March in the allotment

As the soil starts to warm up start sowing some hardy seeds.

VEGETABLES

SOW OUTDOORS

- Beetroot
- Broad beans
- Brussels Sprouts (sow an early variety to harvest in September)
- Kohl rabi
- Leeks
- Lettuce
- Onions
- Radish (summer varieties, e.g. French Breakfast, Sparkler, Scarlet Globe)
- Shallots
- Parsnip
- Perpetual spinach
- Early turnip e.g. Purple top milan
- Peas e.g. Feltham First, Meteor (sow now for May/June crop)

HARVEST

Perpetual spinach (leaf beet), swiss chard, early sprouting broccoli, brussels sprouts, winter cauliflower, celeriac, chicory, endive, kale, leeks, parsnip, salsify, scorzonera, spinach, swede

PLANT OUTDOORS

- Jerusalem artichoke tubers
- Chitted early potatoes
- Onion sets
- Shallot sets
- Asparagus crowns

SOW OUTDOORS UNDER COVER

- Summer cabbage e.g. varieties Greyhound, Hispi, Primo, Derby Day, Stonehead, Minicole, Winnigstadt
- Carrots (sow short-rooted varieties now for a June/July crop e.g. Amsterdam Forcing, Early Nantes)
- Peppers
- Lettuce
- Spinach (summer varieties e.g. King of Denmark, Medania)

SOW UNDER HEATED COVER

- Aubergine
- Celery and celeriac (sow now to plant out in May/June)
- Greenhouse Cucumbers
- Tomatoes (sow now to plant out in May)

FRUIT

- Finish planting bare-rooted fruit trees
- Perpetual varieties of strawberry can be planted in March/April, e.g. aromel, rapella
- Bare-rooted canes of raspberry, blackberry, hybrid berry, blackcurrant, gooseberry can still be planted

2011 Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture

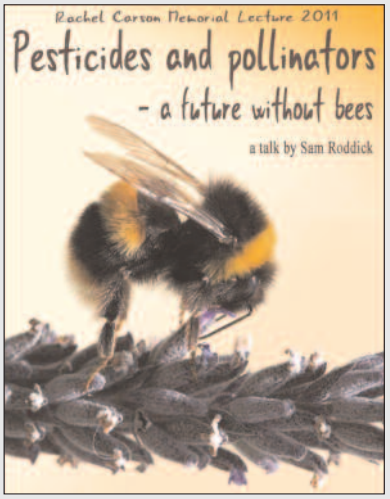
Honeybees have hit the headlines in recent years as their numbers have fallen rapidly. But how is this connected to pesticides?

It is fair to say that the precise role of pesticides in bee deaths is unclear, given the many pressures on bee populations, such as parasites and diseases. However, there are three ways in which pesticides could be part of the problem:

- Toxic pesticides with acute or chronic effects on bee health
- Pesticide exposure making bees more susceptible to parasites, microbes and viruses
- Loss of foraging habitat due to overuse of herbicides and planting of monocultures

The loss of pollinators is of deep concern, not least because we depend on them for food: it's thought that a third of our food comes from crops pollinated by insects. Dwindling insect numbers will also impact on the animal species that feed on them. Not to mention the intrinsic value of these extraordinary and fascinating creatures.

On 1 April, Sam Roddick will deliver the 2011 Rachel Carson Memorial Lecture. Come along to find out more about pollinators, the threat posed by pesticide-dependent agriculture, and what we can all do to help. The lecture will be at the Human Rights Action Centre, Shoreditch, London EC2A 3EA. Tickets £20, concess £12, contact admin@pan-uk.org. Drinks and canapes provided. For more details see www.pan-uk.org



- Grapes can still be planted
- Plant rhubarb from crowns
- Prune apple trees
- 2 to 3 year old plum trees can be pruned similar to apple trees
- Prune gooseberries, raspberries
- Compost around the base of fruit trees, particularly young trees
- Strawberries can be forced to flower by covering them with cloches. You may need to hand-pollinate forced strawberry plants coming into flower using a small paint brush

OTHER TASKS

- Place growbags in the greenhouse to warm up.
- Harvest any remaining winter crops composting the debris.
- Prepare the ground for asparagus crowns. Dig the bed deeply incorporating compost and removing perennial weeds. Asparagus needs good drainage - incorporate pea shingle in a heavy clay soil to improve drainage and/or consider making a raised bed.
- Warm up soil by covering with plastic, fleece or cloches.
- If you have already prepared some beds but are not planning on planting them until until May/June try planting a green manure crop such as mustard or tares. These can be incorporated into the ground 2 or 3 weeks before planting in May/June.

Carrot Root Fly

When planting carrots you should try to protect them from their main pest, the carrot root fly (*Psila rosae*). These small black flies (8mm in length) lay eggs in the soil near carrots with larvae emerging to feed about a week later. First symptoms of attack are a reddening of the carrot leaves which then begin to wilt. Affected carrots have tunnels eaten by the larvae and the creamy coloured larvae, about 1cm long, may be visible.

There are usually two generations of flies. The first generation is laid by over-wintering adults in April/May with a second generation laid in July/August. Carrots growing at these times are vulnerable to attack. More damage is caused by the second generation.

Preventing damage from carrot root fly

- Cover the crop with a barrier to prevent the flies from laying eggs near carrots. Fleece works well but remember to bury the edges to prevent the flies from going under. Mulching the ground with a layer of grass clippings will also make it more difficult for the flies to lay eggs in the soil.
- When carrot root flies are in flight they stay low. Surrounding the carrot bed with a barrier of polythene extending at least 60cm high can deter them.
- It is thought that carrot root flies detect carrots by smell which is particularly strong during thinning. Various strategies may minimise this smell
  - Planting several rows of onions or garlic between each row of carrots. Rosemary, sage or wormwood plantings may also work.
  - Sow sparsely to avoid having to thin seedlings.
  - Dust with calcified seaweed to disguise the smell.
  - Remove thinnings and other waste from the area.
- Time plantings so roots are not in the ground during egg laying periods.
- Sow a resistant variety. 'Carrot F1 Fly Away' and 'T&M Fly Away' have resistance to larval attack. 'Sytan' is also less susceptible to larval attack.
- Avoid particularly susceptible varieties such as 'Autumn King'.
- Carrot root flies are not strong fliers so planting in an exposed, windy site can prevent their attack.

This troublesome pest can affect related crops (in the apiaceae family) such as parsnips, celery, celeriac, parsley, coriander.

PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK *UK*

Pesticide Action Network *UK* (PAN *UK*) is an independent non-profit organisation working nationally and globally with individuals and organisations who share our concerns. PAN *UK* projects enable us to work effectively towards specific targets to enable us to:

- Eliminate the hazards of pesticides
- Reduce dependence on pesticides
- Promote alternatives to pesticides

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