



April in the allotment

VEGETABLES

SOW OUTDOORS

- * Beetroot and turnip
- * Peas and broad beans
- * Broccoli
- * Brussels sprouts
- * Cabbage
- * Carrots
- * Chard
- * Endive
- * Kale
- * Kohl rabi
- * Leeks
- * Lettuce
- * Spinach and perpetual spinach
- * Radish

SOW OUTDOORS UNDER COVER

- * French beans
- * Squash (e.g. courgettes, marrows, pumpkins)
- * Greenhouse cucumbers (e.g. Conqueror, Telegraph)
- * Lettuce
- * Sweet Corn

SOW UNDER HEATED COVER

- * Aubergine
- * Celery
- * Outdoor cucumbers (e.g. Burpless Tasty Green)

PLANT OUTDOORS

- * Globe artichoke
- * Jerusalem artichoke tubers
- * Chitted potatoes (second earlies and maincrops)
- * Asparagus
- * Onion/shallot sets

PLANT IN GREENHOUSE

- * Aubergine
- * Peppers
- * Tomatoes



Pesticide exposure linked to skin cancer

A new study published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* indicates that sun exposure may not be the only major factor in risk of melanoma for agricultural workers. Researchers from the University of Iowa, the National Institute of Environmental Health Science, and the National Cancer Institute found that repeated exposure to maneb, mancozeb, parathion and carbaryl doubled the risk of this particularly dangerous form of skin cancer. The research, part of the federal government's long-term Agricultural Health Study, looked at cancer rates among 56,285 pesticide applicators living in Iowa and North Carolina. While the overall melanoma rates among the study's participants were low, the study has serious implications for those exposed to these particular pesticides. Maneb and mancozeb are approved for use on farms in the UK.

Pesticide use and cutaneous melanoma in pesticide applicators in the Agricultural Health Study, LK Dennis, CF Lynch, DP Sandler, MCR Alavanja, Environmental Health Perspectives, 2010, doi: 10.1289/ehp.0901518 (available at <http://dx.doi.org/>) Online 17 February 2010.

FRUIT

PLANTING

- * Fruit trees are coming out of dormancy so all bare-rooted fruit trees should already have been planted.
- * Strawberry can be planted in March/April, but it is best to remove flowers in the first year.

OTHER FRUIT TASKS

- * Compost around the base of fruit trees, especially young ones.
- * Weed around the base of young fruit trees to help them get established.
- * Sow melon seeds under cover to plant in the greenhouse in May. Cantaloupe varieties do best in unheated greenhouses.
- * Hand-pollinate peaches/nectarines (use a soft paint brush) - they flower early when there are not many pollinating insects.
- * Strawberries can be forced to flower by covering them with cloches. Hand-pollinate the forced plants if necessary.

Wireworms

Wireworms are the larvae of the garden click beetle, *Athous haemorrhoidalis* and the common click beetle, *Agriotes lineatus*. They attack the underground parts of plants, damaging roots, tubers, corms and stems. Potatoes are particularly susceptible but they also attack beetroots and carrots. When numbers of wireworm are high they may also attack the roots of strawberries, brassicas, beans, tomatoes and many seeds/seedlings.



Photo: www.oisal.org

Damage can occur all year but is concentrated in spring and autumn. Small holes 2-3mm across appear on the outside of tuber or root crops. Cutting them open often reveals a network of tunnels which allow other pests and diseases to gain entry. Slugs and woodlice may be found, and bacterial and fungal rots may develop making the crop unsuitable for storage. On roots and stems small blackened pits can be seen and the plants may suddenly wilt and die. In tomato, wireworm may tunnel into the stems and upwards into the pith.

The female click beetle lays eggs just below the soil surface from May to June. They prefer grassland and weedy soil and so land that is newly cultivated is more susceptible to wireworm than well-cultivated soil. A month after egg-laying small white larvae hatch and feed on both living and dead plant material in the soil. They grow up to 3cm long and develop a tough golden brown skin with three pairs of short legs. The larval period can last for up to four years. Larvae move through the soil profile in response to changes in moisture and temperature. In warm soils (above 10°C) they feed close to the soil surface while in hot or cold weather the larvae move deeper in search of ideal conditions. Most crop damage occurs in the late spring/early summer, and early autumn, as the soil temperatures are most favourable at these times. Eventually the larvae construct pupal cells at about 20 to 30 cm depth in the soil, pupate over winter and emerge during the following summer and early autumn to mate.

Numbers of wireworm can be reduced by

- ◆ thoroughly turning soil in autumn, and before planting, to expose wireworm to their predators such as birds, frog beetles.
- ◆ checking homemade compost before use and expose to predators if necessary.
- ◆ harvesting susceptible crops early if ground is known to be infested with wireworm
- ◆ burying raw potatoes in a number of places about 10-15cm below the soil surface. These should be removed from time to time and any wireworm destroyed
- ◆ Before planting crops bury a net of pre-soaked grain about 10cm down in the soil (a mix of half wheat, half corn pre-soaked for 24 hours to promote germination works well). The soil around the bait can be heated by covering with black plastic. The bait should be removed regularly and wireworm destroyed. More details are available at <http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/icm/2003/4-21-2003/trapwire.html>

OTHER TASKS

- * Place growbags in the greenhouse to warm up
- * Harvest the remainder of the winter-harvest crop and compost any debris
- * Propagate perennial herbs such as rosemary and lavender. Cut a few inches below a shoot tip, remove the lower leaves from the cutting and place the cut end in perlite in a humid, shaded environment. The relative success rate of rooting and the time required depends on which species is being propagated.
- * Grass will grow rapidly in April/May so it is time to get the lawnmower out of the shed and into action



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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