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Springtime –  
a new life cycle is starting...

Gardening teaches you that nature has a yearly rhythm. Getting in touch with that rhythm will give you a feel for when your garden needs enhanced attention and when it needs a rest. In Springtime it needs lots of TLC (tender, loving care)!



## Building a hotbed

A hotbed is a place where your seeds can grow into young plants that can later be moved to the patch. The hotbed stores moisture and warmth. You can easily build your own hotbed. All you need is an old window frame, a few bricks, a spade and some wooden sticks that are strong enough to support the window frame when it is open.



### Hotbed step by step



Choose a sunny spot that is protected from wind. Loosen the soil where you want to put the hotbed. Define the outline with the bricks.



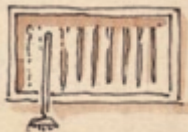
Remove soil from inside the hotbed to a depth equal to the digging end of your spade.



Then fill the hotbed with horse manure. Put compost on top.



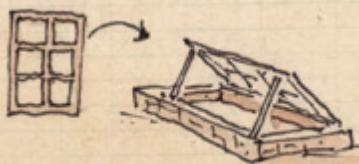
Next, take a broomstick and mark out grooves ready for sowing.



After sowing, sprinkle some water on top.



Finally, gently lay the window frame on top of the bricks. Use the wooden sticks to keep the window frame open. You can adjust the height of the frame according to the outside temperature. If it's warm outside, open the frame wide. If the weather suddenly gets cold, close it. At night, put a thick layer of straw on top of the frame to protect your plants.



## Prepare your garden patches

Later, some of the plants in your hotbed will be planted in the garden. But others can go straight outside. So to prepare your garden patches, let's give them some attention.

First remove all the leaves and dry branches, and get rid of the winter dirt. When you're finished this important task, your compost heap will be very glad to take the waste for you!



Put a lot of compost on the clean soil. Compost keeps the moisture in and activates the microorganisms that are necessary for root development. Keep a regular look out for weeds. Spring is the time when they start growing, so get rid of them now before they start to cause you problems! When removing weeds always make sure to pull up the entire plant, including its root system. Otherwise they will just grow back!





If there are too many of them or your garden is too big, it might be time to consider bringing in some ducks. Remember, ducks love snails!

By the way: springtime is also snail time. So keep a close eye on the spots where they like to go. Where are the slightly shady and moist areas in your garden? Don't plant your lettuce there! Check for those slimy creatures and collect them.

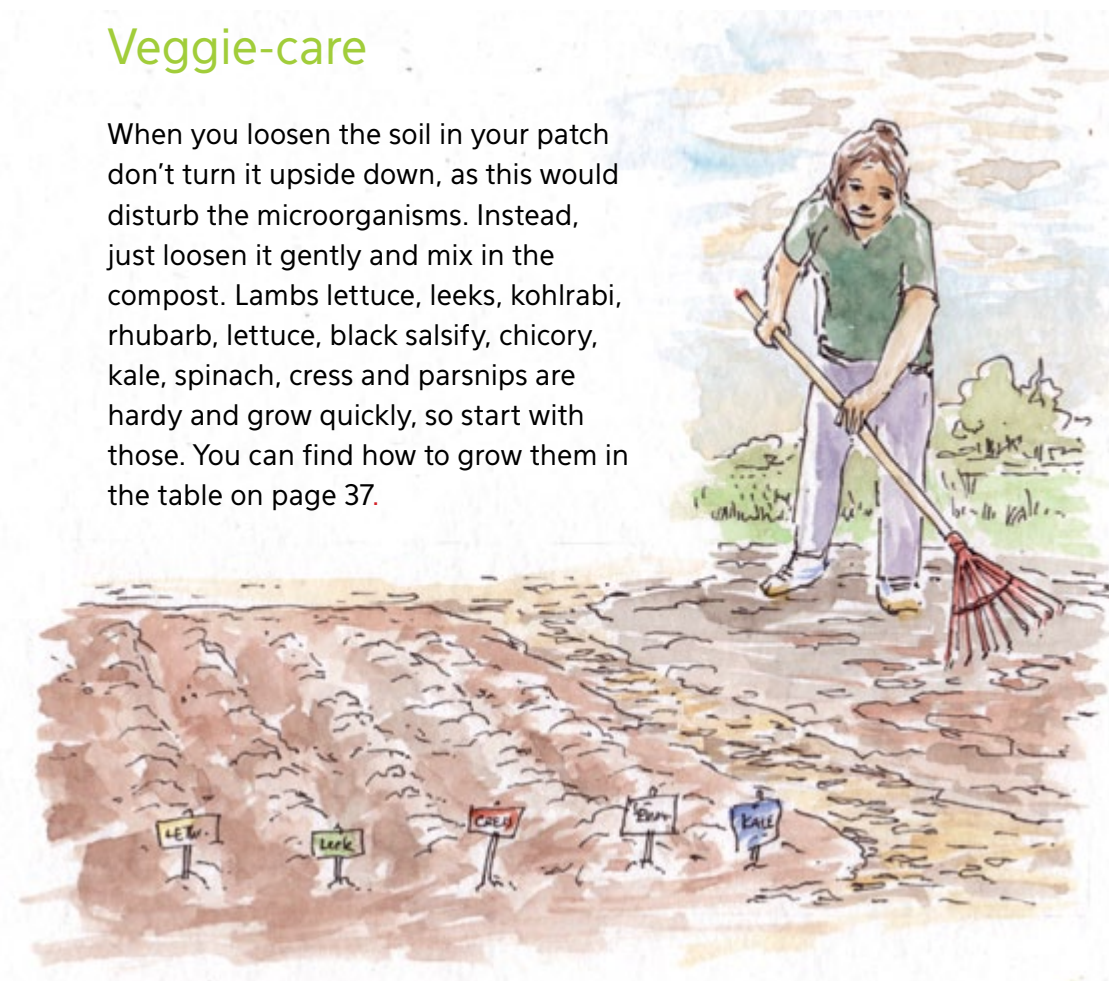


In early spring, your fruit trees need a good trim. First, cut all the dead branches off, then remove some of the thinner ones. The tree can then put all its energy into the remaining ones. Raspberries and blackberry bushes need a trim too, and some might need assistance from additional sticks to ensure they can support their own weight.



## Veggie-care

When you loosen the soil in your patch don't turn it upside down, as this would disturb the microorganisms. Instead, just loosen it gently and mix in the compost. Lambs lettuce, leeks, kohlrabi, rhubarb, lettuce, black salsify, chicory, kale, spinach, cress and parsnips are hardy and grow quickly, so start with those. You can find how to grow them in the table on page 37.



Don't forget that young plants always need a moist environment. They cannot store a lot of water yet so never let them dry out, the damage to them would be too severe. Rain water is always best as it is soft and contains no chlorine or other chemicals. So try to collect as much rainwater as you can.

## Herbs












For thousands of years, herbs have helped humans and animals to treat their diseases. If wild horses have colic, for example, they search for chamomile fields. Sheep look out for thyme if they need to deworm themselves. A working knowledge of herbal healthcare comes naturally to animals!















For humans, fresh herbs are not only tasty, they enrich every meal and strengthen the immune system. Most herbs can be planted in spring. Keep in mind however that they are sensitive to cold. So make sure you put some in the hotbed first, until you can be sure there are no more temperature drops. Peppermint and Melissa can be easily multiplied by dividing them at their roots, thus giving you two plants out of one. They make a good neighbor for most plants, so you can plant them on almost every patch.



Here is a selection of herbs that are healthy and easy to grow:

Name	Sowing	Groove depth (inches)	Distance between rows (inches)
Basil 	February: hotbed, May: outside	0.1 to 0.2	15 x 10
Winter savory 	March, outside	Flat	12 x 9
Savory 	April to June, outside	Flat	12 x 9
Borage 	April to June, outside	0.2 to 0.4	12 x 9
Dill 	April to June, outside	0.8 to 1.2	12 x 4
Oregano 	February: hotbed, May: outside	0	15 x 10
Fennel 	March to April, outside	0.4 to 0.8	15 x 10
Chervil 	March to June, outside	0	12 x 4
Coriander 	March to April, outside	0.4 to 0.8	12 x 4
Caraway 	March to June, outside	0.4 to 0.8	12 x 4
Lavender 	February: hotbed, May: outside	0	15 x 10

Name	Sowing	Groove depth (inches)	Distance between rows (inches)
Lovage 	March: hotbed, April: outside	0.4 to 0.8	16 x 20
Sweet majoram 	April to May, outside	flat	15 x 10
Pimpinella 	March, outside	0	15 x 10
Sage 	March: hotbed, May: outside	0	15 x 10
Common sorrel 	April, outside	0	15 x 10
Chives 	February: hotbed, April to July: outside	0.8 to 1	15 x 10
Black cumin 	End of April, outside	0.4	15 x 10
Crown daisy 	April, outside	0	15 x 10
Thyme 	March: hotbed, May: outside	0	15 x 10
Cress 	February: hotbed, April to September: outside	0	12 x 9
Hyssop 	Middle of March: hotbed, April: outside	0	15 x 10
Balm 	Middle of March: hotbed, May: outside	0	16 x 10