

What To Plant And Do In the Food Garden In April

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WHAT TO PLANT IN APRIL (Ballarat and District) *

FROM SEED	FROM SEEDLING	IN SEEDLING BOXES #
BROAD BEANS GARLIC - BULB PEA & (PEA) ROCKET SPINACH ^E & (SPINACH) SPRING ONION TURNIPS	BROCCOLI ^X CABBAGE ^X CAULIFLOWER ^X LETTUCE & (LETTUCE) PAK CHOI ^{1X} & (PAK CHOI ^{1X}) SPRING ONION	<u>BROCCOLI</u> ^X <u>CAULIFLOWER</u> ^X <u>LETTUCE</u> <u>ONION & ONION</u> <u>PAK CHOI</u> ¹ SPRING ONION

* 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 in warmer weather. (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

• Empty compost bins.

April is when the bulk of the summer crop beds are cleared, which means that you will have a lot of new organic material to compost. Make sure you have space for all this material by clearing the bin with the oldest compost in it (assuming you have a two or three stage compost bin setup).

When adding organic matter to a compost bin chop up any course plant material such as corn stalks before placing it in the bin. Try and layer the courser material with finer items such as lawn clippings and kitchen vegetable scraps. Regularly add dolomite, or lime to your compost bins to stop the compost becoming too acidic. It is especially important to do this if you are adding lots of kitchen scraps or animal manure.

• Clear summer crop beds and prepare for winter and early spring crops.

A standard way to prepare a bed is to add one shovelful of sheep or cow manure, one shovelful of compost and a couple of handfuls of blood and bone per square metre. You can also add a pinch of rock dust (for trace minerals).

If you are planting vegetables that prefer alkali soils (such as brassicas, spinach or broad beans) then add one handful of lime or two of dolomite per square metre. Animal manures are acidic so when adding lime or dolomite it's a good idea to add extra blood and bone in lieu of animal manure.

Cleared beds that won't be planted out until late winter or early spring should be covered with mulch or planted out with a manure crop.

• Finish planting your over wintering crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, broad beans, peas and spinach.

Broccoli and cauliflower can be planted Throughout April and May but unless the seedlings are in the ground by mid-April at the latest they will not be big enough by the time the cold weather sets in. These small brassicas plants will sit relatively dormant in the ground all winter and won't mature until the weather warms up in spring.



Brassicas seedlings that have just been planted in a bed recently cleared of tomato plants. The 13 millimetre polypipe stakes around them are to stop blackbirds scratching up the seedlings.

Garlic can be planted anytime from April through to mid-June. You can also plant onion seeds in a propagation box ready for planting out in August.

- **Give growing brassicas an occasional dose of liquid fertiliser.**

This will help ensure that they get to a big enough size before the cold weather sets in.

- **Harvest the last of the tomatoes and bottle or freeze what you can't eat fresh.**

Remove your tomato plants after they have stopped growing and turned brown. Any green tomatoes left at the end of the season can be turned into green tomato chutney.



Lettuces in the greenhouse late autumn. As the summer greenhouse crops finish steadily them with lettuces, peas and rocket.

- **April is a good time to prune your berry bushes:-**

BLACK CURRANTS: Cut the old dark coloured branches to the ground.

BRAMBLE BERRIES: Cut back all canes that have borne fruit this season and tie up the young shoots that haven't borne fruit.

RASPBERRIES: Remove every cane that bore fruit last year and dig out any suckers.

- **If you are going to plant bear rooted fruit trees this winter then now is the time to order them.**

Select varieties that will give you a staggered crop over the season. Apples will bear reasonably well without another variety to cross pollinate but pears need another partner, so if planting a single pear consider buying a multi grafted variety. Though you could risk it and plant a single pear tree in the hope that there are other pear trees in backyards in the immediate area which your pear tree can cross pollinate with.

- **Plant strawberries for next season's crop.**

While strawberries can also be planted in spring planting them in autumn will allow them to establish their root systems in readiness for spring growth. Strawberries like well drained acid soil so when preparing a bed for strawberries add plenty of manure (which is acidic) and sand. Also mulch the beds with pine

needles (which are also acidic) digging some of the needles into the soil to encourage them to break down. When planting strawberries only use certified virus free plants or runners that have come from plants that produced plenty of strawberries this year (a sign that they are likely to be virus free). Replace all strawberry plants that are older than three years old.

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The sealed blue drum contains home made liquid fertiliser concentrate. It is made by dangling a hessian bag in water filled with manures and blood and bone. Some Seazol has also been added.

WHAT TO DO IN THE GREENHOUSE

- **Clear greenhouse crops that have finished their run such as eggplant and cucumber and plant with lettuce seedlings, rocket and peas.**

Capsicum and tomato plants can be left in a little longer, capsicum should produce ripe fruit through to the end of May and tomato plants may even continue producing into June.

- **Set aside some space for seedling boxes as from April through to October seedlings are best grown in the shelter of the greenhouse.**

WHAT TO DO IN THE GARDEN

- **Continue to harvest and bottle fruit from late fruiting trees.**

As the fruit season ends clean and store your nets in a well ventilated dry space in preparation for next year.