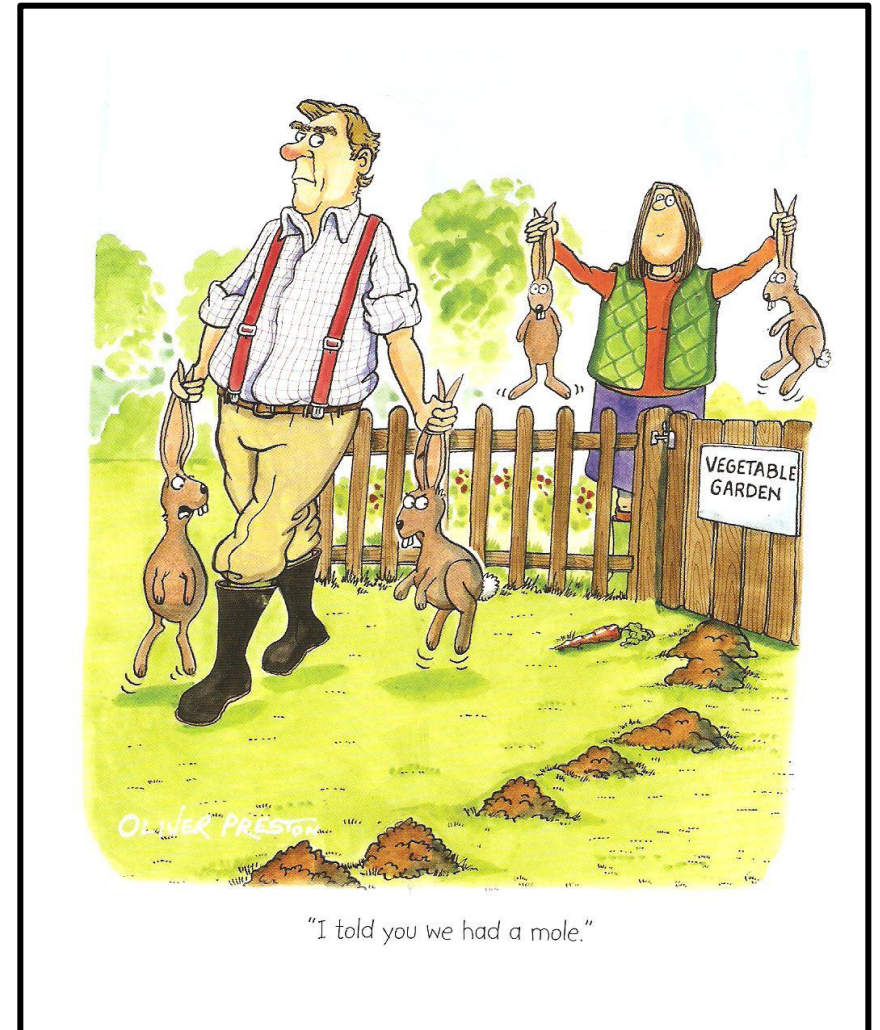


Ash Parish Garden Club

www.ashparishgardenclub.org.uk



Monthly Newsletter Mar 2019

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>TEL NO</u>
Chairman	Mr J Poole "MEADCOTT" Badshot Lea Rd	01252 319621
Secretary	Mrs. B Ames 97 Longacre, Ash	01252 686303
Treasurer	Mr. Ian Chant 145 Carfax Ave, Tongham	01252 329767
Show Secretary	Mrs. B Winton 2 Elm Hill, Normandy	01252 333756
Social Secretary	Mrs. H Chant 145 Carfax Ave, Tongham	01252 329767
Victoria Hall Rep	Mr. Brian Perry 9 Drake Avenue Mytchett	01252 542341
Mag Editor	Mr. Brian Perry 9 Drake Avenue Mytchett	01252 542341
Prog Secretary	Mrs P Slack 16 Firacre Road, Ash Vale	01252 311210

MAGAZINE CONTENTS

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS	1
MAGAZINE CONTENTS.....	1
EDITORS NOTES	1
R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY	2
DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.....	2
APRIL FOOL	2
THIS MONTHS RECIPE.....	3
GARDENING CALENDAR MARCH.....	4
POETS CORNER	7
APGC TRIPS FOR 2019.....	8
CLUB EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES –.....	8
HDRA CRASH COURSE ON FLYING PESTS.....	9
FIVE STEPS TO GROWING GREAT PEPPERS	12

EDITORS NOTES

Brian –Stories to ernestperry33@gmail.com hard copy to Chris

R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY

We are affiliated to the RHS who's benefits include competitive insurance cover, free gardening advice, a free group visit to an RHS garden, (54 members to visit Wisley *club trip in Summer*) access to medals (*Banksian medal*) and show stationery and a free monthly copy of The Garden magazine (*see Brenda Winton if you wish to view*). Our membership number is 10564709.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SPRING SHOW	6 April
PLANT SALE	11 May
RHS Malvern (spring)	9 - 12 May
RHS Chelsea	21 - 25 May
SUMMER SHOW	1 July
Gardeners World Live	13 - 16 June
RHS Hampton Court	1 - 7 July
RHS Tatton Park	17 - 21 July
AUTUMN SHOW	7 Sep
RHS Malvern (autumn)	28 - 29 Sep

APRIL FOOL

April Fool's Day next month, and if you're the mischievous type you probably had a lot of fun thinking of creative ways to trick your friends and family.

Amongst our local wildlife are some of the best tricksters around, and while we don't recommend you take inspiration from these sneaky species (you'd almost certainly end up in court) you may be interested to know some of the ingenious methods they employ to deceive their predators and prey.

Cuckoos

Cuckoos are migratory birds, arriving in Britain around April and heralding the start of spring with their signature 'cuck-oo' call. To us this bird is a welcome harbinger of the new season, but to the birds that share its habitat the cuckoo signals something far more insidious (not that they'd know).

Adult cuckoos are 'brood-parasites', meaning they lay their eggs in other birds' nests to fool them into raising their young for them. Once the cuckoo chick hatches it pushes the other eggs out of the nest, so the poor, deluded mother bird has only her

oversized imposter to feed. Dunnocks, meadow pipits and reed warblers are common victims of this 'cuckolding' behaviour.

Any time now cuckoos should be arriving at Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust's Fishlake Meadows nature reserve near Romsey.

Bee orchids

The bee orchid is a master of mimicry and has evolved to look like its main pollinator - the longhorn bee. This draws in amorous bees looking to find a mate, and when they land on the flower the pollen is transferred. This is a wonderfully efficient system for the orchid, but the bee is invariably disappointed.

Bizarrely, longhorn bees are rarely found in the UK so the bee orchids here appear to be self-pollinated. The bee orchid is at its best in parched, sunny habitats and can be abundant where the ground has been disturbed. They can also be found on Noar Hill, Farlington Marshes and Blashford Lakes nature reserves.

Peacock butterflies

Peacock butterflies are a striking and unmistakable species, easily identifiable by the blue and yellow markings on their wings. To potential predators these markings look like two large eyes, making the butterfly appear far more threatening than it really is.

Conversely, when its wings are closed, the peacock butterfly takes on the appearance of a dead leaf - a protective and highly effective camouflage. Peacock butterflies are widespread across the UK and at their most abundant in the summer months.

THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Bacon and egg fried rice (nice & easy)

SERVES 2 TIME 20 MINS

You will need

- 2 large eggs
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 x 80g pack bacon lardons (or 100g chopped streaky bacon)
- 250g frozen mixed vegetables (we used a frozen stir-fry vegetable pack)
- 3 spring onions or 1 small onion, sliced
- 1 tbsp grated ginger
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 x 250g pouch cooked rice
- 1 tbsp light soy sauce, plus more to serve

To do

1 Mix the eggs with the sesame oil and some seasoning. Heat half the vegetable oil in a wok or deep frying pan and cook the eggs, continually stirring, until you have scrambled egg. Set aside in a bowl.

2 Heat another teaspoon of vegetable oil and fry the bacon pieces until crisp and golden. Add the mixed vegetables, tossing everything together. Fry for another 5-6 minutes until the vegetables have defrosted and are just tender. Add the onion (reserve a few of the green spring-onion tops if using), ginger and garlic, and stir-fry for a minute, then add the rice, breaking up into the veg as you mix. Fry for another 2-3 minutes until piping hot.

3 Season with the soy sauce, and add the scrambled egg back to the wok, folding everything together. Serve in bowls with a drizzle more soy sauce and the reserved spring onion greens (if using). A drizzle of chilli sauce wouldn't go amiss here.

GARDENING CALENDAR MARCH**March, Week One**

This is a busy time in the garden. The weather is becoming spring like and the evenings are brighter. All the jobs you put off since Christmas need to be tackled. Deciduous shrubs and trees are bursting into growth along with the weeds and the lawn.

1. Time-saving tip: Eliminate grass corners. Curve the edges to remove awkward bits of lawn which are difficult to cut. Plant up or hard surface where the turf is lifted.
2. Money-saving tip: This is a good time to apply a mulch of composted bark. A two inch (5 cm) deep layer spread on the surface, before the soil dries out, will deter weeds. Spreading newspapers between the soil and the mulch will slow down the rate the bark decomposes. It should last for an extra two years.
3. As soon as possible start cutting the grass. If it has not been cut since last autumn it will be long and tufted and hard work. Choose a dry day, cut it to three inches and remove the cuttings. The same day, or soon after, cut it again to half its height. Don't put it out of your mind. It will be easier to cut when short in about 10 days.
4. It's useful to make early outdoor sowings of salad vegetables such as scallions (spring onions), lettuce, radish and rocket. Providing the soil is not wet and sticky, cultivate and rake over the surface. Cover the area with clear polythene for a week before sowing. This will warm the soil up and get the seed off to a good start. Next week we will start sowing.
5. This is the best time to move snowdrops. It is called "moving in the green". Once the flowers have faded dig up the plants. Take care not to damage the bulb or

the foliage. Tease out the clumps and transplant straight away at the same depth. Water to settle the soil around the roots.

6. Cut back *Buddleia davidii*, the butterfly bush, to within six inches of the older wood. Plants which have been neglected for years may be cut to waist height. They will be rejuvenated, probably flowering this summer.

7. If you have recently bought a camellia with flower buds you may, for your enjoyment, keep it in the conservatory or porch until after it has flowered. Don't allow the compost to dry out.

8. Keep an eye on your favourite hostas which will be starting into growth. Slugs and snails love them, removing the shoots before the leaves can open. Use beer or citrus skins on a daily basis to trap enemy number 1.

March, Week two

There is no shortage of jobs that need to be started. These should keep you busy but try to find time for a stroll in the garden to admire the results of your past labours.

1. Time Saving Tip: Sow carrots thinly in rows to avoid spending time (and getting a sore back) removing surplus seedlings. The smell of the crushed foliage attracts the carrot fly pest.

2. Money Saving Tip: Allow crocus growing in the lawn to produce seed before cutting that area of grass. They will quickly multiply.

3. St.Patrick's Day or the Ides of March, two days won't make any difference but now is the time to prune your bush roses. Cut out the old branches as close to ground level as possible. Remove thin shoots. Cut the younger growths back to 6-8 inches above an outward pointing bud. Remove the prunings.

4. The showy winter shrubs with their coloured bark are starting to leaf up. Cut all the stems of *Cornus alba*, red dogwood and *Cornus stolonifera* *Flaviramea*, yellow stemmed dogwood, to within a few inches of the ground. The new stems will be a much brighter colour for next winter.

5. Fruit trees and bushes will benefit from a high potash feed. Potato manure fertilizer at a handful to each plant in the area of the roots will guarantee better fruit. A liquid feed of tomato fertilizer on the strawberries will work wonders)

6. Don't be tempted to use freshly cut willow or poplar branches for pea or bean supports. They root like weeds. It is embarrassing to end up with a garden full of pussy willow!

7. Edge the lawn and repair any bald or damaged areas. Loosen the soil and sow grass seed. Protect the patch with clear polythene or cling film. Hold it in place with pegs until the seed has germinated.

March, Week Three

Hopefully grass cutting is well under control. About now you may give one cut leaving the clippings on the grass. They will soon disappear putting some nutrients back into the soil.

1. Time Saving Tip: When the soil is wet or heavy rain is expected don't use the hoe to weed. It tends to pull small weeds out by the root. If they are not lifted they will reroot. You will be guilty of transplanting weeds!

2. Money Saving Tip: Dissolve washing soda crystals in hot water and brush over paths and patios to remove green algae. It is cheaper than chemicals off the garden centre shelf.

A new lawn may be sown anytime in the next 8 weeks. Cultivate and level the ground, removing debris and stones. If there is time allow a crop of weeds to germinate. Spray them with a contact weedkiller or rake them off immediately before sowing the grass seed. The lawn will get a head start before more weeds germinate.

4. Herbaceous plants are starting to grow and this is a good time to take an "Irish man's cutting". Pulling pieces of rooted stem off the side of the clump works with Michaelmas daisy, Golden rod and Day lily. Pot them up or plant out in the flower bed.

5. Weeds are manic at the moment. Perennials such as bindweed, goutweed, nettles, buttercup and thistles are growing strongly. Control them by digging out and burning the roots. Glyphosate weed killer will eventually kill most weeds but it may take more than one application. Spray on a dry, calm day taking all the recommended safety precautions.

6. Winter flowering heathers are looking a bit sad with the dead flower heads becoming tatty. Clip them over with hedge clippers removing most of the old flower stalks. This encourages new growths from low on the branches, keeping the heathers compact. If they are not removed, eventually the plants become straggly and bare along the stems.

7. Planting onion sets is fraught with problems. Don't "screw" them into hard soil. If the soil is loose they may be pushed in leaving half of the bulb exposed. Birds have a habit of pulling them out as fast as you push them back in. Try covering each onion with a small mound of sand. This will keep them in place until they root into the soil. The sand is then removed.

8. Clematis tangutica, commonly known as the orange peel clematis will be throwing new shoots from the base. The old growth from last year should be cut away to tidy the plant ready for this year's bloom.

March, Week Four

There is good news and, naturally, there is bad news. Easter is at the end of this week. British Summer Time starts so there is an extra hour of daylight in the evening and the children are off school for Easter holidays. You can decide which is the good news!

1. Time Saving Tip: Remove a circle of grass from the base of trees in the lawn and mulch with chopped bark. It will take less time to cut round the trees. There will be less collision damage to the tree trunk.

2. Money Saving Tip: Leather jackets are grubs which eat the roots of grass resulting in a patchy and yellow lawn. If there are birds, especially starlings, on your lawn every morning it is a sign of this pest. The easiest way to get rid of them is to lay black polythene on the lawn in the evening and remove it early next morning. The grubs will have come to the surface where the birds can see and dispose of them.

3. Last week I promised to tell you how to sow grass seed. Sow it at a rate of 45 grams (1.5 ozs) to the square metre. Rake it into the soil surface using short strokes to prevent moving the seed. If the soil is loose roll the surface after sowing. An

application of lime is useful if the soil is acid. A general purpose granular fertilizer at 60 grams (2 ozs) per square metre, raked in before or at the same time as seeding, will get the seed growing strongly.

4. Sweet pea loves a deep, rich soil which allows its roots to go deep in search of water and nutrients. Dig a 3 ft deep trench where the sweet peas will be planted. Separate and dump the sub soil. Fill the bottom of the trench with old wet newspapers and rotted farmyard manure to retain moisture. Back fill the trench with layers of topsoil and compost. Allow to settle ready for planting at the end of April when the plants have been hardened off.

5. Japanese acers, *Acer palmatum* varieties, suffer from wind scorch and frost. The new foliage and shoots are already showing and protection should be given by forming a wigwam frame with a temporary cover of horticultural fleece.

6. Shrubs such as camellia, bay, rhododendron and holly which are grown in containers as specimen plants will enjoy a feed. Carefully remove the top inch of compost without disturbing the surface roots. Replace with fresh compost and a slow release fertilizer. Water well.

7. Prune forsythia and flowering currant (*ribes*) which have finished flowering. These shrubs flower on the previous year's growth so cut off all of the branches which flowered.

8. Ponds are coming to life and water plants are starting to grow. Check the submersible pump and clean the filters. Thin out the oxygenating plants.

POETS CORNER

A Contemplation upon Flowers

Brave flowers - that I could gallant it like you, And be as little vain!

You come abroad, and make a harmless show,

And to your beds of earth again.

You are not proud: you know your birth:

For your embroidered garments are from earth.

You do obey your months and times, but I

Would have it ever Spring:

My fate would know no Winter, never die,

Nor think of such a thing.

O that I could my bed of earth but view

And smile, and look as cheerfully as you!

O teach me to see Death and not to fear,

But rather to take truce!

How often have I seen you at a bier,

And there look fresh and spruce!

You fragrant flowers! then teach me, that my breath

Like yours may sweeten and perfume my death.

HENRY KING (1592-1669)

APGC TRIPS FOR 2019

Sun 14TH APR Wisley

Meet at Victoria Hall at 1.00pm and return at approx 5pm, cost £4 for Minibus.
Members can use own transport and meet us outside Wisley Entrance at 1:30pm

For all following garden visits a deposit of £10 is required at time of booking.

Sun 19th May Leonardslee Gardens , Horsham Cost £17 each

<https://www.leonardsleegardens.co.uk/>

Stopping off at Hilliers Garden Centre, Horsham for Lunch

<https://www.hillier.co.uk/garden-centres/locations/horsham/>

Leaving Victoria Hall at 11am, returning approx 5:30pm

Sat 8th June Houghton Lodge Gardens, Stockbridge Cost £15.50 each

<https://houghtonlodge.co.uk/>

Stopping off at Andover Garden Centre for Lunch

<https://www.wyevalegardencentres.co.uk/product/andover/2214>

Leaving Victoria Hall at 11am, returning approx 5:30pm

Sun 14TH JUL Lavender Farm Selborne Rd, Alton UK Cost £10 each

<https://www.thelavenderfields.co.uk/>

Stopping off at Avenue Nursery Lasham for Lunch <http://avenuenurseries.com/>

Leaving Victoria Hall at 11am, returning approx 5:30pm

Sun 8TH SEP Great Comp Garden, Sevenoaks

<https://greatcomparden.co.uk/> We shall be having Lunch at the Great Comp Tearoom.

This is a RHS Partner Garden.

Cost for RHS members £10 each

Cost for those without RHS membership £17.50

Leaving Victoria Hall at 10am, returning approx 5:30pm

CLUB EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES –

Please contact secretaries direct for further details.

4th Esher Molesey The History of Squires Garden Centres, with Colin Squire

Ann Beauchamp 0208-979-1415

7th Aldershot Floral Design Demo: It's only Natural, with Kate Kerr

Dee Kelly 01252-350944

13th Nat. Veg. Surrey Growing in containers, with Barry Newman. E. Horsley V.Hall

Sally Coleman 0208-399-8809

- 16th Ellens Green/Rudgwick SPRING SHOW, Rudgwick Village Hall 2.30 pm
Simon Quail 01403-822766
- 18th Epsom Seasonal Pruning, with Mark Saunders
Sue Anderson 0208-393-0892
- 20th Chiddingfold The Way to a Wimbledon Lawn, with Paul Patton
Els Trovo 01428-684548
- 20th Dorking Beneficial fungi for your plants, with Helen Thomas
Cliff Weight 01306-888286
- 21st Aldershot Floral Design Something of this Nature, with Craig Bullock
Tickets Dee Kelly 01252-350944
- 26th Tilford Herbs, growing and uses, with Belinda Allen
Janet Arm 01252-783133
- 30th Elstead SPRING SHOW, Village Hall
Kathy Deaville 01252-702630
- 30th Ewell SPRING SHOW 2.30 pm at Blenheim High School Ewell
Lynne Mason 0208-393-9257
- 30th Milford SPRING SHOW, Village Hall
S. Miskimmin 01483-421509
-

HDRA CRASH COURSE ON FLYING PESTS

'Prevention is better than cure' is a philosophy that runs deep in the veins of all organic gardeners. That's why they often control flying pests by tackling the earth-bound young as well as keeping an eye on the air-borne adults.

This article gives you hints and tips on how to cope with the many flying pests such as cabbage white butterfly and aphids (greenfly). Use a combination of techniques for maximum effect.

Let the predators take the strain

- Get to know your friends and create a garden that encourages them to stay.
- Mulching soil with organic matter such as composted bark, wood chips or homemade garden compost will encourage garden friends such as centipedes and beetles to live in your garden. They eat many insects, slugs and snails.
- Don't be too tidy. A pile of logs will provide shelter for hedgehogs, beetles and other friends. Beetles eat cabbage and carrot root fly eggs and larvae, vine weevil, New Zealand flatworms and other pests.
- Feed the birds in winter to keep them in your garden to eat your pests. One pair of blue tits and their young will eat 10,000 caterpillars a year. Hang seed and/or bacon fat from a tree. Have a bird table, and even bird box for nesting.
- Don't cut down herbaceous plants until the spring. Leave the seed heads on plants over winter; it provides valuable food for birds and a winter home for ladybirds.

- Many native plants provide valuable feeding and breeding sites for beneficial insects and garden friends. Wildlife hedges including plants such as sloe, oak and field maple will attract many pest-eating friends.
- Leave a patch of nettles; they provide valuable food early in the season for ladybirds as well as a breeding site. A ladybird eats about 5000 greenfly in its lifetime.
- Don't cut all your grass. Long grass is a breeding site for many beneficial insects.
- Many flowers attract beneficial insects such as hoverfly and lacewings that eat aphids and greenfly. Open faced annual plants such as Californian poppies and marigolds, convolvulus, poached egg plant and Phacelia are useful in the vegetable garden. Fennel, hardy geraniums, hyssop and so on are great herbaceous perennial for your flower borders.
- Anthocorid bugs live on shrubs, trees and herbaceous plants. They are voracious predators of many pests, especially on fruit trees.
- A garden pond creates a home for many garden friends to gobble up pests.

'Gardening with Beneficial Insects'- HDRA booklet 'The Small Ecological Garden, Sue Stickland (HDRA / Search Press).

Barrier methods

- Barriers are a great way of protecting plants from flying pests.
- Put the barrier in place before the pest arrives.
- Netting is the most versatile barrier: it will protect your plants from all flying pests - pigeons to flea beetles. Choose the mesh size of the net to suit the pest.
- Cabbage white butterflies: net with a mesh size less than 1cm².
- Flea beetle, cabbage root fly, carrot fly, aphids, pea moth, and other small flying pests. Use a very fine mesh or horticultural fleece. The covers can be kept over the plants throughout their life, or removed once the susceptible stage has passed.
- Mats, bought or made from carpet underlay cut to a 10cm x 10cm square, placed on the soil around the cabbage stem will prevent cabbage root fly from laying their eggs at the base of the cabbage.
- Bottle cloches will protect newly planted seedlings from birds, slugs and other pests.
- Humming lines criss-crossed over your crop will protect it from birds. Lines can be bought or made from cassette tape.

Traps

- Male codling moths (the maggots you find in your apples) as well as pear and plum moths can be enticed onto a sticky trap using a pheromone as a lure.
- Grease bands around the trunks of fruit trees trap the female wingless winter moths as they climb up the trunk to mate with their flying males.
- Trap whitefly in your greenhouse using yellow sticky traps. These and other similar products are available from the Organic Gardening Catalogue.

Nip the problem in the bud

- Removing pests by hand is one of the best controls.
- Gooseberry sawfly larvae: In April and May, watch out for tiny caterpillars on the undersides of gooseberry leaves near the ground in the centre of the bushes. Remove them daily to prevent defoliation.
- Aphids: Nip out the tops of broad beans infested with black fly. Prune out badly infested shoots. Squash aphids on small plants with your fingers.
- Cabbage caterpillars: Watch out for the eggs and young caterpillars when you see the cabbage white butterflies about. Squash the yellow eggs and remove caterpillars daily.

Timely sowing

- It is often the young of the flying pests that cause the damage. Avoid sowing until the egg-laying period of a particular pest is over.
- Pea moth: this moth only lays its eggs in pea flowers. Sow early or late so the peas are not flowering from mid-June to mid-July when the moths are laying (timing will vary with locality).

Carrot root fly: The first generation of flies normally finishes egg-laying by the end of May. Sow seeds in February or wait until early June to avoid damage.

Biological control

- You can buy natural predators and parasites to control a range of pests, particularly in greenhouses. These are known as 'biological controls'.

Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt) for caterpillars

Encarsia for moderate whitefly infestations

Delphastus for severe whitefly infestations

Aphidius for greenfly and black fly

Biological controls are available from the Organic Gardening Catalogue

Sprays

- Sprays are always the last resort for the organic gardener. Only use them after you have tried all other methods.

Spray	Use against	Notes
Derris	Aphids, caterpillars, flea beetle, raspberry beetle, sawfly larvae.	Can harm ladybirds, lacewings and parasitic wasps.
Pyrethrum	Aphids	
Insecticidal soap	Aphids, whitefly	Can damage some sensitive plants
Rape seed oil	Whitefly, aphids, thrips	Not for use on young plants, fuchsias and begonias

And another thing ...

- It has been shown that planting French marigolds *Tagetes patula* with the tomatoes in your greenhouse can keep whitefly at bay.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Pest Control without poisons - HDRA booklet

Pests - How to control them on Fruit and Vegetables Pauline

Pears and Bob Sherman (HDRA/Search press)

Factsheets on specific pests are available from HDRA,

Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry CV5 3LG.

Books and booklets, barriers, traps and biological controls are available through: The Organic Gardening Catalogue,

Riverdene Business park, Molesey Road, Hersham,

Surrey, KT12 4RG. Tel: (01932) 253666

Email: chaseorg@aol.com and in our shops at Ryton Organic Gardens, Voiding Organic Gardens and Audley End.

The HDRA members helpline can assist in identifying pests and advise on suitable methods of control.

FIVE STEPS TO GROWING GREAT PEPPERS

Sweet peppers -sometimes called bell peppers - can be expensive to buy, so it's worth growing your own. They are great for greenhouses or in pots outside in a warm spot

Peppers need warmth. So unless you have an especially warm, sunny, sheltered position and are prepared to have some protection ready with some fleece for colder nights, the best option is to grow them in frames, unheated polythene tunnels or greenhouses. The good news is they are suitable for growing in containers or grow bags filled with multipurpose compost.

Peppers require well-drained, fertile moisture-retentive soil, which is slightly on the acid side. To achieve this, incorporate moderate amounts of well-rotted manure (5.4kg per sq rn/10lb per sq yd) into the soil, but avoid using fresh manure, or large quantities as this may lead to lush, leafy growth at the expense of fruit.

Transplant seedlings into three inch pots when two true leaves have formed.

Further transfer plants to 12in pots of good compost once the roots fill the 9cm (3in) pot in early May if growing in a heated greenhouse, late -May if in an unheated greenhouse or early June if growing outside.

Pinch out the growing tips to encourage bushiness; side shoots the shoots forming between the main stem and leaves can be further pinched back if you want lots of smaller peppers.

You may need to stake and tie plants in if they are likely to produce lots of heavy fruit. Water regularly and feed with a high potash liquid fertiliser once the first fruit has set.

1. Choose the right spot

The right site will make all the difference in how well your peppers grow. The soil should be rich and loamy. Avoid adding too much nitrogen to the soil as it can cause the plants to grow too fast, making them susceptible to disease.

2. Harden off any seedlings

You'll need to harden seedlings off gradually if you are exposing them to outdoor conditions. This helps seedlings adjust, so they'll be less stressed when you plant them. And less stress means bigger, more productive peppers.

3. Planting them out

If you are persisting with growing outdoors wait to plant until night time temperatures have consistently reached 60°F and all danger of frost has passed. Like tomatoes, peppers grow extra roots from the buried portion of the stem. Stake taller varieties so the stems do not break in strong winds or due to a heavy fruit load. After you plant the pepper seedlings, water them well.

4. Watch and water well

Throughout the growing season, make sure your pepper plants receive at least an inch of water. In the greenhouse they will need daily water and never let them dry out. Check the peppers during periods of extreme heat and drought, when each plant can easily take a gallon of water a day. You can add a thick layer of organic mulch to help retain soil moisture and to help moderate the soil temperature. But do this only after your soil has warmed—mulching cool soil will keep it too cool and stunt the pepper plants' growth.

5. Pinch off flowers

As difficult as it might be for you, pinch off any early blossoms that appear on your pepper plants. This won't harm the plants. In fact, it helps them direct their energy into growing, so you get lots of large fruits later in the season and a higher overall yield instead of just a few small fruits early on.

Pick fruits when they are green to encourage further cropping. Left on the plant, fruits will change colour and become sweeter. If they are left to ripen on the plant, new flowers are not formed and this can lead to a reduction in yield by 25 per cent or more.