

# Into the garden

## June's golden hours

June arrives like a long exhale – the garden finally at full stretch, the evenings long and warm, the borders doing exactly what we hoped they would back in February. This is the month to be outside, hands in the soil, nose in the roses – and very much in the moment.



### ALAN'S ALMANAC: JUNE IN THE GARDEN & ALLOTMENT

Meet Alan Coxon: food and heritage expert, curator of projects from *Roaming the Paths to Alan's Almanac*, and Platinum's very own gardening voice. With a passion for the land and a gift for unearthing timeless wisdom, Alan guides us through the gardening year – sharing know-how, inspiration and a few winks of humour along the way. Find out more at [roaming-the-paths.co.uk](http://roaming-the-paths.co.uk) and [alans-almanac.co.uk](http://alans-almanac.co.uk).



● **Pinch out tomato side shoots.** On cordon varieties, nip out the shoots that appear between stem and leaf – every few days if you can. Left unchecked, the plant puts its energy

into leaves rather than fruit. A quick pinch now pays dividends later.

● **First potatoes and soft fruit – time to pick!** Once early potatoes start to flower, the new potatoes are ready. Strawberries, cherries and redcurrants are ripening fast too. Pick regularly, watch out for the birds, and enjoy every mouthful – this is what it's all been for!

● **Deadhead to keep things blooming.** Sweet peas are unforgiving – miss a few faded heads and they'll stop flowering almost overnight. Roses and geraniums are much the same. Ten minutes of deadheading makes the whole garden look a lot fresher.

● **Check for nesting birds before you clip.** June is peak nesting season, so always check hedges and shrubs before trimming. Disturbing an active nest is an offence – and in any case, who'd want to? Leave that section alone and come back later in summer.

● **Water deeply, not often.** The garden is thirstier than ever now. Deep, occasional watering encourages roots downward; frequent light sprinkling does little good. Early morning or evening is best to reduce evaporation.

● **Keep on top of the lawn.** Growth peaks in June and a lawn can go from neat to shaggy surprisingly quickly. Mow once or twice a week, but resist cutting too short in dry spells – a slightly longer sward holds moisture and stays greener for longer.



● **Thin out fruit for a better harvest.** Remove some developing fruitlets from apples, pears and plums now. It feels ruthless, but the remaining fruits will grow larger and sweeter. Nature, it turns out, benefits from a gentle edit.

● **Beware of the burn!** The sun is at its zenith, and a closed greenhouse can become the "brown house" alarmingly fast – keep those vents open. And the same goes for the gardener: hat on, water bottle handy, shady spot located.



### WIN A THERMOS BUNDLE WORTH £72!

June is finally here – and whether you're stopping for a well-earned cuppa in the garden, packing a picnic or heading out for the day, this brilliant Thermos bundle has everything covered.

The bundle includes the new Thermos 4.5l Radiance Cool Bag – perfect for keeping food and drinks beautifully chilled – alongside the Icon Travel Mug and Icon Food Flask, which between them keep food and drinks hot or cold for hours. All available from [thermos.co.uk](http://thermos.co.uk). To enter to win this prize, send an email titled "Gardening" with your full name to [platinum.letters@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:platinum.letters@kelsey.co.uk) by Thursday 4 June at 23.59pm. A winner will be picked at random and contacted the following week.



### Pick up a copy

New to gardening, or simply looking to grow your knowledge? *Amateur Gardening* magazine is the go-to read for home gardeners – packed with practical advice, expert tips and seasonal ideas to help you grow plants, vegetables and flowers successfully. From the latest gardening news to columns by some of Britain's finest horticultural minds, it's a genuinely useful companion, whatever your plot. Grab your copy today at [shop.kelsey.co.uk/amateur-gardening-magazine](http://shop.kelsey.co.uk/amateur-gardening-magazine).





Enjoy the Garden & Plant Fair at Chatsworth.

## Dates for your diary

### Chatsworth Garden and Plant Fair 5-7 June – Chatsworth House, Derbyshire

Set within Chatsworth's 105-acre garden, this three-day fair brings together specialist nurseries from around the country alongside expert talks, garden tours, live music and local food. Entry is included with any garden ticket, so there's no extra cost to attend. [chatsworth.org](http://chatsworth.org)

### Caisson Gardens Open Days – Combe Hay, near Bath Selected dates in June

A remarkable two-acre garden set around a Georgian house near Bath, where 15 dry canal locks thread through a 40-acre property restored with regenerative principles. Wildflower meadows, herbaceous borders, topiary and wildlife ponds make this a truly special visit. Tickets £16.50 – booking essential. [caissongardens.com](http://caissongardens.com)



Wander Caisson Gardens.



Explore the rooftop garden on the South Bank.

### Natural Dye & Wellbeing Garden – National Theatre, London Open throughout June, Monday-Saturday, free

A fascinating rooftop garden on the South Bank where marigolds, dahlias, indigo and chamomile are grown to create natural dyes for the theatre's costumes. Drop in, wander freely and join workshops on natural dyeing techniques. [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk)

#### OLD LORE REMINDER

*"A dry May and a dripping June brings all things into tune."*

An old English country saying that captures June's essential gift to the garden: warmth and moisture in just the right measure.

## Did you know?

- The summer solstice falls on 21 June, giving us the longest day of the year – and gardeners the longest possible window to admire what they've been quietly building since March. Make the most of every minute of it.
- Lavender comes into its own this month, and not just for the bees. Its essential oils peak just as the flowers open, which is why June-cut lavender is the most intensely fragrant. Dry a few bunches now and your linen cupboard will thank you well into winter.
- Strawberries are a June garden's

greatest act of generosity – but did you know that the fruit isn't technically a berry? Botanically speaking, each "seed" on the outside is the actual fruit, and the red flesh is an enlarged receptacle. The tastiest botanical quirk we know of!

- Hoverflies are June's underappreciated pollinators. Dressed in convincing wasp-stripe disguise but entirely harmless, they're busy hovering over open flowers all month – particularly fond of achillea, fennel and marigolds. Plant a few and you'll have pollination on tap.



#### ALAN'S TOP TIP

Here's a little trick: a small drop of washing-up liquid in the watering can helps break the surface tension and allows the water to actually penetrate. Splash a little of this mixture onto the basket, leave it for five minutes, and repeat. After another five minutes, the water should begin to absorb. Take your time – little and often works best to rescue an arid arrangement.

*Hanging baskets can be a real challenge during the long, hot days. When they dry out completely, they're notoriously difficult to re-wet – water tends to run straight off rather than soak in.*