

SPRING GARDENING

For the eager gardeners out there, the impulse to get started again in the garden is building within us, especially after the false starts during February. Last month fooled us into thinking spring was here for few days, before shattering the illusion with another cold spell.

Now March is with us, bringing with it the sound of bleating lambs to cheer us. Any established lawns could have a light cut, but only if it's beginning to look long, and you haven't cut it already that is. It is best to be sure though that the ground is neither wet or frosted when cutting, or you will pay the price of a sick looking lawn for months. The smell of the first cut is a joy to behold, and instantly triggers memories of the scents still to come in future months.

By mid March, you must have all your bare rooted shrubs planted. After this time, if you still want to plant more shrubs, try planting pot grown specimens. With their more established root system, they are not so fussy when they are planted, so long as they are fed and kept watered.

Early potatoes can go in during March when the conditions are right. If you manage to spread the tubers out for a month prior to planting, then the chitting process (allowing shoots to develop) will mean your potatoes have a head start at planting time. If you want a large number of small potatoes when harvesting, leave all the shoots on when planting. If you want larger, but fewer potatoes, remove all but 2 of the shoots. Also, never plant any diseased tubers, they will just rot in the ground and are liable to infect your entire crop in some cases.

This is a good time to to prune your summer flowering shrubs like Buddleia and Spiraea. Cut back last years growth to 3 buds away from the old wood.

You may even want to spread your stock of Snowdrops around your plot this month. This is an ideal time to do this as they are still "in the green", which is a perfect state to move them in. But please, please, please, don't move any other bulbs when they are still growing like this, only Snowdrops can tolerate this treatment.

Finally, I will leave you this month with something you might like to experiment with yourselves during the coming season. It's a tried and tested way of keeping insect pests away from your prize plants.

Chop and crush 6-8 cloves of garlic, and put them in 2 litres of water, and let the mixture infuse for a month. Then drain, before regularly spraying the liquid on your plants through the growing season, before any sign of an attack may appear.

The mixture doesn't kill the insects, but as you spray prior to the pest appearing, I can only assume it is the smell that keeps the insects away. Perhaps they can't detect the smell of their host plant because of the garlic's aroma. What do you think? I'd like to know.

You may even like to add other ingredients like vinegar etc, and see if it keeps even more pests away. Your findings and feedback over the coming months would be gladly received.

Happy gardening.

STUART MABBUTT

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LONDON MARATHON

Gavin Sharrock will be taking part in the London Marathon on Sunday 18 April. He will be running to raise money for the Miscarriage Association. If anyone would like to a form to sponsor him, please contact him at 7 Orchard Way, Marcham or phone 391455.

MAD distributor needed

for The Dog House area. Please contact Judith or Peter on 391275 if you could deliver MADNews to eager readers every month!

Do you want to make a difference to someone with a life threatening or terminal illness ?



The Oxfordshire Befriending Network is looking for reliable and trustworthy people in this area to befriend someone with a life threatening or terminal illness. We offer excellent free training and on going support. Our next course starts in May.

If you'd like to find out more please contact Catherine Gundry on 01865 316200 or oxford@befriending.net

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TALKING SCIENCE

Public lecture: Friday 12 March 2004 7pm

Creating Faces

The process of facial reconstruction allows us to imagine the appearance of an individual from skeletal remains. This lecture will explain the technique and highlight the importance of it in forensic and archeological investigations.

Warning: pictures of human remains will be shown during this lecture. Recommended age 9 and over.

To reserve a free place, please contact Lisa Faircloth on 01235 445789 or email l.h.m.faircloth@cclrc.ac.uk.

Open Afternoon 24 March 2004, 1.30- 4.30 pm

Space Science and Technology Department

SSTD carries out an exciting range of space science and research and technology development. With significant involvement on over 40 space missions, including Envisat, GERB, Beagle-2 and SMART-1 SSTD is at the forefront of space research.

Recommended age 9 and over.

To reserve a free place or for more information, please contact Emma Gilgunn-Jones on 01235 445553 or email e.l.gilgunn-jones@cclrc.ac.uk.

BBOWT, the Local Wildlife Trust, will hold a Spring Fair on Saturday 27th March 2004 at 10am - 2pm. This will be held in The Abbey Hall, Guildhall, Abingdon and also on the Market Square. Lots of stalls, refreshments (including home made cakes) and family-friendly activities. All welcome, admission free.

BBOWT has 4 nature Reserves within 2 miles of Marcham so we welcome the support of Marcham people. Contact: Alan Hodgson 01865 390734.

Abingdon Drama Club celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year and presents "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" by Martin McDonagh as part of the Abingdon Arts Festival. Performances Wed 31 March – Sat 3rd April at 7.30pm in the Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon. Tickets available from Modern Music or Ticketline (01235) 524538. Adults £6, senior/students £5. Mature audiences only due to the language and violence content.

To get your letter included please write to the editor by 20th month latest