



Tulips



Rapeseed



Forsythia

by Vanda Lawrence

# THE AMATEUR GARDENER

**M**y favourite spring flowers are yellow ones – is this because I am so desperate to see the sun after the dark winter days? Who knows, but the daffodils and other spring bulbs have been much appreciated. As the flowers die, deadhead them and give a foliar feed every couple of weeks until the leaves have turned yellow and died back. This goodness will be absorbed into the bulbs to give us yet another wonderful display next year.

Another favourite yellow flower is Forsythia. This will need cutting back after flowering to help keep a good shape and make room for nearby summer perennials to make growth. By the way, while you are working in the flower beds take the opportunity to stake and tie-back where necessary while there is still room to move. As the year progresses and plants get bigger it gets very difficult to do properly.

Talking of Forsythia, if yours is in hedge form please check before you start cutting back to make sure there are no birds nesting there. If you have some little lodgers you will have to delay until after the babies have fledged. Of course, the same applies to all hedges or shrubs due a haircut.

In the potager you will be able to continue sowing and planting your chosen vegetables, but keep an eye on the weather forecasts so you can protect tender plants and seedlings from any late frosts. The same applies in flower beds and shrubberies – sow and plant out summer bedding but hold back the half-hardy bedding plants until all risk of frost has passed.

Earth up your potatoes as necessary and keep hoeing, hoeing, hoeing so that weeds don't get the chance to establish. Also be alert for the Colorado beetle (*Doryphore*) which can damage your potato plants. They also attack tomatoes, aubergines and pepper plants too.



Colorado Beetle, *Doryphore*

In the pond you will notice blanket weed starting up again. Find a rough stick to twirl in the water amongst the weed to collect it up, rather like candyfloss. Leave it on the side of the pond for 24 hrs so that any little creatures trapped amongst it will be able to return safely to the water.

If you haven't sown your peas yet, do it now. To speed up germination soak the seeds in warm water overnight and discard any which are floating after this – they will not germinate.

Sow Pumpkin (*Potiron*) seeds this month or buy ready grown plants from the garden centre. When the plant has developed 3-5 leaves pinch out the end of the stem, leaving only 3 leaves. Next month you will be able to cut back the side shoots which will have appeared to 5 or 6 leaves. Pumpkin plants grow rapidly and need plenty of water.

A fellow-gardener recently asked if I could put a few French/English words on here for easy reference, so here goes:

cuttings.....	boutures
damping off.....	la fonte des semis
foliar fertilizer.....	engrais foliaires
germinate.....	germer
grafting.....	greffage
ground cover.....	couverture de sol
leaf mould.....	moule feuille
mulch.....	paillis
prune/lop/cut back.....	élaguer
potting soil.....	terreau
rooting hormone.....	hormone d'enracinement
systemic.....	systémique
multipurpose fertilizer.....	engraie à usages multiples
young shoot or twig.....	scion
weeds.....	mauvaises herbes
clusters.....	grappes
Nursery.....	Pépinière
Nitrogen.....	Azote
Magnesium.....	Magnésium
Iron.....	Fer
Potash.....	Potasse

Lastly, I'm back to the French Calendrier Lunaire and Japanese Knotweed. Apparently, according to this publication, this terribly invasive plant will disappear more easily if you cut them down in the morning of 6th or 7th May .... watch this space!