

## HERBS

To pick fresh herbs early in the Spring you will need to pot up some plants now. If you have a greenhouse or a polytunnel, dig up and divide some of your herb plants, replanting one half of the clump in its original site and the other half under cover. You can also put the clump in a large pot and bring that into shelter or construct a cloche over the herbs, using heavy duty clear plastic, firmly secured. This will warm the soil so the plant regrows some new leaves for you to use in the Autumn as well as coming away much earlier in the Spring.

Suitable herbs for this treatment are Chives, French Tarragon, Sorrel and Mint all of which taste much better fresh than dried. Salad Rocket can be sown now and will be usable for several weeks both outside and under cover but you will need to sow more in the Spring as it is not hardy enough to overwinter



To see examples of all these techniques and a wide range of organically grown plants visit

### the ASK Organic Garden

a half acre garden within Woodside Walled Garden, situated 4 miles north of Jedburgh, east of the A68 on the B6400.

The ASK Organic Garden is open 7 days a week March to October 10am to 5pm. Someone from ASK is usually on hand to answer questions on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays between 11am and 4pm.

Produced for the ASK Organic Garden Club by ASK Organic, Wolfhopelee, Bonchester Bridge, Hawick. TD9 9TP. Telephone 01450 860291 and 860778. email [da@askorganic.co.uk](mailto:da@askorganic.co.uk).

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# HOME GROWN:

*the organic way*



## Forward Planning

We want to continue to enjoy fresh veg from our gardens throughout the Winter and into next Spring and now is the time to get going to achieve it. A range of crops will stand our Borders' winters and some Enviromesh or a polytunnel or greenhouse will increase your choice. You can plant in ground used for an earlier crop like peas or potatoes.



## SOWING AND PLANTING METHODS

Sow seeds thinly in a seed tray and prick out the little seedlings into pots, then plant out as 3cm tall plants. When sowing, fill the tray with around 2cm of compost, water the compost and then sow the seed. When pricking out, thoroughly soak the tray of seedlings so you can tease apart the roots without damaging them. When planting out, make a suitably sized hole with a trowel, fill it with water and then put in the plant, drawing drier soil round the neck of the plant. When sowing a row of seed, say chard or carrots, mark out the drill, make a channel 1cm deep with a hoe or the butt end of a rake and then water along the drill. Sow onto the moist soil and cover with the drier soil scooped out of the drill. This gives seedlings the moisture they need without burying the seed too deeply with the force of water from the can.

## PROTECTION

The combination of snow, frost and rain we often get in the Borders can damage many plants and, while Winters don't seem to be as hard as a few years ago, some protection will be necessary, especially at higher altitudes. The ideal is a greenhouse, polytunnel or coldframe, but you can protect plants with fleece or Enviromesh cloches. It is important that the material doesn't touch the plants, otherwise those leaves will be frosted or rot, so the cloche hoops must be tall enough to prevent this happening.

## SUITABLE CROPS

**Lettuces** should be sown, pricked out and planted as described above (spaced 20–30cm apart). Particularly good varieties are: Rouge d'Hiver and Rougette du Midi which are old (1880) French varieties with striking red and green leaves; they overwinter as little plants and grow away in the Spring. Valdor, a bright green butterhead type, is also hardy and can be harvested in early Spring. It is also resistant to botrytis.

**Corn Salad and Salad Rocket (Ruccola)** can be sown directly into the ground in August. The Rocket grows fast and produces plenty of leaf throughout Autumn but won't overwinter. Corn Salad (Vit is a good variety) is hardy and will also seed itself next Spring so put it where you want to keep it.

**Endives** are a little more bitter than lettuces but some varieties can be blanched to reduce this. Fine de Louvier is an old, frizzy, loose-leaved variety that copes well with cold

conditions; you can pick individual leaves or, as it grows very flat, put an upturned flower pot over the centre to blanch it, then cut the whole plant. Cornet de Bordeaux is a particularly delicious upright variety with good frost resistance.

**Chicories** come in striking crimson and white as well as green. Varieties like Palla Rossa and Rossa di Teviso should be left to heart up as their inner leaves are the sweetest and most beautiful. They are especially hardy and will regrow in the Spring. Grumola Verde needs more protection, or eat it first; it has spoon shaped leaves with nutty tasting ribs.

**Oriental Leaves** should mostly be sown in August as they bolt quickly in hot weather. Pak Choi, Mustard Spinach, Perilla and Giant Red Mustard can all be sown now, and you can get packets of mixed leaves, usually containing Mitzuma and Mibuna for cut and come again.

**Kale** is a reliable Spring leaf crop, it must be grown outside and will stand up to most winters. Pentland Brig and Dwarf Green Curled are good, reliable varieties. They should be sown, pricked out and planted as described above. Planting spacing is 45cm. Curly leaved kale, unlike other brassicas, does not seem to be so attractive to Large White butterflies.

**Sprouting Broccoli** [green or purple] should be sown as for kale. They are not quite as hardy as kale, so may need protection during a severe spell of Winter weather.

**Spring Cabbage** should also be started in August. Pixie, Advantage and Spring Hero can all be recommended. Pixie is the earliest and Spring Hero is a ballhead variety.

**Swiss Chard** provides excellent spinach-like leaves in Spring which can be eaten cooked or raw. Sow directly, thinning to 5cm, remembering to use the thinnings as an early taste of the crop. It will need protection during the coldest part of Winter. Very fast-maturing **Carrots** like Paris Market, Amsterdam Forcing and Nantes can be sown, if protected from root fly.

**Spring Onions** sown now will mature before the Winter, especially if you protect them from October on.

Some varieties of **Garlic** and **Broad Beans** can be sown in Autumn and others should be sown in Spring so make sure you sow them at the right time. Garlic Thermidrome needs frost to stimulate clove production in the Spring so plant it in October/November. Broad Bean Aquadulce can be sown in October for an early crop. If you have a vole problem sow in pots and plant out when 4-5cm tall. They are tall beans so will need support in the Spring.