



Into the garden

April's Full Awakening

April strides in with a burst of colour and intent, nudging the garden into full swing. Buds open, birds get busier, and the soil finally feels ready to cooperate. It's the moment the whole garden leans into the season – and invites us to do the same.

Dates for Your Diary

● **Pashley Manor Gardens Tulip Festival** *Easter Monday 21st April – Bank Holiday Monday 5th May, East Sussex*
Pashley's annual tulip festival is a riot of elegant planting, with over 48,000 tulip bulbs choreographed into borders, pot displays and sweeping vistas. Perfect for gardeners who love structure, design and colour done exceptionally well. pashleymanorgardens.com



● **The Newbury Garden Show** *11–12 April 2026, Newbury Showground*
A lively spring showcase packed with plants, garden inspiration and specialist stalls. From practical demonstrations to gorgeous seasonal displays, it's an easy, enjoyable way to gather fresh ideas – and a few irresistible plants – for the months ahead. newburygardenshow.co.uk

● **Plant Hunters' Fair** *12 April 2026, Middleton Hall & Gardens*
A charming spring fair set within Middleton Hall's historic grounds, bringing together specialist nurseries with an irresistible mix of unusual, garden-worthy plants. It's a lovely chance to browse, chat with passionate growers and head home with something you didn't know you needed – but absolutely do. middleton-hall.co.uk

Did you know?

- Bluebells are on the move this month, quietly transforming woodlands into those dreamy violet-blue carpets we wait for all year. When they appear, it's the garden's way of saying, 'Right, we're properly awake now.'
- Beetles become the unsung heroes of April, clocking in early to break down leaf litter and freshen up the soil. They may not get the glory, but without them, the whole garden would be slightly off its game.
- Perennials are busy setting their crown height right now, essentially deciding how tall they're going to be this year. A little feed in April works wonders – think of it as a pep talk before their big summer performance.
- Fruit blossom is irresistible to solitary bees, those super-efficient early pollinators who get the job done before the honeybees have even checked their calendars. A few early flowers like aubretia or lungwort can turn your garden into the hottest spring stop-off in town.

ALAN'S ALMANAC: FEBRUARY IN THE GARDEN & ALLOTMENT



Alan Coxon, food and heritage expert, curator of projects from *Roaming the Paths* to *Alan's Almanac*, is *Platinum's* gardening voice. With a passion for the land and a gift for unearthing timeless wisdom, Alan is our guide through the year – sharing know-how, inspiration and a few winks of humour along the way. Find out more at roaming-the-paths.co.uk and alans-almanac.co.uk.

Alan says: 'April arrives with energy to spare. The soil is warming, mornings are brighter, and the garden is raring to go – but don't be lulled by sunshine alone. Frost can still bite at night, so garden with enthusiasm, lightly tempered by patience.'



● Sow with confidence

April is peak sowing season. Outdoors, get carrots, beetroot, parsnips, spinach, chard, lettuce, peas and hardy herbs underway. Sow little and often and keep fleece nearby – April likes to keep us on our toes.

● In the greenhouse

Tomatoes, chillies, aubergines and cucumbers should be motoring along. Move seedlings into bigger pots before roots start to knot, ease them outdoors on warm days, and keep the air flowing – muggy, stagnant conditions are an open invitation to problems.

● Blossom watch

Fruit trees steal the show this month, heavy with blossom and alive with bees. Apples, pears, plums and cherries all flower now, but a late frost can undo the magic – cover smaller trees if cold nights loom.

● Tidy with care

Nesting season is in full swing, so hedge trimmers stay parked.

If tidying is unavoidable, check carefully for nests first. Untidy corners aren't lazy – they're vital wildlife real estate.

● Feed the soil, not just the plants

Now's the time for compost or well-rotted manure. Mulch beds to lock in moisture, suppress weeds and improve soil structure – then let earthworms do the hard work, quietly and for free.

● Love the lawn

Growth speeds up fast, so raise mower blades for the first cuts. Leave some areas uncut for daisies and dandelions, and mow neat paths through longer grass – practical, beautiful and very satisfying.

● Potatoes and protection

Finish planting early potatoes now, with second earlies later in the month and maincrop towards the end. Draw soil up around new shoots to protect from frost and encourage better harvests. Keep fleece close – April is nothing if not unpredictable.

● Wildlife matters

Keep feeding birds, with peanuts safely in feeders, and refresh bird baths often. Shallow water helps bees too. Leave straw and old vegetation lying – it'll be snapped up for nesting before you know it.



ALAN'S TOP TIP

Label everything. What's obvious today becomes a guessing game in two weeks' time. Reused yoghurt pots or wooden lolly sticks work beautifully – labels remember what the gardener forgets.

OLD LORE REMINDER

"When April blows its horn, 'tis good for hay and corn." An old English farming saying that claimed April's gusty showers were early blessings – softening the soil, feeding new roots and setting the stage for strong summer crops. For gardeners today, it's a reminder that April's mix of rain and breeze is nature's way of preparing the ground for abundance.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

My Garden: A Year of Design and Experimentation by Jacqueline van der Kloet (Timber Press)



This beautifully illustrated book offers a month-by-month tour of Van der Kloet's own garden, celebrating naturalistic planting, bulbs, perennials and design principles that deliver impact all year long. It's rich in seasonal insight, practical advice and visual inspiration – ideal for anyone reshaping or refining their garden this year.