



## **Your monthly gardening checklists - March**

### **Flowers**

- Pick off any developing seedheads on daffodils and other spring bulbs, but leave the foliage to die back naturally
- Finish pruning roses early in the month
- Cut dogwoods, willows, cotinus and paulownia right down to the base to promote vigorous new growth
- Start sowing hardy annuals outdoors, including California poppies, nasturtiums and opium poppies
- Tidy up alpinas as they start to flower, removing dead foliage, then mulch with grit to keep the foliage off damp soil
- Plant faded forced bulbs out in the garden for blooms next year
- Plant lilies and other summer-flowering bulbs in pots and borders
- Feed ericaceous shrubs, such as rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and pieris, with an ericaceous fertiliser
- Tidy up borders, removing established and newly-germinating weeds, then mulch generously with garden compost
- Plant new roses and other shrubs and climbers
- Sow native wildflower seeds in trays or modules, to produce plants for your own mini-meadow
- Check tender new shoots for aphids, and remove before infestations get out of hand
- Continue deadheading spring flowers and any remaining winter bedding so they don't set seed
- Scatter general-purpose fertiliser over flowerbeds and around roses, shrubs and hedges

## Fruit and veg

- Avoid carrot root fly by sowing an early crop of carrots under cloches or fleece
- Sow tomatoes, chillies, sweet peppers and aubergines in pots indoors
- Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers, at a depth of 10-15cm, spaced about 30cm apart
- Buy young herbs to plant in containers near your back door, for handy pickings
- Plant onion and shallot sets, spacing them 10-15cm apart, and keep the bed free of weeds
- Make the first outdoor sowings of hardy veg, such as spinach, covering with cloches or fleece
- Plant early potatoes in trenches on the veg plot, or in large tubs if space is limited
- Sow parsnips as soon as the soil starts to warm up, as they're slow to germinate and need a long growing season
- Plant a fig tree in a large container to restrict its roots, which encourages fruiting and limits its overall size
- Feed cabbages and other brassicas with nitrogen-rich fertiliser, such as pelleted chicken manure
- Plant bare-root asparagus crowns in well-drained soil or raised beds, in an open, sunny spot
- Start hoeing veg beds as soon as the weather starts to warm up, as weeds will germinate quickly
- Plant strawberries in a hanging basket to keep the fruits away from slugs

## Greenhouse

- Get crops off to a good start indoors to transplant into the garden later, such as celeriac, celery, lettuces and parsley
- Take down bubble insulation in the greenhouse once temperatures start to rise, to let in more light
- Sow a selection of vibrant annual climbers, such as Spanish flag (*Ipomoea lobata*) and black-eyed Susan (*Thunbergia alata*)
- Buy good value young bedding plants for growing on to a larger size under glass, or sow your own in a heated propagator
- Sow dwarf French beans in a large pot for an early indoor crop in June
- Plant prepared freesia bulbs in pots of rich, loam-based compost, for fragrant flowers indoors this summer
- Pot up overwintering cannas into fresh compost, water in, then place in a warm spot to spur them into growth
- Sow sweet peas in deep pots and keep them frost-free in a greenhouse or on a sunny windowsill
- Take cuttings from dahlia tubers planted last month to raise new plants
- Protect greenhouse sowings of beans, peas, mangetouts and sweet peas from hungry mice
- Be vigilant for greenhouse and houseplant pests, such as mealy bugs, and treat straight away
- Open greenhouse vents on sunny days to prevent humidity building up
- Sow coleus on a warm windowsill to enjoy their vibrant foliage indoors or in tropical-style displays outside
- Take basal cuttings from perennials, such as delphiniums and lupins, to root in a pot indoors

## Garden maintenance

- Mow lawns once they start back into growth, and re-cut the edges with a half-moon edging tool
- Build or buy a new compost bin, ready to recycle the coming season's garden waste
- Dig out a new pond, or install a water feature, to attract more wildlife
- Put slug barrier products around the new shoots of hostas and other susceptible perennials
- Replant pots of bulbs from indoors into borders, once the display is over, then water in well and apply liquid feed
- Check that tree ties aren't too tight and that stakes are still firmly anchored in the ground
- Prune out any wind-damaged branches on trees and shrubs
- Fork up emerging shoots of perennial weeds, such as ground elder, removing every bit of root

- Place bug boxes or bundles of hollow stems in sheltered corners, where insects can lay their eggs
- Keep putting out food for garden birds, as the breeding season gets underway
- Chop down winter-grown green manure and dig into the soil, to get the veg plot ready for sowing
- Cut back winter-flowering jasmine to keep it within bounds and encourage flowers next year
- Give blackcurrant bushes a high-nitrogen feed

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