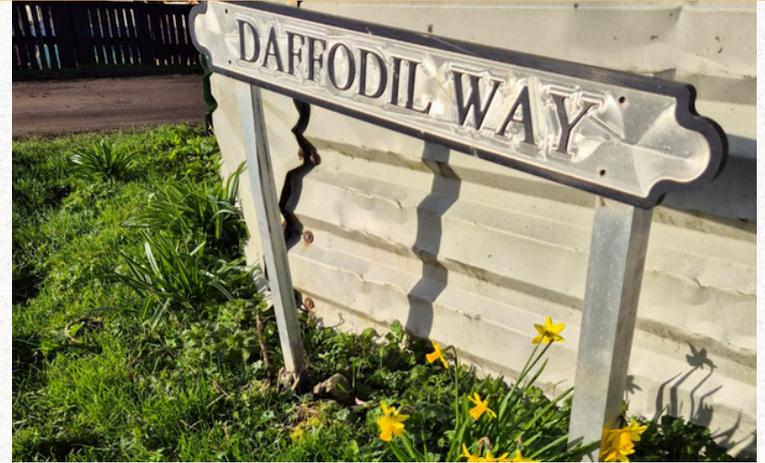


The Plot Thickens...



MARCH ON THE PLOT

Firstly, welcome back to another wonderful growing season on Moss Lane Allotments!

We have welcomed a lot of new members this year, and on behalf of the Committee we hope they settle in well to the Allotment community, and wish all our ploholders a wonderful and successful growing season.

March signals the start of one of the busiest periods for growers. The weather starts to improve, there are seeds to be sown and tended to, beds to be prepared, plots to be overhauled.

With that in mind, this issue is going to focus on a few key things relevant to the Spring season. We hope you find it useful, and welcome any feedback!

This Month:

- Jobs for March
- Focus on....Aphids
- Seasonal Recipe: Freshly Sown Radish Salad
- Allotment Make: The Row Cloche (Mini Greenhouse)
- Digital Resource: VegPlotter

A reminder- we'd love to celebrate any good news stories or achievements within our community. Weddings, big birthdays/anniversaries or awards etc. Please get in touch and let us know if you have any moments you'd like us to mark in future issues!

SITE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Firstly, please can I remind everyone **NOT** to leave rubbish on Recycling Corner. This area is for items that are in a condition to be used by others - excess plants, spare pots, plants, etc.

WATER will be available again from **01 April**. Please exercise courtesy with the taps-

- DO NOT use hosepipes to water your plot
- If using hose to top up water butts, you **MUST** make way for those with a watering can
- Try to use water butts or other harvested rainwater as much as possible. Not only is it actually better for your plants, it also helps us keep down water costs

Don't forget that you can continue to burn items on your plot until 31 March. That said, please do follow these few rules to ensure that you are burning safely:

- Always contain fires - DO NOT allow open fires that can get out of control
- Only burn dry waste
- **NEVER** leave your fire unattended
- **ALWAYS** have water on hand

Jobs for March



HANDY REMINDERS

March is the month we've been waiting for!

Spring is officially here (alright, still a couple of weeks to go, but you know what I mean!). The allotment bursts back to life, daffodils are out, birds are nesting, and the soil is finally warming up. This is when the hard work of winter planning pays off, as we all move from organising to active growing.

Expect the weather to be changeable- there are still the odd few late frosts and cold snaps likely! The golden rule will be

“Sow little and often!”

Don't plant everything at once. Keep your cold frames and cloches ready, and take advantage of mild, sunny spells to get those first seeds in the ground.

JOBS FOR MARCH:

- **Sow Outdoors:** Start sowing your hardy vegetables directly into the ground. This includes: parsnips, broad beans, spinach, radishes, spring onions, and early carrots. Ensure the soil is fine and stone-free before sowing.
- **Plant Potatoes:** If the danger of a hard frost is past and the soil is workable, plant your chitted first and second early potatoes. Plant them about 15cm deep in trenches, ensuring the chits are facing upwards.
- **Plant Onions & Shallots:** Get your onion and shallot sets into the ground. Push them gently into the soil so that just the tips are showing.
- **Harden Off:** Start the process of hardening off any seedlings you began indoors (like chillies or broad beans). Place them outside during the day, sheltered from wind and direct sun, and bring them back in at night. Slowly increase the time they spend outside over a week or two.

Defence Mechanism!



APHIDS

Aphids (greenfly and blackfly) are small, sap-sucking insects that multiply rapidly and cause curled, distorted growth, particularly on the tender new tips of broad beans and fruit trees.

Why they are a March focus:

They are one of the first pests to arrive as the weather warms, and they love the new, juicy growth on your seedlings and early crops.

How to deal with them:

- **Catch Them Early:** Check the growing tips of your broad beans and fruit trees every few days. Early detection makes control simple.
- **Squish or Wash Off:** For small infestations, simply squash them with your fingers or use a strong jet of water (from a hosepipe) to wash them off the plant.
- **Encourage Predators:** Avoid using strong chemical sprays. Instead, encourage beneficial insects like ladybirds, hoverflies, and lacewings, which are natural aphid predators. Planting companion flowers nearby helps them establish.
- **Soapy Spray:** For a quick control, use a dilute solution of soapy water (a few drops of mild washing-up liquid in a spray bottle of water) to spray the affected areas. Repeat after a few days.

Soapy Spray Application Guidelines

- **Mixing Ratio:** Use approximately 1 teaspoon per 3 litres of water. For a smaller 500ml spray bottle, use about 1/6 of a teaspoon.
- **Product Choice:** Choose a mild, basic washing-up liquid. **Avoid "Platinum" or concentrated versions**, as they contain harsh chemicals that may damage foliage.
- **Application Timing:** Spray during dull weather or in the evening. Applying in direct, full sunlight can cause the soapy residue to scorch or burn the plant leaves.
- **Direct Contact:** The spray must touch the aphids directly to be effective. Focus on the undersides of leaves and affected stems where they cluster.
- **Rinsing:** If you are concerned about potential leaf damage, rinse the plant thoroughly with clean water a few hours after application.
- **Frequency:** You may need to repeat the treatment every 2–3 days for up to two weeks to manage recurring infestations.

Monthly Makes



Freshly Sown Radish Salad

Radishes are one of the fastest crops to grow and can be ready in as little as 4-6 weeks from a March sowing! Keep your motivation going for the season ahead by trying this delicious radish salad. Serve as a side, or add a touch of goats cheese for a more substantial meal!

Ingredients:

- A handful of freshly pulled radishes
- A few handfuls of winter or early spring lettuce/spinach leaves
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp cider vinegar (or lemon juice)
- Salt and pepper
- Optional: A sprinkle of chopped chives or garlic tops

Method:

Wash the radishes well and slice them thinly (or quarter them if small).

Wash and dry the lettuce and spinach leaves.

In a small bowl, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper to make a simple dressing.

Combine the leaves and radishes in a bowl. Drizzle with the dressing just before serving.

Enjoy the delicious, peppery crunch of your first harvest!

Allotment Makes



The Row Cloche (Mini Greenhouse)

Cloches provide a protective, warming cover for your first direct outdoor sowings in March, giving them a vital head start. This simple structure traps heat, raises the soil temperature, and protects those precious early sowings from the worst of the March winds and frosts. It can easily be made using bits and bobs you may already have lying around on your plot. It can also be adapted onto permanent wooden frames if required.

What you need:

Lengths of flexible plastic piping or thick wire (to form hoops)

Clear plastic sheeting (old builders' plastic or greenhouse film- you may even have this if you have had any large items delivered to your home)

Clips or pegs

Bricks or stones

The Make:

- Stick the ends of the plastic piping or thick wire into the soil along the sides of your newly sown bed to create a series of semi-circular hoops. Space them about 1etre apart.
- Lay the clear plastic sheeting over the hoops, ensuring it covers the entire area and has excess that drapes onto the ground.
- Attach the plastic to the hoops using clips or pegs, to stop it from blowing away.
- Anchor the edges of the plastic with bricks or stones, or secure it with soil to prevent drafts.

Useful Resources

VEGPLOTTER

This is a fantastic resource that I think would be useful for those fairly new to growing, or those who (like me!) sometimes need a helpful reminder or two from time to time about what we should be doing! It's also really handy if you want to make changes to a plot layout but plan it all out ahead of time.

One thing that makes this platform really good is that it is available for use on computer, tablet, **and** mobile phones. So no matter what device you prefer to use, you can use VegPlotter.

You start by creating a free account (it's legit, don't worry), and from there you can use the software to:

- Mark out your plot
- Add your beds, paths and structures
- adding plants as they go in or plan months/years ahead
- Use your smartphone to check/update your monthly plans from your allotment or garden
- Track suitable companion plants
- Manage crop rotation conflicts
- Upload photos of seed packets so you never forget planting and care instructions

Now to be transparent, there is a free version of this but there are also paid versions- and here's a screenshot showing what you get in each. I think the free version is definitely adequate.

The screenshot displays three pricing tiers for VegPlotter:

- Free:** £0 per year. Targeted at those just starting out or with small patches. Includes unlimited garden plans, up to 40 plantings per year, tailored schedules, row or square foot gardening styles, monthly task lists, a simple interface, crop rotation warnings, companion planting suggestions, unique month-by-month planning, mobile/desktop/laptop compatibility, and print-out plans.
- Essentials:** £18 per year (€42 pay-monthly annual-cost). For larger vegetable gardens or farms. Includes everything in the Free package plus unlimited plantings without limits, check-off jobs, filtering by plant/plot, and unlimited notes and photos to journal progress.
- Advanced:** £30 per year (€72 pay-monthly annual-cost). For gardeners wanting custom planting schedules. Includes all benefits of Free and Essentials plus custom plants with their own schedules.

Each tier has a 'Subscribe' button and an option to 'purchase as a gift'.