



GLOSSARY

What do 'the experts' mean by.....?

Mid-winter	-	January
Late winter	-	February
Early spring	-	March
Mid spring	-	April
Late spring	-	May
Early summer	-	June
Mid-summer	-	July
Late summer	-	August
Early autumn	-	September
Mid-autumn	-	October
Late autumn	-	November
Early winter	-	December

Annual: Plants that complete their life cycle in one year.

Biennial: Plants that produce leafy growth in the first year, then flower, set seeds and die the following year.

Bolting: When a plant starts to flower and then produce seeds. This can affect several crops - leafy vegetables, beetroots, and radish, with spinach and onions being particularly affected. It usually occurs when there's a long spell of hot weather and the plant roots become dry (difficult to recall now after all this rain, but remember the lovely hot May bank holiday period....?). As soon as you start to notice the thick, strong stem, remove it close to the base.



Chitting: Six weeks or so before the last frost is expected, place seed potatoes in egg boxes or shallow trays out of direct sunlight with the buds (or eyes) uppermost. When the shoots are about 2- 5cm long they can be planted out into the soil.

Cloches: A cover used to protect plants from cold weather. Can be made of plastic or glass.



Cultivar: Plants that have developed from the original cultivated species (rather than the wild), either by accident or breeding.

Crop Rotation: The practice of growing vegetables in a different place each year to avoid pests and diseases building up.

Deciduous: Plants that shed their leaves at the end of the growing season (usually in autumn and winter) and renew them in the spring time.

Double Digging: Involves a trench being dug one spit deep (spade-depth) and the soil transported to the other end of the plot. The bottom of the trench is 'forked over' to the depth of the fork then compost or manure is added and the roots of perennial weeds removed. The adjacent trench is then dug a spit deep and the soil from that put into the first trench, and so on until the end of the bed. If this is done when you first prepare your beds, it will not have to be repeated for at least another five years, depending on soil type. Be careful not to dig up the subsoil when preparing the soil as it has no immediate nutritional value.

Earth Up: Pulling or hoeing earth up around plant stems to protect their roots (or tubers in the case of potatoes).

Fertilisers: Often artificially produced and available in concentrated powder, liquid or granular forms. They're a quick source of plant food. [Can also be homemade with nettles and comfrey.](#)

Foliar Feed: A liquid fertilizer that is applied to healthy plant foliage. Nutrients are taken up by the plant very quickly using this method.

Frost Hardy: Plants that can withstand temperatures down to -5oC (23oF)

Fully Hardy: Plants that tolerate frost without protection.

Green Manure: The practice of planting lush green crops into soil that would otherwise be left empty for six weeks or more, with the sole intention of digging them back in before flowering. The many benefits of green manuring include suppressing weeds, improving soil structure, releasing valuable nutrients, preventing soil erosion, as well as fixing nitrogen (in some crops).

Half hardy: Plants that aren't able to withstand frost, but are usually able to withstand temperatures down to 0°C (32°F)

Horticultural Fleece: A lightweight, man-made fabric used to keep frost and insects off plants. Can be draped directly over plants or over cloche hoops.

Hungry Gap: Usually March to May, when most of the winter crops have been harvested and before the spring vegetables are ready.

Manure: Usually refers to bulky products that came from animals. They act as soil improvers and are a source of slow release plant foods that earthworms love.

Mulching: A layer of compost, bark chippings, well-rotted manure or other material that is spread on the soil after watering to help retain moisture in the ground, suppress weed growth, and depending upon material, add nutrients.

Organic Matter: material that has originated from organisms that were once living (such as straw, seaweed, peat moss, plant residue, compost, ground bark and animal manures).

Perennial: Plants that usually live for at least three years.

pH: The degree of alkalinity or acidity. Basic PH testing kits can be purchased from garden centres. If the pH is too low you may need to add lime to raise the levels to grow certain types of vegetables (such as cabbages). The calcium contained in limestone also helps with soil



structure. Caution: never add lime and fertiliser at the same time as they can react, releasing ammonia gas.

Setting: When pea and bean flowers are pollinated and the young seed pod starts to form. French beans self-pollinate so a good 'set' will be pretty much guaranteed. Runner beans don't, so have to rely fairly much on insects pollinating them.

Soil Structure: The correct definition is "*the coming together of the primary soil particles (sand, silt, clay) into larger, separable units.*" Or in other words, the better the soil structure, the less likelihood of waterlogging in clay soils and better drainage in sandy soils.

Sub Soil: The section of soil that lies below the top soil. Usually recognised by a change in colour and texture and devoid of organic matter.

Suckers: Roots that are sent out from the parent plant to form new plants. Can become invasive if not kept under control.

Tender: Plant that is vulnerable to low temperatures.

Top Dress: Putting a fertiliser onto the soil once the crop has started to grow.

Top Soil: The darkest layer of soil beneath the grass. The main plant nutrients are in this layer.

Variety: Plants that have developed with slight differences from wild plant species and are often then brought into cultivation.