

March in flowers

Seeds to sow

HARDY ANNUALS

Towards the end of the month is the perfect time to start sowing hardy annuals. Wait for the weeds to start germinating to show that your soil is ready. Don't follow everyone else; they are probably sowing too early.

A heat mat and a greenhouse will help get things off to a flying start, but waiting for the weather to warm will give you good strong plants, more sustainably, and with much less stress.

- / Agrostemma (corncockle)
- / Ammi majus
- / Bladder campion
- / Borage
- / Bronze Fennel
- / Calendula
- / Chicory
- / Cornflowers
- / Cerinthe
- / Grasses (all of them!)
- / Larkspur
- / Nigellas
- / Opium poppies
- / *Orlaya grandiflora*
- / Scabiosa

STARTING PERENNIALS

My flower field, Malus Farm, is being guided more and more by regenerative principles and that means the surface of the soil should be covered, and the underneath of the soil should be as undisturbed as possible. & that means as much permanent planting - perennials - as possible.

It is still early in the season so I would recommend starting under glass if you possibly can, unless your climate is exceptionally mild. Some perennials will like a period of cold before bursting into life in the spring, so do some research on those which will need to feel the winter and pre-chill in your freezer.

- / Achillea
- / Verbascum
- / Perennial grasses
- / Astrantia
- / Lady's mantle
- / *Cephalaria gigantea*
- / Hollyhocks
- / Dianthus (Try *D.carthusianorum*)
- / Echinaceas (I favour *E.pallida*)
- / The big textural plants such as Echinops and Eryngium
- / Baptisia
- / Bupleurum
- / All the heucharas

Flowers to harvest

EARLY SIGNS OF LIFE

- / Narcissi
- / The first early tulips
- / Cherry blossom
- / Brunnera
- / Amelanchier blossom
- / Early fritillaria
- / Hellebores

Other jobs for this month

/ Water. Spring can be surprisingly dry, especially for pots stuffed with flowering spring bulbs. Water and, in the case of tulips, give a fortnightly feed.

/ Weed. Keeping the soil covered is key, even if what is covering it is not something you would have chosen. At this stage, soft annual weeds might be a good thing but bindweed never is. Pull it out.

/ Keep adding to and turning your compost heap. You will probably have a lot of greens so mix with cardboard or woodchip to create glorious, friable compost.

/ Plant out any autumn-sown hardy annuals.

/ Pinch out your winter-sown sweet peas. They might be starting to put on spring growth so increase watering.

/ Bask in the blissful, early spring sunshine. Glorious.