



MIDWAY NURSERIES

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NEWSLETTER APRIL 2007

We have really appreciated the good weather this March, a great improvement over the last two years. Undoubtedly we will have a few set backs over the next few weeks and we'll soon be complaining that the ground is too dry but a fine March makes all the difference by giving the gardening season a good start.

Our local weather expert whose predictions proved true in February has passed on a couple more tips on what we might expect. "*If the wind is in the east on St Benedicts Day, it will neither chop nor change until the end of May.*" That was 21st March and I think that the wind was in the east on that day! Also "*As many mists in March as there are frosts in May*". I took note of mist on at least two mornings but there may well have been more. The moral of the tale is - don't put away your winter woollies yet and keep the frost fleece handy.

Pick of Our Plants for April

We have some good strong plants available of **Dicentra Spectabilis** or Bleeding Heart. (£4.99)

These easy to grow perennials grow in all soils in sun or light shade. The pink heart shaped flowers appear in spring to early summer dangling from arched stems. The foliage is an added attraction making this an essential plant for every garden.



Rhododendrons and Azaleas are deservedly popular plants for spring and early summer and are ideally suited to this part of the country where most of us have acidic soil. The

Rhododendron family is wide and diverse, from giants growing up to 30m tall down to tiny alpine creepers growing to only 5cm. Although we can't offer quite those two extremes we do have varieties ideally suited to the rock garden or containers and others that will grow to fill a good space in the shrub border. No garden should be without one member of this family.



The earliest **Clematis** to flower in the spring are those from the *alpina* and *macropetala* groups. Both species are ideal for the 'lazy' gardeners. They are fully hardy and need little or no pruning. Happy to scramble between shrubs and up trees they will also happily



cover a wall or fence. They can be grown in the open ground or in containers and come in various shades of blue, purple and pink. New for us this year is Clematis macropetala *Purple Spider* (shown left) which has really dark purple flowers.

Although past their flowering time we have managed to get in some Hamamelis or Witch Hazels. Strong plants of Pallida (yellow) and Dianne (red) are available at £21.95.

We now have a good range of **herbs** available. It's a good time to start a new herb garden or re-vitalise the old one. We also have a good choice of lavenders in small pots – the best way to plant a lavender hedge.

New seasons **water plants** will be in during the second half of the month. If you have any particular requests, do let us know and we can try to include them in the order.

We will also be having a fresh stock of **roses** in just after Easter.

Opening Times

In April, May and June we will be open
9am to 6pm Mondays to Fridays
9am to 5pm Saturdays and Sundays

Jobs For The Month

- Plant early potatoes at the start of the month and main crop later.
- Make sowings of vegetable seeds outside. With no chemical control of carrot root fly available use fleece over the plot to prevent the flies laying their eggs.
- Plant shallots and onion sets at any time this month.
- Plant out vegetables that have been grown under glass after careful hardening off. We will have plants of broad beans, lettuces, cabbages and cauliflowers available this month.
- Sow hardy annuals such as calendula, nigella, godetia, nasturtiums etc. outside
- Trim the winter flowering heathers once they have finished flowering.
- Cut off the flowers of daffodils, tulips and other spring flowering bulbs once faded but let the leaves die down naturally and apply a general fertiliser.
- Sow new lawns or lay turf.
- Keep spraying the roses. If you haven't already done so, apply rose fertiliser and mulch around the roots
- Plant shrubs (an especially good month for planting evergreens and conifers). It's a good idea to add composted manure or garden compost to the soil when planting.
- Apply a general fertiliser over shrub and herbaceous borders. Pelleted chicken manure is an easy but effective solution.
- Make sure you have some fleece available to cover vulnerable plants during cold nights.

Hanging Baskets

It's time to bring in your baskets for re-filling. We will be starting on planting baskets up soon after Easter. This year we are charging £14.95 for a 12" Refill and £17.95 for a 14" Refill, and a little more for new baskets. Even if you haven't already got baskets, if you order in advance we can work to your own requirements regarding colour schemes, favourite flowers, situation etc. Ask for details.

Behind The Scenes

April is always a busy month. If the weather is good we hope to get plenty of customers, which will keep at least one of us, (sometimes two) full-time at the till.

April is also the month when we have most deliveries of plants and although most come in pre-priced it is surprising how time-consuming it is to get them on display. We also need to top up our front display with plants that we have grown at the nursery that are growing behind the scenes. We have to be constantly checking our back beds for what is ready for sale. It's no good having a wonderful display that's hidden from view.

This month is also our main month for bedding plant production. Each week we have deliveries of trays of plant plugs and these require potting up as soon as possible. Meanwhile we are still sowing and pricking on seedlings. The tunnels fill up very quickly. At the end of the month we start filling baskets, which helps by freeing up floor space. We start with the bizzzy lizzy and begonia baskets, which are planted directly from plugs and then move on to the mixed baskets.

We grow a fantastic range of fuchsias for pots and baskets from rooted cuttings, which we pinch out for a second time three or four weeks after potting. These make fantastic bushy plants but we usually have to double space them at the same time so that they don't suffer by being too squashed.

Last year we spent a lot of time in April wheeling up supplies of compost from our back area. This year we had less pallets delivered in the autumn to relieve the responsibility on our aging staff and us! Our son Jack, now 14 and potentially as strong as us has volunteered (at a suitable fee) to move the stock we do have behind the scenes. This year we will be having more in-season deliveries that will be directly unloaded into the car-park.

Even if we experience some April showers this month, there will still be many hours of watering ahead of us. The last few weeks of dry weather and strong winds have certainly had a drying effect and we will need more than an odd shower to balance it out. In any case, the rain never gets to the tunnels. However in spite of his moaning and groaning Keith loves the opportunity to escape into the tunnels with his hose pipe to get away from the otherwise all female work-force. He would be even more enthusiastic if we could rig up the TV so that he could be watching the cricket world cup at the same time!

Good Gardening

Celia and Keith

PS If you would like us to e-mail this monthly newsletter to you, e-mail us at midway@plantsmiths.co.uk

