

April in flowers

Seeds to sow

With the exception of biennials, you can sow almost every sort of seed in April. If your soil is warm enough, direct sow. Just clear some ground, make a narrow, shallow trench in the soil, sprinkle the seed sparingly, re-cover with soil and water gently but generously.

Sow little and often. This not only protects you if one sowing doesn't thrive for some reason, but successional sowing is the key to a long, abundant flower season.

HARDY ANNUALS

There are a vast number to choose from, but these are my absolute favourite. Easy, forgiving, abundant.

- / White corncockles
- / Borage
- / Bishops flower (*Ammi majus*)
- / Love in a mist
- / Cornflowers
- / Chocolate lace flower (*Daucus carota* 'Dara', technically a biennial but they will flower in the first year)
- / Opium poppies
- / Mixed scabious
- / Greater Quaking grass
- / Bladder campion
- / Smoky fennel
- / Sweet peas
- / Cerinthe
- / Larkspur

HALF-HARDY ANNUALS

*You could start half-hardy annuals in March but I find I am so busy and the greenhouse is so full, I am better off waiting until the autumn-sown hardy annuals are all planted out. There is never enough space at this time of year. The exception to this is the lovely *Cobaea*; it needs a really long growing season so start early March on a warm windowsill or on a heat mat.*

- / Cosmos
- / Strawflowers
- / Nicotiana
- / Tagetes
- / Nasturtiums
- / Sunflowers (I adore 'Italian White' or try 'Vanilla Ice')

Flowers to harvest

- / The last narcissi
- / An abundance of tulips
- / Blossom, quince & amelanchier
- / Brunnera
- / Fritillaria
- / Ravenswing, the black cow parsley
- / Solomon's seal
- / Very early clematis
- / The first red & white champions
- / Early varieties of irises
- / Grape hyacinths

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.

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

/ Celebrate the return of real warmth. Glorious. But don't pack away your woollens yet; April is a fickle month and chilly nights are still possible.