

THINGS TO DO



Things to keep you busy in the veg garden over the next couple of weeks are:

- **Feed** spring cabbages and brassicas (left) with a rich feed. I use poultry manure, which is available in pelleted form if you don't keep your own hens.
- It's always a good idea to put a **mulch** around fruit bushes or fruit trees at this time. It helps to conserve moisture later in the year, when it's most needed, and will also prevent the development of weeds, which would cause competition.
- It's a good idea to buy some **fleece** to use as protection, especially when you're sowing vegetable seeds directly outside. Seeds to consider are carrots, parsnip, radish, spinach, and leeks. These are ready for sowing now.
- Start regular **weeding**. The earlier you get this going the better as it will pay dividends when it comes to busy times in the garden.
- Keep bird feeders topped up and make sure that water is provided in bird baths. If frozen after very cold nights, **break** the ice.
- Slugs and snails will soon become a nuisance. Keep the vegetable patch **tidy** and clear of falling leaves. Use organic methods for control, such as Nemaslug.

'One of the most innovative teachers I have met is Frenchman Tanguy de Toulgoet'

Top marks: Tanguy de Toulgoet's gardening courses are very popular



**GARDENING COURSES
WILL DEVELOP
YOUR SKILLS**

GET TOP MARKS BY TAKING A CLASS OR TWO

Though potatoes are a good place to start, don't forget that this is a great time to start growing from seed. You might consider taking up a gardening course. There are quite a few around the country and you'll find ads in local newspapers. Some of them specialise in organic methods.

Others take a more general approach and some concentrate on home produce. One of the most innovative teachers I have met in recent times is a Frenchman, Tanguy de Toulgoet, who practises biodynamic methods that are extremely useful when it comes

to growing your own produce. This man is a talented gardener with a lot of valuable information to share with anyone starting out or anyone interested in developing their skills.

To find out more information about his courses and his style of gardening, check out his website (www.dunmorecountry.school.ie) which gives a list of dates and plenty of detail about what you can expect if you decide to take part, or you can email Tanguy at toulgoet@eircom.net. Places are always in demand so it's worthwhile putting your name forward as early as possible.



SOW NOW, REAP LATER

If you have a greenhouse, now is the time to get planting. There is a great array of seeds to choose from and I have started sowing tomato plants. These need protection from the cold and it might be worthwhile investing in a small heated propagator to get young plants off to a good start. But by starting early you'll get real value when it comes to harvesting a crop in summer. Thompson & Morgan seed catalogue offers a comprehensive range of vegetables and it's also worthwhile contacting the Irish Seed Savers Association, which is based in Scariff. They offer many historic, hard to find vegetable seeds and it's worthwhile becoming a member as it will make a wider range available to you. They also, earlier in the season, offer seed potatoes - many of historic interest.

