

What To Plant And Do In the Food Garden In MAY

By John Ditchburn (Ditchy), The Backyard Food Gardener www.urbanfoodgarden.org

WHAT TO PLANT IN MAY (mild coastal & warm inland) *

FROM SEED	FROM SEEDLING	IN SEEDLING BOXES #
BROAD BEANS	BROCCOLI ^X	CABBAGE ^X & <u>CABBAGE</u> ^X
GARLIC	CABBAGE ^X	LETTUCE & <u>LETTUCE</u>
PEA	LETTUCE	ONION
ROCKET	PAK CHOI ^{1X}	PAK CHOI ¹ & <u>PAK CHOI</u> ¹
SPINACH	SPRING ONION	SPRING ONION
SPRING ONION		

* Key vegetables only, not all vegetables that can be planted at this time are listed. # Sow in seedling boxes for planting out in four to six weeks time. 1 Best sown in single cell seedling trays as these seedlings don't like their roots being disturbed when transplanted. X Prone to cabbage butterfly damage when grown this time of year. (Parenthesis) Grow in greenhouse or temporary polytunnel. DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in glass/plastic covered seedling box. RED DOUBLE UNDERLINED

WHAT TO DO IN THE VEGGIE PATCH

- Lift any beds that still have summer crops in them and prepare them for spring plantings.

- Plant broad beans and garlic.

They both like alkali soil so add a handful of lime per square metre. Broad beans will do better with a handful of sulphate of potash per square metre after they have emerged from the ground.



When harvesting pumpkins leave about fifteen centimetres of stalk on the pumpkin.

- Harvest your pumpkins before a heavy frost strikes and store in a dry place with good ventilation.

When harvesting pumpkins leave about fifteen

centimetres of stalk sticking out, if the stalk is removed at the base it creates an exposed area where bacteria can enter. Pumpkins with damaged skins or without a stalk attached should be eaten first. Store pumpkins in a dry place with good ventilation. If you are unable to store them in a dry place then lay them on their sides so that the hollow at the top of the pumpkin does not fill with water.



Store pumpkins in a dry place with good ventilation. These pumpkins have been stored in an old bird aviary.

- Plant onions in seedling boxes for planting out as seedlings in August.

The simplest way to do this is plant them in a styrofoam box that has been filled ¾ full of compost or good soil then covered with a couple of centimetres of seed raising mix. If the box is watertight then drill some holes in the bottom.

- **Apply a heavy layer of mulch to beds that are being fallowed.**

An alternative is to sow fallowed beds with a green manure crop. This is a crop that is left to grow for a while before being turned into the soil to boost organic matter. Traditionally winter green manure crops were made up of barley, wheat and oats but pre mixed modern combinations may also include lucerne, barley, beet, broad beans, clover, corn salad, dun pea, endive, fava bean, fenugreek and kale. Another option is to plant your old and unwanted seeds as a manure crop instead of throwing them out.

- **Beds with winter crops in them can be left bare (to promote warmer soil) or only lightly mulched as weeds tend not to be as big a problem in winter.**

Any weeds that do come up can be controlled by regular hoeing using a wire weeder or single pronged hoe. These hoes are designed to break up the surface soil, this action kills small weeds and prevents germinating weed seeds from taking hold.

- **Lift tomato plants that still have tomatoes on them and hang them up upside down in a dry place with good ventilation.**

As the plant dries off many of the remaining tomatoes will ripen up.

WHAT TO DO IN THE GREENHOUSE

- **If you have an automatic watering system then switch off all the outlets to the garden and reduce the time and frequency of outlets in the greenhouse and to covered verandah pots.**

- **Pull out the remaining summer greenhouse crops and plant lettuce seedlings and rocket and peas.**

Leave some space for later plantings of lettuce seedlings in June and July and a place for a propagation box to start growing next season's seedlings in August.

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN

- **Spray peach and nectarine trees at leaf fall with Bordeaux mix to control leaf curl.**
- **Apply dolomite around stone fruit trees. You can also use sieved fire ash.**
- **Start winter pruning fruit trees that have cast their leaves.**



May is a good time to do development projects such as building a new raised bed.

- **Finish pruning berry bushes and heavily mulch around them.**
- **Do some garden development projects.**

May is a good time to do some garden development projects as there is less day to day garden work to do and there will still be some milder weather before the really bad winter weather sets in. Projects like adding raised beds or extending paths are all easier to do at this time of the year.

- **Carry out maintenance on tools and equipment.**

Give all blades a good sharpening, spray all metal parts with lubricant and oil wooden handles. Replace any handles that are very old or damaged. Hang bird nets on a washing line and pick out any twigs caught in them.