

What To Plant And Do In the Food Garden In MARCH

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WHAT TO PLANT IN MARCH (Ballarat & district) *

FROM SEED	FROM SEEDLING	IN SEEDLING BOXES #
BROAD BEANS ^L LETTUCE PAK CHOI ^X PEA ROCKET SPINACH SPRING ONION TURNIP	LETTUCE PAK CHOI ^X BROCCOLI ^X BRUSSELS SPROUTS ^{E X} CABBAGE ^X CAULIFLOWER ^X	BROCCOLI ^X CABBAGE ^X CAULIFLOWER ^X LETTUCE ONION ^L PAK CHOI ^X

* Key vegetables only, not all vegetables that can be planted at this time are listed. # Sow in seedling boxes for planting out in four to six weeks time. 1 Best sown in single cell seedling trays as these seedlings don't like their roots being disturbed when transplanted. X Prone to cabbage butterfly damage when grown this time of year. (Parenthesis) Grow in greenhouse or temporary polytunnel. DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in glass/plastic covered seedling box. RED DOUBLE UNDERLINED Grow in artificially heated seedling hot box. E or L Only Early or Late in the month.

WHAT TO DO IN THE VEGGIE PATCH

- **Begin harvesting the potatoes once their leaves have died back.**

If you have butternut pumpkins the first of them should be ready to eat but large pumpkins such as Queensland Blue and Jarrah are best left until the start of April. These large pumpkins can be eaten earlier than this but they won't be fully ripe so will not taste as nice. Large pumpkins are normally not ready to eat until the first autumn frost.

- **Continue to harvest your tomato crop.**

As the season winds down there will be lots of ripening tomatoes so make sure you check your tomato plants for ripe tomatoes at least every second day. If blackbirds are eating your tomatoes then pick them as soon as they get their first flush of light pink colour and bring them in to ripen off inside.

- **Apply lime or dolomite to beds to be planted with vegetables that like alkali soil.**

Vegetables that like alkali soil include brassicas (Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage), broad beans, peas and spinach. Add one to two handfuls of lime per square metre, double that amount if using dolomite.

As animal manures are acid it's best to minimise the use of them when planting vegetables that need an alkali soil. Use Blood and bone or NKP fertiliser in place of animal manure, though well-rotted animal manure can be used if the bed is prepared four to six weeks in



LEFT: Just picked half ripe tomatoes. RIGHT: Tomatoes that have turned completely red after being left in the kitchen to ripen for a few days .

advance.

- **Protect your brassicas from cabbage butterfly caterpillars.**

The two most effective options are:

Derris dust: A natural insecticide made from the root of the derris plant. Its main drawback is that it is a broad spectrum insecticide, which means it will kill helpful predator insects as well as the cabbage butterfly caterpillar.

Bacillus thuringiensis: (commonly sold under the brand name Dipel). The active ingredient is a bacteria that kills any caterpillar that eats leaves sprayed with it. Its big advantage over Derris dust is that it doesn't harm predator insects.

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN

- **Make sure you harvest fruit that is ready to be picked.**

Apples and pears can be picked when slightly immature but stone fruit such as peaches and nectarines need to be picked when ripe as they won't ripen further once harvested. What you can't eat fresh should be preserved using a Fowlers Vacola preserving unit or



March is a prime time for preserving surplus fruit and vegetables.



LEFT: Packet of the bio-insecticide Dipel RIGHT: Derris dust. Both come in a powdered form but Dipel has to be mixed with water.

WHAT TO DO IN THE GREENHOUSE

- **Harvest capsicums, chillies, eggplants, tomatoes and cucumbers.**

Regularly apply liquid fertiliser to eggplant, capsicum and chilli plants. This especially applies to capsicums as they are very water and nutrient hungry.

- **Keep all greenhouse vegetable plants well-watered.**

Being warmer than the garden greenhouses have a higher evaporation rate, hence the need for more water.

- **Towards the end of March begin closing the greenhouse doors at night.**

In summer the doors of a greenhouse should be left permanently open day and night but as the weather begins to cool down close the doors at night to retain warmth.

- **Continue to monitor plants for diseases.**

Due to increased heat and moisture levels greenhouse plants are more prone to diseases. Remove diseased leaves and plants and dispose of in the rubbish bin.

stewed and frozen.

- **Move bird netting from fruit trees that have finished their harvest to late fruiting trees with fruit that is yet to be harvested.**

Prune the fruit trees before putting the nets over. If you have grapevines then monitor them for ripeness. Remember that grapes are like stone fruit in that they won't ripen further once they are picked, so don't harvest them until they are fully ripe. If you haven't already done so put nets over them. If you only have a few bunches of grapes you can use fruit bags instead.