

## Garden Organic's November

**Protect cauliflower heads by folding over the leaves. This will keep the curds a nice creamy white.**



Brussels sprouts ready for picking



Leek starting to bolt

- Harvest bolting leeks! If you live in a part of the country where the summer was cool and dry, with a tropical spell in October, you may find that some of your leek plants are beginning to produce flower stems (bolting is the technical term). There is no way to stop this process.

Dig plants up at the first sign of bolting and you will still get a usable proportion of leek around the sturdy flower stem. Chopped leeks can be frozen quite successfully.

- Early Brussels sprouts will be ready for picking now. And don't forget that you can cut the small 'cabbage' from the top of each plant and eat it too. Clear away old leaves from around the plants, and remove those lower down the stems if they are diseased or infested with whitefly.
- Net brassica plants (kale, sprouts, broccoli etc) against pigeons if you haven't already done so. Pigeons become an increasing problem as the weather gets colder.
- Lift and store all remaining root crops still in the ground such as carrots, swede, beetroot and turnips. Read our ['Storing the harvest'](#) factsheet for advice.

- Finish clearing crop remains and compost them in a compost heap or [trench](#). Most material is fine to compost but do not compost diseased plant material such as onions with white rot or brassicas with club root. Add it to your green waste for collection or take to your local refuse centre.
- Check stored crops, potatoes in particular, for signs of disease. Dispose of any showing signs of rot so it doesn't get a chance to spread.
- If you haven't received your copy of The Organic Gardening Catalogue for 2012, [click here](#) to order one now. It features a huge range of organic vegetable seeds, seed potatoes, onion sets, fruit trees and bushes and lots more.
- Scrub clean pots and seed trays now to make the spring rush less frantic.
- Start a compost trench - Bury plant waste and vegetable peelings from the kitchen at about a spade's depth, preferably where the runner beans will grow next year. Cover the waste with soil, as soon as you add it, to prevent foxes or other animals from scavenging.

[Make your own leafmould](#)

- Winter cover  
Make sure that bare ground is covered. Autumn leaves make a good winter mulch. It protects the soil from heavy rainfall and creates a wonderful soil structure.

You can use leaves collected last autumn, or, when they fall this year. Your local council may deliver leaves on request to allotments and other sites where lorry access is possible. Ask for parks and cemetery leaves, rather than street swept ones.

- What a difference a leaf makes....  
A 10-year trial at Ryton Gardens, comparing 3 different soil treatments (see below) demonstrated clearly the benefits of leafmould. The difference in the leek growth {see picture} is obvious.

This trial has now been removed. It will be started afresh in the new Compost and Soil Fertility garden being developed at Ryton Gardens this winter.



- Leafmould experimental plots
  - '**Bare**' plot – turf removed at preparation; organic fertiliser applied in spring (right)
  - '**Green manure**' plot – turf dug in at preparation; grazing rye grown over winter, organic fertiliser in spring (left)
  - '**Leafmould**' plot – turf dug in at preparation; leafmould applied every autumn; organic fertilisers in spring (centre)

## Sowing and Planting

The information below on sowing and planting is for everyone from the south of England to the north of Scotland. Growing conditions can vary dramatically across the country, and even within a locality. If you are new to growing and are unsure about exactly what to do when, try asking other vegetable growers nearby. And be guided by the weather and soil conditions.

- **Keep on sowing**

Carry on sowing and planting for autumn and winter cropping, and for early harvests next season. Use cloches, cold frames, greenhouses and polytunnels to maintain growth over winter in cooler areas.

<b>Vegetable</b>	<b>Information</b>
Garlic	Plant in November, or even later on light soils. The sooner the better for the best crop. It is preferable to plant named varieties of garlic, such as ' <b>Vallelado</b> ' and ' <b>Flavour</b> ', rather than using left-over cloves from garlic bought from the greengrocer. This will avoid the risk of introducing disease, and help ensure you are growing a variety suited to the UK. Varieties such as 'Flavour' can also be planted in early spring, but tend to give much better yields after a period of winter chill. Garden Organic members can view a useful article on garlic growing in issue <a href="#">169 of The Organic Way</a> (pages 29-31). Organic planting garlic is available from The <a href="#">Organic Gardening Catalogue</a> .
Broad beans	Broad beans are traditionally sown in autumn (late October to early December) for an early summer crop. Autumn sown plants are also less attractive to blackfly. But their success can be variable; mice and wet conditions can cut plant numbers considerably. Sow in November in a well drained spot. Dress soil with a potash fertiliser if chocolate spot disease is a regular problem. Use extra hardy cultivars such as <b>Super Aquadulce</b> , <b>Aquadulce Claudia</b> , <b>Imperial Green Longpod</b> , or <b>The Sutton</b> (a bush variety good for small gardens under a cloche). If autumn sown crops tend to fail in your garden, don't despair; some of the spring sown cultivars can produce a crop that is almost as early.
Hardy peas	Round seeded, hardy varieties of pea can be sown now for a June crop. Suitable varieties include <b>Douce Provence</b> , <b>Feltham First</b> , <b>Meteor</b> and <b>Pilot</b> . They can also be sown in the spring. Pea seeds are a favourite with mice, so it is not worth sowing them now where mice are a problem.

Organic broad bean and pea seeds plus organic planting garlic and onion sets are available from the [Organic Gardening Catalogue](#)

- **What you could be eating now if all had gone to plan**

Artichoke, Jerusalem	Leek
Beetroot	Lettuce
Brussels sprouts - early	Marrow
Cabbage - autumn	Onions
Calabrese	Parsley
Cauliflower - autumn	Parsnip
Carrots	Potatoes
Celeriac	Pumpkin
Celery	Rocket
Chicory	Salsify
Garlic	Spinach
Endive	Turnip - main crop
Kohl rabi	Squash
	Swede

## **Pest & disease watch**



Brassica whitefly on underside of leaves



Leek rust

- Blight alert! Over the past few years some potato varieties, such as Sante and Lady Balfour, have lost some of their useful blight resistance. This is because

the fungus-like organism that causes potato blight has become more virulent since the introduction of other disease strains from South America.

Variety	Blight resistance rating 1 (low) to 9 (high)	
	Pre 2006**	Current *
Cara	7	5
Valor	5	5
Lady Balfour	8	4
Orla	8	4
Sante	7	4

- \*Means of scores at multiple sites over the last 3 or 4 years as determined by SASA, JHI and SRT.  
\*\*From the NIAB handbook, pre 2005/6

It is worth checking the current blight resistance status of a variety before you buy. The Sarpo varieties are still some of the most blight resistant potatoes you can buy. Sarpo Axona has a blight resistance rating of 7, and Sarpo Mira 8.

- Brassica whitefly can be a major problem on winter brassica crops - Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, kale etc.

Where an infestation is severe, several sprays of insecticidal soap may be necessary. Use a good quality sprayer – preferably one with a lance - and try to spray in the cool of the morning when the whitefly are less active. Pick off any yellowing lower leaves before you spray, which is where most of the young whitefly scales will be found. Remember to spray under the leaves too. Insecticidal soap must come into contact with the pest in order to be effective.

- Leek moth - Mainly a pest of leeks and onions, the caterpillars of leek moth feed within the leaves. Whitish brown patches develop and older caterpillars tunnel down into the stem and bulb causing extensive damage. [Leek Moth factsheet](#).
- **Allium leaf miner (leaf mining fly)**

*Phytomyza gymnostoma*



Allium leaf miner larva



Allium leaf miner pupae

- If you have seen this pest on any of your crops this year, please fill in our on-line survey [Click here to take survey](#)

This tiny pest, relatively new to the UK, was first found in the Midlands in 2003. It is gradually spreading across the country. It can affect onions, garlic, shallots, leeks and chives. Similar damage can also be caused by the leek moth (*Acrolepiopsis assectella*).

We are interested to know how far it has spread. The brown pupae will be present now on leeks; you can spot them when harvesting.

[Click here for more photos](#)

### **Diagnosis**

Damage is caused by the maggots of the leaf mining fly feeding on the plant. Symptoms you may see:

- Lines of white spots on leaves. Leaves and plant distorted.
- Creamy white, legless maggots, 5-8mm long in leaves and bulbs
- Brownish orange pupae, 3-4mm long, in leaves and bulbs.
- Plant rotting.

### **Timing**

The fly lays its eggs on the plant in March-April and September-November.

### **What can you do about it?**

If you know this pest is in your area

- Cover susceptible plants with horticultural fleece or ultra-fine enviromesh. The fly is only 3mm long! You may be able to remove the cover in May – August when the fly should not be active. Remember that plants in seed trays and pots are also at risk.
  - Use a crop rotation. Although the pest usually pupates in the plant, some pupae will fall to the ground. If you plant susceptible plants in the same place next year, and cover them, pupae in the soil may hatch out to infect them.
  - Dispose of infected plants in your green waste collection bin.
- Net Brussels, broccoli and other winter brassicas to protect them from pigeon damage. Support the nets above the plant tops so that pigeons don't just land and eat the leaves through the netting.
  - Leek rust - a fungal disease of leeks. Red/orange pustules develop on the leaves and stems. Sheltered sites, poor drainage and planting too close together can exacerbate this problem. Cold weather can halt the progress of this disease. In a mild autumn the disease may continue to develop, turning leaves yellow and resulting in reduction of plant size.
  - For information on prevention and control, refer to our [Leek rust](#) factsheet. (Factsheet access requires Members' password)
  - Check and repair fences, especially rabbit proofing if rabbits are a problem in your area. The netting should be buried at least 15cm (6in) under the ground in an 'L' shape to prevent rabbits digging underneath.