- **Hedgehogs waking up:** Hedgehogs typically emerge from hibernation towards the end of March — earlier in mild years. They will be foraging at night to replenish fat reserves after winter. Leave wild areas undisturbed and provide a shallow dish of fresh water.
- **Parakeets:** Our noisy residents are pairing up and seeking nesting sites. Beautiful to watch — but do net your new onion sets and any emerging seedlings.



From Plot to Plate

A SIMPLE SUPPER

March is your last real chance to enjoy spring greens and kale at their best before summer crops take over. This simple recipe needs nothing more than what is likely already on your plot.

Spring Greens with Garlic & Chilli

A Plot-to-Plate Recipe

Ingredients:
Freshly picked spring greens or kale, olive oil, 3 garlic cloves (sliced), 1 red chilli (chopped) or generous pinch chilli flakes, lemon, salt, pepper.
Optional: Pasta, Parmesan, pine nuts.

Instructions:

1. Roughly shred greens, discard tough stems. Blanch in boiling salted water 2-3 mins until tender-crisp. Drain well, press out water.
2. Heat oil in large frying pan. Add garlic, chilli/flakes. Cook 30 secs until fragrant.
3. Toss in greens, season well, finish with a squeeze of lemon.
4. Serve immediately as a side, or toss through pasta with Parmesan and toasted pine nuts.

Enjoy fresh from your plot!

💡 Do not discard the blanching water — it is full of nutrients and makes an excellent base for soups or risottos, particularly with kale and chard.

POEM CORNER

WINTER DIALOGUE BY JEREMY NAYDLER

*'My plants, my friends, where are you now?
You have gone, gone, withered and gone.
And a dreadful stillness deadens the air – your
life and beauty are no longer there.'*

*'We have made our home in another place,
flown so deep in our retreat we've abandoned
form, abandoned space, slipped through the
world and into the night, far away and out of
sight. Yet we're as close as the breath of your
sigh, close as the pupil of your inner eye.'*

*'My plants, my friends, I see you now: You have
come, invisibly you have come, and a
wondrous stillness enlivens the air – your life
and beauty are everywhere.'*

"**Winter Dialogue**" is a poem by Jeremy Naydler, published in his collection *Soul Gardening* (Godstow Press, first published 2006, reprinted 2011). It's a beautifully crafted short piece — a conversation between a gardener and their plants during winter, exploring themes of loss, hidden presence. Thank you, from a plot holder, for recommending this beautiful way of seeing our allotments as they sleep.

Please note: Car tyres, regardless of size or type, are strictly prohibited on the allotment site. They must not be used for decoration or as planters on any plot.