

Your Garden in August

Spring is around the corner, so enjoy the last of the winter gardening wherever you are!

Late winter brings a mixed bag of weather with wind, rain, cold and the promise of warmer days ahead all on the cards. In colder areas keep an eye out for late frosts and in warmer areas be ready to water if a burst of hot or windy weather arrives.

Late frost and why it can affect plants

Frosts that occur as new growth resumes in late winter and spring can be very harmful to garden plants and can affect flowering and fruiting as well as damaging growth. Problems arise as new growth and buds are highly vulnerable to being killed or damaged by frost. Frost damage may look like burning or blackening. Frost damaged flowers are unlikely to be pollinated and form fruit.

If late frosts occur in your area, keep an eye on the sky and the weather forecast. Cold, still nights, where temperatures drop towards 1 degree C, can mean frosts overnight. To protect new growth and flowers cover them with fleece, shadecloth or a sheet overnight. Regular applications of **Seasol** every 2 weeks also helps to strengthen plants from the inside out to help them cope with frost and cold weather.

If frost occurs, try watering over the plants before the sun rises to reduce damage (although water pipes may be frozen).



Planting vegetables in late winter

Get a head start on late spring and summer crops with early plantings. In frost-free zones start planting tomatoes, cucumbers, beans and zucchini later this month. In areas that are still cold, especially at night, plant seedlings into containers and keep them warm and protected to plant into the garden in early spring.

There's also time to start late crops of cool season vegetables including English spinach and snow peas. These plants will give quick and nutritious crops while other vegetables establish. To keep your vegies healthy and happy for a bumper crop apply **PowerFeed PRO SERIES for Tomatoes & Vegetables** every two weeks.

August is also an ideal time to plant carrots, parsnips and potatoes. For more information on growing individual vegies check out our [vegie guide](#).

If you don't have a vegetable garden, now is a great time to install a raised vegetable bed in a sunny spot so you can grow some vegetables and take your first steps towards being self-sufficient and reducing food miles.

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Repot your plants now

Later winter, as days warm and growth begins, is the ideal time to repot containerised plants that have outgrown their pots. Repot both indoor and outdoor potted plants.

Signs that plants need repotting include a drop in the potting mix level in the pot, a potted plant that's unstable and easily blown over, and a plant that's not thriving and needs frequent watering. Also, ensure water is going down into the potting mix.

If it is running down the side of the pot and out the bottom or pooling on top, then the potting mix may need a soil wetter such as [Seasol Super Soil Wetter & Conditioner](#).

Repot plants into a slightly larger pot. Use fresh good quality premium potting mix such as [Seasol Advanced Potting Mix](#). If the pot is already as large as you can manage, lightly prune the root system before replanting it into the same pot with fresh potting mix.



Tips on repotting plants

While repotting, check for a healthy root system and remove weeds and any pests. If the root system has become highly compacted or is spiralling in the container (known as root bound), soak the roots in a bucket of [Seasol](#) for a couple of hours (mix 40mL of concentrate per 9 litres of water) and gently prune and tease out the roots. At replanting, make sure that the roots are completely covered and surrounded by potting mix with no air pockets. Use [Seasol](#) to water the plant into its new container.

If the plant is too big to repot, use [Seasol Potting Mix Booster](#) to refresh the potting mix and top up with existing potting mix. Potting mix can also be refreshed by removing cores of potting mix (for example using a bulb planter) and replacing with fresh potting mix. Also, check drainage holes at the base of the pot are clear and not blocked with roots.

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Stars of the garden

Deciduous magnolias are eye-catching bloomers in late winter with large white, pink or claret red flowers carried on bare stems.

While many range from small to stately feature trees including *Magnolia x soulangeana* and *M. denudata*, there are varieties that grow as large flower-filled shrubs including the star magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*).

Enjoy this annual flower show of magnolias in your garden or neighbourhood. As the month progresses, leaf buds open and flowers fade and the show is over for another year.



Looking after deciduous magnolias

To get the most from deciduous magnolias, place them where they have room to spread their branches without pruning. Give them shelter from frost as buds form as frost can ruin the flowers before they open. Also provide shade from hot summer conditions, particularly hot westerly sun and drying winds. Water plants well during late spring and summer and feed with a granular fertiliser such as **Seasol plus Nutrients Roses & Flowers**. Apply every 6 to 8 weeks to improve soil and plant health.

It is not just gardeners who love magnolias. Local wildlife particularly possums are also partial to their blooms. Protect free-standing trees from possums with a metal or plastic band around the lower part of tree's trunk so it can't be climbed. Holes in buds are usually caused by birds, especially bullfinches, an attractive but introduced species.

Five important jobs for late-winter

1. Add colour to gardens with late winter-flowering shrubs including japonica camellia and deciduous magnolias.
2. Every two weeks apply an all round liquid fertiliser such as **PowerFeed All Purpose including Natives** to help leafy vegetables stay productive and keep annual flowers in bloom. Boosted with liquid compost it is safe on all plants including natives, vegies, seedlings and fruiting plants.
3. Finish planting bare-rooted plants. If there's no permanent position available, pot up bare-rooted plants into containers with potting mix.
4. Protect new plantings especially new seedlings from damaging winds with temporary covers or screens, regular watering and **Seasol**.
5. Turn compost in compost heaps using a fork to encourage the breakdown of materials. If the heap is dry, lightly moisten it. If wet, cover during rain events until it dries.



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