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**ORGANIC ALLOTMENT**  
**BLOG**

## Caroline Foley's expert guide to a few things to do in July

There is still time for great summer sowing



From pea seed to pea in three months

I dropped into the supermarket last week to buy some carrot seed only to discover that the whole seed stand had vanished. Seed sowing was over until next year. I was surprised by this because there is still time to grow quite a lot of produce from seed for eating in summer and early autumn.

Some of the Japanese varieties of turnips sown in early July will be golf ball size within the month. Turnip '[Market Express](#)' is first past the post with a 30-day turnaround. The RHS Award winner 'Tokyo Cross' will be ready five days later. Its additional attribute is that it won't get 'pithy' or coarse if you leave it to grow on for winter eating.

Young mustardy turnip leaves are spicy thrown into salads or stir fried. Incidentally, remember that turnips come under the brassica group in the rotation scheme – not the root family as one might be forgiven to expect – so they should go in the cabbage patch.

Young beetroots and turnips make [good cooking partners](#). Among the best for a quick crop of beetroot is 'Burpees Golden', a mild flavoured, amber-fleshed cultivar which will be ready to eat in seven weeks. Blood red beetroot 'Pronto' is just as quick. It is delicious at the ping pong stage and produces exceptionally tasty tops.



Carrots can be eaten at any stage and don't need to mature

If you are happy to eat them young, carrots will grow neck and neck with beetroots and turnips. They come in a dazzling array of colours these days, however, for tried and tested speed, go for early varieties such as 'Early Nantes', 'Nantes 2', and 'Amsterdam Forcing'. Carrots can be eaten at any stage of their growth and don't need to ripen or mature.

It is getting on the tight side now to sow summer squash. However, the 'Patty Pan' – the scallop or flying saucer squash – is at its best when only an inch or two across. Eaten like this, it only takes 49 days from seed to plate.

Dwarf French beans are quicker than the climbing types. Good varieties for sowing now are the 'baby' varieties that have been bred to be at their most delicious and nutritious when still small. 'Speedy' is probably is the record breaker being ready in seven weeks. The RHS Award of Garden Merit 'Annabel', is another good choice and would pass the post about a week later.

Although they don't care for heat, you can get a crop of peas in just over three months providing you site them well and keep watered. Mangetout, being immature, are faster and a better bet. 'Oregon Sugar Pod', for example, takes 68 days on average. It is also worth growing a few for the young pea shoots, which are a delicacy in salads and can be ready to harvest in two weeks.



Radishes are ready to eat within four weeks

Baby leaf salads can be kept going throughout the year with a six week turnaround and varying the choice of leaves to the time of year. Planted under the beans or peas they will get some refreshing shade at midday.

Racing greens – eg, leaf beet, rainbow chard, komatsuna, and chrysanthemum greens – can all be slotted in and enjoyed well before the first frosts. Pak choi can be eaten as baby leaf in as little as three weeks and as a headed crop in six.

Radishes will be ready to eat in four weeks. 'Cherrybelle' and 'French Breakfast' are two of the most popular and reliable types.

As the schools break up, your thoughts might turn to a bit of nature study. I was surprised to find I could keep some three year olds totally absorbed for a good half hour by providing magnifying glasses (£1 each at the market) for an informal bug study.



Sunflowers are tailor-made for kids

Butterflies are always particularly fascinating and, while you would need to do a little research into particular food plants if you were to be serious about it, you can rely upon lavender and – even more so – on buddleia, which will flower non-stop until next term, to draw in a good selection.

Sunflower seeds are tailor-made for young children. They will grow almost as you watch them. Each visit will show progress. Depending on variety, you could grow a giant of up to 6m, a good talking point through the summer holidays. When choosing the site however, take into account that the flowers always face east towards the rising sun.

*Next month, what to sow for winter.*

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**soundsofOregon**

29 June 2011 6:06PM

Here in Oregon, we are on a latitude with southern France; and July and August are typically hottish and dry, with cool nights. I think I've said this before, here, but wot the heck...with beans, a final end-July sowing takes us up to frost-time: fresh green beans on vigorous plants are quite the treat when everything else summery in the garden is yellowing and slowing down. The plants from a late-July sowing won't be as productive, but they will be the last 'pick-mes' available until the frost comes in. Then there's potatoes. Adventurous souls hereabouts succession sow them July through the end of August. Most potatoes are 55-70 day maturities - and Aug, Sept and half of October amounts to 75 days. Long enough. If we have an unexpectedly early frost in mid-September from an August planting, we will still have lots of baby potatoes. Of late we've been experimenting with sowing potatoes in greenhouses in October under mulch. I see much talk of potato blight around this blog. Are any of you trying the blight-resistant varieties?

That's the summer crops. But I am just about to begin my biggest seeding push of the year - for the fall and winter garden. I think of the summer garden as my small garden. It's the October through May eight-month harvest window that holds me up most of the year and so I devote most of my energy to it. The first couple of weeks of July are when I seed most of my major fall and overwintering Brassicas in trays, and my carrots, beets and parsnips in the ground (July-sown parsnips are nowhere near as big as those sown earlier in the year, but are much easier to dig). Leeks were sown months ago and Brussels sprouts earlier this month. Just when everybody dolls up and heads off to summer festivals up and down the west coast, I pick up my watering wand and digging fork and hunker down for the Big Prep. I'm busy gathering my seed, wits and gumption. There is ground to dig. I love this time of year.

n

**jaredbrown**

29 June 2011 10:59PM

Glad to hear it's not too late for sunflowers! I will get some into the ground this weekend. Last winter we hung the dried heads up on the bird feeder. The nuthatches and tits wasted no time picking the seeds out of them.

**deborahsm**

30 June 2011 12:30AM

Apropos of nothing, I have to report my good news. I discovered a tall bee orchid in the long meadow grass in my corsham garden. I can't describe how happy it made me, I had to lie down and worship it for visiting me. It is so mysterious, I wonder how it came, a single seed from where? Keble Martin says unknown in the south west,  
[ some time ago now that his brilliant book was published]

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perhaps orchids are on the up in these parts!

Also this year a clutch of big beefy morel mushrooms, why suddenly did they appear? I know they grow on burnt ground but only one was near the garden bonfire circle... the rest were spread around.

A few years ago I found a double white campion in the orchard, I marked it but someone else inadvertently scythed it and it has never returned.



**sparclear**

30 June 2011 11:17AM

shared and enjoyed with you, **deborahsm**, truly a 'champagne moment'.

My botanist friend, who loves Keble Martin just as much as we all do, agrees with me KM's now out of date, alas many things once 'common' are now rare.

Wildflower websites being modernised every single minute these days, showing how orchid patterns are changing - yes - and they indicate *the topsoil is healthy*. Seeds are millionfold, tiny like dust, will soon spread.....

.....also with you, **jaredbrown**, lovely image of natural birdseed provision. In wintertime always especially grateful to espy birds from house window, do you have a good spot in mind?

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**nahema**

30 June 2011 12:04PM

Such useful information about growing time, thanks Caroline .I have clipped this and I know I will refer to it again.It is important and so often missing on seed instructions.

I rather think the supermarkets may have missed a small marketing trick there! Not every one is so organized when winter ordering their seeds.

@deborahsm, how lovely. I hope you find more and more each year. What a wonder!

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**adamwilliams**

5 July 2011 2:16PM

Great Experiments...

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