



Gardening notes for April:

Well spring has definitely arrived this month, and if you are able to dodge the showers it's a lovely time to be in the garden. All that fresh new growth, blossom and the potential for wonderful harvests on the veg patch.

The lawn should now be cut regularly with the blades gradually being lowered to their summer height. If lawns are your thing then it's time for a spring feed, personally I am happy not to feed as it makes it grow faster! However, if your lawn has heavy use or is looking sick it may be beneficial. Always follow the instructions regards dosing and when to apply. If you can learn to love your lawn weeds – although I would always remove dandelions. It gives a more diverse habitat and perhaps some clover flowers for the bees. Also, the weeds may well stay green for longer than the grass if we have a drought! If you feel the need to apply weed killers, then again ensure the instructions are followed carefully. Now is a good time to lay a new lawn turf or seed or to repair an existing one. If you have bare patches you can rack over the area to expose soil and then sprinkle with lawn seed. Again, there will be instructions on the packet and you can buy different types of grass for different situations, shady, heavy use etc.

It's a good time for planting seeds, both in seed trays and directly into the garden. As I have mentioned before, follow the instructions on the packet. If you are planting indoors in seed trays remember that seedlings are prone to fungal infections – commonly called damping off. To avoid this happening ensure that you don't sow the seeds too thickly, this will ensure there is good air circulation between each seedling. Also, don't overwater and ideally water by standing the trays in water until the surface is damp rather than watering from above.

Get ready for new growth starting as the weather warms up by tying in climbers and ensuring any patio pots are watered if its dry. It's a good idea to add slow release fertiliser to patio pots.

It's a good time of year to plan for colour in patio pots, and there will be plenty of options in the garden centre, however still be wary of frosts, watch the forecast and have some fleece handy.

Even if you have limited space why not try growing some veg. Especially successful are salad leaves, grow them in a pot (I would recommend a minimum of 8-inch diameter) by the back door, then you can harvest them when making sandwiches, there are seeds sold specifically for cutting as salad leaves. Use copper tape round the top to stop slugs from helping themselves and ensure there is nothing they can use as a bridge to get to your crop. There

are other veg suitable for growing in pots, look out for varieties specifically bred for this, perhaps tomatoes or chillies.

Spring is the time to feed houseplants and water regularly. If you have orchids soak the compost once a week and then allow to drain completely before putting back in position as they hate sitting in wet conditions.

Don't forget the wildlife this month, the birds will be grateful for food as they start to raise their broods. Water is important both for the birds, mammals and insects- why not have a dish of water on the ground as well as a bird bath. When you are planning new planting/ patio pots choose open flowers where the pollen and nectar is more accessible to bees and other insects.