



ALAN'S TOP TIP
 Caught out by a late frost? Plants are often tougher than they look. Potatoes will usually send up fresh shoots and even tender perennials like pelargoniums recover surprisingly well. Tidy away any damaged growth and you may be pleasantly surprised by how quickly the garden bounces back.

Into the garden

May in full swing

By the time May arrives, gardens are changing quickly. Borders fill out, fresh growth appears almost daily, and plants seem to gain height overnight. There is colour, movement and that satisfying sense that the season has truly taken hold.

Dates for your diary

RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2026
 19-23 May, Royal Hospital
 Chelsea, London

The Chelsea Flower show returns this May with its usual mix of thoughtful design, inventive planting and plenty to admire. Keep an eye out for A Little Garden of Shared Knowledge sponsored by Viking, designed by Katerina Kantalis and inspired by travel, craft and shared experience. Also look for A Garden for Every Parkinson's Journey, designed by Arit Anderson, celebrating the restorative power of green spaces and created with support from the grant-giving charity Project Giving Back. rhs.org.uk/chelsea

BBC Gardeners' World Spring Fair
 1-3 May, Beaulieu,
 Hampshire

A lively early May event filled with specialist nurseries, practical demonstrations and plenty of seasonal temptation. It is a good place to gather ideas and come home with something you had no intention of buying but absolutely needed. bbcgardenersworldfair.com



Belgravia in Bloom, London
 18-24 May

This free floral festival transforms the Belgravia neighbourhood with imaginative flower displays and creative installations across shops, front gardens and public spaces. It's a lovely way to enjoy spring colour without formal show tickets. With *Fairy Tales* in Belgravia as the theme, expect whimsical displays that lean into nostalgia, storytelling and a bit of playful magic.

OLD LORE REMINDER

"A wet and windy May fills the barn with corn and hay." Country wisdom reminds us that unsettled weather now often leads to sturdier crops later, even if it means keeping jumpers and wellies within reach.

Did you know?

- Tomato plants release their distinctive scent when brushed because of tiny hairs on their stems. It is part defence mechanism, part summer nostalgia.
- Many perennials put on most of their height growth this month. A discreet support added now is far less noticeable than emergency staking later.
- Bees navigate using the sun as a compass. Even on cloudy days they can detect patterns of polarised light, which is how they stay so impressively on course.



WIN! A GARDENING CADDY BAG WORTH £75

If you are anything like us, May means tools scattered on steps, seed packets tucked into pockets and secateurs that mysteriously vanish. This month, we have something that keeps everything in one place and makes life a little easier. Win this stylish and practical Gardening Caddy Bag from Genus Gardenwear (genus.gs). A firm favourite with gardeners, it is Endorsed by the Royal Horticultural Society. To enter, please send an email with "Gardening" in the subject line and your full name to platinum.letters@kelsey.co.uk by Thursday 7 May.



ALAN'S ALMANAC: MAY IN THE GARDEN & ALLOTMENT



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

- **Feed the surge.** Growth is racing ahead and containers, hanging baskets and hungry vegetables soon start asking for seconds. Feed little and often to keep things strong and steady. When planting up pots or beds, add a slow-release fertiliser so plants have a dependable supply of goodness ticking away in the background.
- **Support before it's needed.** Peas, beans, climbing roses, delphiniums and plenty of tall perennials appreciate a bit of early structure. Get stakes and supports in place before plants start flopping about looking for something to lean on. It's far easier to guide a young stem than to rescue a border after wind and rain.
- **Finish planting and sowing.** If April's weather slowed things down, May often offers the chance to catch up. Complete any lingering sowing jobs and continue planting out young plants so everything can settle in and get growing during the garden's most energetic weeks.
- **Sow little and often.** Keep sowing salads, beetroot, carrots, French beans and herbs. Small batches every couple of weeks mean steady harvests rather than a sudden mountain of produce. Warm soil helps seeds germinate quickly, but dry soil can slow them down, so if conditions are parched give the ground a good soak the day before you sow.
- **Watch the quiet invaders.** Weeds are every bit as enthusiastic about the warmer weather as your crops. A quick hoe on a dry day slices through tiny seedlings and

leaves them to shrivel in the sun. Five minutes here and there is usually enough to keep them in check and save yourself a far bigger job later.

- **Keep an eye on pests.** Aphids start multiplying with impressive enthusiasm as temperatures rise. Check soft new growth regularly and encourage natural helpers like ladybirds and hoverflies by avoiding blanket pesticide use. Quite often, a brisk jet of water does the trick perfectly well.
- **The first rewards.** The "hungry gap" begins to ease as the first proper harvests arrive. Asparagus, broad beans, spring cabbage and the last of the sprouting broccoli start appearing again. Early salad leaves, radishes and spring onions bring that welcome taste of the new season.
- **Enjoy the evenings.** By now the garden changes almost daily. A border that looked tidy last week may suddenly be brimming with growth, and new shoots appear when you're not paying attention. A quiet wander round in the evening often reveals what needs tying in, thinning out or simply admiring.

Take time to enjoy nature around you. The verges are lush with cow parsley and hogweed, bees are busy, and birdsong seems to come from every hedge. If your garden has a tricky corner – a dry bank, a shady patch beneath a tree or a damp spot that never quite behaves – it might be the perfect opportunity to create a small haven for wildlife. Your garden is about to hit its stride!