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# A Note From the Editor

Welcome to our April/May edition.

April is the month of warm spring sunshine, Easter holidays where families and friends gather, chocolate eggs, hot cross buns, long walks, spring flowers and St George's Day.

Egg hunts have been a beloved tradition in England since the reign of Queen Victoria and generations of children have delighted in the thrill of running around a garden or park in the hope that they might discover a treasured prize. Many stately homes are holding spring events this year which promise to be wonderful days out.

Spring gifts don't just have to be for children, adults will enjoy receiving some artisanal chocolates or treats, a bunch of flowers or spring plant or even the invitation for a walk to a local coffee shop for a friendly catch up.

May is a wonderfully comforting warm and sunny month here in England, and with the mild, light evenings many of us are dusting off our barbecues, strolling to the pub or local restaurant for a delicious meal or picnicking in the park and watching the birds nesting in trees that are fast filling with leaf. Nature is in full force now; spring flowers are in bloom and many of us are enjoying the feeling of a new start that fills us with optimism for the months ahead.

May is a very English month. There is nothing quite as English as listening to the thwack of leather on willow and polite clapping as local teams play a game of cricket before retiring to the clubhouse for tea or watching skilled crown green bowlers pit their skills against an opposing team in gentle but determined competition. All around mowers hum as lawns are trimmed, and radios play timeless Motown classics reminding us how lovely the month of May is.

Here are some dates for your calendar:  
3rd April - Good Friday (Bank Holiday);  
5th April - Easter Sunday; 6th April -  
Easter Monday (Bank Holiday); 23rd  
April - St. George's Day; 4th May - Early  
May Bank Holiday; 25th May - Spring  
Bank Holiday.

As always, we ask you to please remember to mention Stonesthrow Directories when calling our Advertisers.

However you chose to spend the next couple of months - please remember to keep your heart and your business local.

Yours, Stonesthrow Publications.

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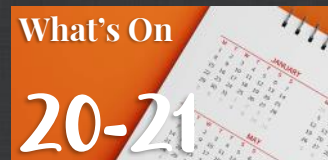
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# Affordable Luxury: Rethinking the Garden Room

Creating more space at home doesn't have to mean a costly extension. Across the West Midlands, garden rooms are becoming a smarter, more cost-effective way to add space, giving you something practical, flexible, and built to last.

## What Does 'Affordable' Really Mean?

When it comes to garden rooms, 'affordable' is often misunderstood, and many focus on the lowest upfront price. While a poorly built garden room may save you money initially, without proper insulation, professional installation or durable construction, it can become costly to maintain and repair, or even unusable in winter. Affordability is about long-term value, investing in a space you can use year-round, for years to come.

## An Easier Way to Create Space

Compared to traditional brick and mortar extensions, garden rooms are a hassle-free way to create extra space. Installation is faster, disruption is minimal, and the result is a room that can be used for work, hobbies or relaxation, just steps from home. From home offices and gyms to creative studios or entertainment spaces, garden cabins are being designed around how people actually live.

## Affordable Luxury, Without Compromise

For those looking to keep the cost of their garden room down, **Cabin Master's Studio Range** offers the solution. With set sizes and specifications, these ready-to-use buildings remove the need for a full bespoke design, helping to keep your new studio budget-friendly.



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## Designed Around You

Of course, **bespoke garden rooms** are an option for those wanting complete flexibility. From layout and glazing to internal paint colours and premium cladding options, a tailored design allows homeowners to create a space that fits their exact needs, whether for work, relaxation, or a bit of both.

## Built for Everyday Living

Modern garden rooms aren't just an add-on anymore. With full insulation and professional installation, they're designed to be used every day, in every season, just like any other room in your home. Done properly, a garden room doesn't just give you more space, it gives you a better way to use it.

Visit **Cabin Master's Studley show site** to explore the range, chat with their friendly team of garden building experts, and see what's possible for your own home.

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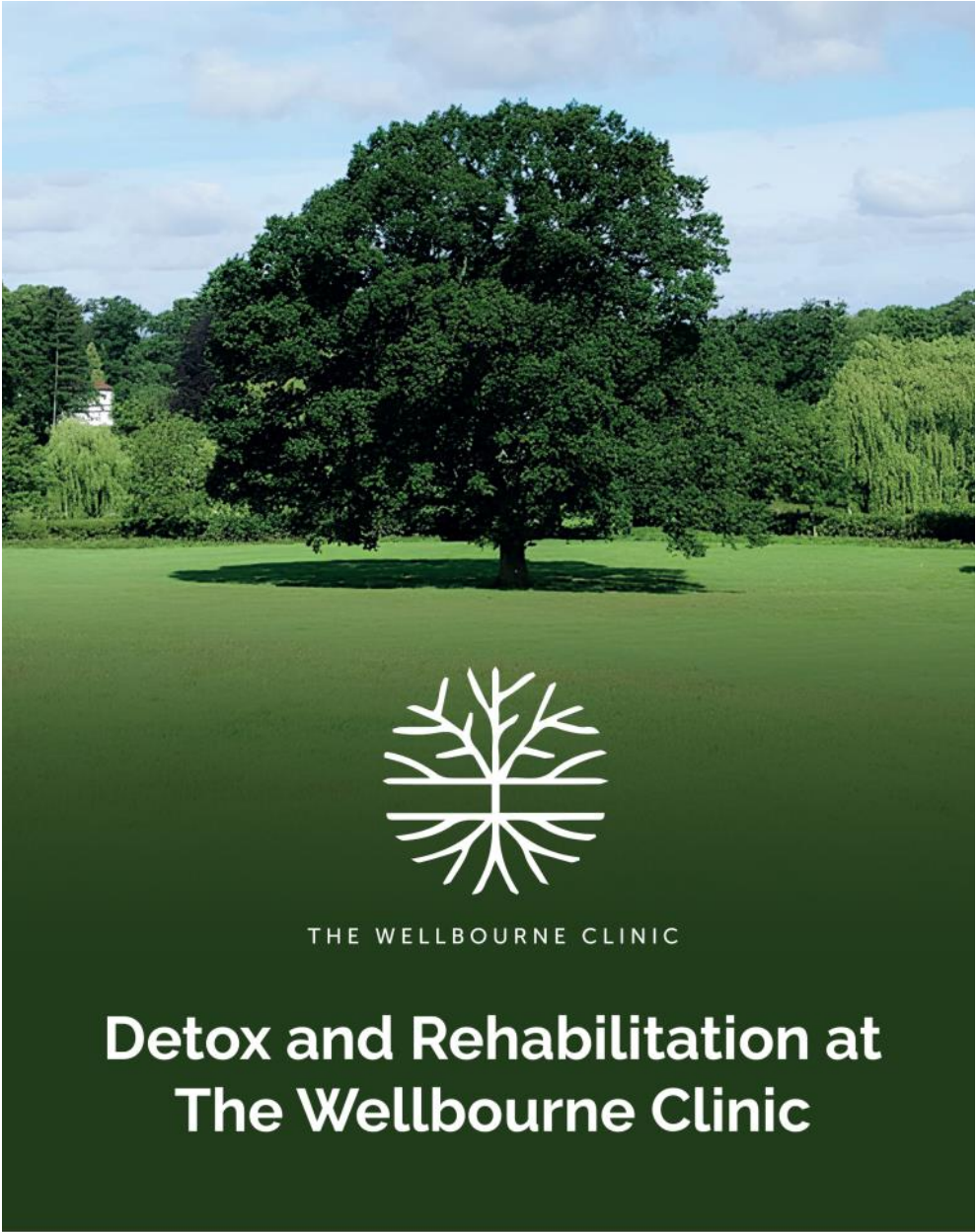
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# Dementia Care focus

*With good advice, careful consideration and a person-centred approach choosing the right care for someone with dementia can help them live well.*

With almost a million people living with dementia in the UK, and that set to increase by around forty per cent by 2030 the condition is often referred to as the UK's biggest health and social care crisis. But with good care people suffering from dementia can live good lives.

## DEMENTIA

Dementia is a syndrome, a group of related symptoms, and it is mainly associated with the decline of certain brain functions which include memory loss, but also includes thinking speed, mood, movement, understanding and others. Alzheimer's disease is one of the most common types of dementia along with vascular dementia but there are numerous others.

## UNDERSTANDING THEIR NEEDS

Many people who suffer from dementia have complex needs, which range from the need to feel safe, to the need to take medication properly and regularly to the need to maintain their dignity and to maintain their selfhood. Any dementia care needs to focus on meeting these needs and any other needs that are specific to the individual.

## RESEARCH CARE OPTIONS

When considering care options family members need to undertake extensive research into what help is available. This can begin with support to live at home through to living in a care or nursing home. If you have been helping someone live independently or semi independently but as symptoms have worsened a needs assessment will be required from social services. Your local GP is a good place to begin this process and seek advice, guidance and support.

## EVALUATE FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Dementia sufferers have extensive needs but there is help out there. Care homes are assessed by the Care Quality Commission and the most recent report is a good place for families to access an initial assessment.



## LOCATION AND FACILITIES

The location of a care facility can have an impact on the ability of someone with dementia to live well, and being close to friends and family can have a massive impact on their health. However, because dementia requires higher levels of specialist care whether there is an appropriate care or nursing home with the facilities to care for people is also an important factor.

## CONSIDER COST AND FUNDING

The cost of caring for someone with dementia can be considerably higher than for those without it. There should be 24-hour cover, with specific trained staff who understand dementia and can create and implement a care plan to help your loved ones live well and be happy. This specialist care makes dementia care cost relatively high. There is financial assistance out there, but this is often means tested. Your local GP will be able to offer advice and put you in touch with care specialists to allow informed decision making.

Choosing the right care for your loved one involves many factors but if they are able, it should involve the person with dementia as much as possible so they can live their best life.



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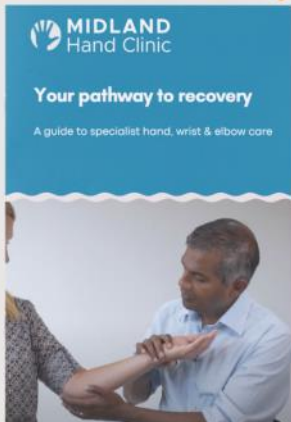
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Spire Parkway Hospital 0121 7041451  
GP Healthcare Knowle 0121 7962777

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# How to save your pet from loneliness



Is your pet lonely? Find out by exploring the subtle signs that a lot of us miss.

They're fed, walked, stroked and adored, so how could your pet possibly be lonely?!

In truth, loneliness in pets is one of the most common and misunderstood behavioural issues vets and trainers see, and it often hides in plain sight.

Part of that is because it doesn't present itself in the same way as it does for us humans – after all, loneliness doesn't look like your dog staring sadly out of the window all day!

Instead, it looks like 'naughty' behaviour. It looks like a suddenly chewed shoe, an accident on the carpet, a cat that's gone aloof, or a dog that won't settle even after a walk.

Animals are social creatures. They are wired for routine, stimulation and company, and after a long winter of darker evenings, cancelled walks and shorter days, many pets quietly slip into emotional hibernation.

Come spring, that bottled-up restlessness starts to show. So with that in mind, here are the signs most owners miss:

- following you from room to room
- whining
- pacing or excessive grooming
- sudden clinginess or, conversely, withdrawal
- destructive behaviour that comes out of nowhere
- oversleeping

- loss of interest in toys
- increased barking or vocalising

As discussed, this isn't naughtiness, it's communication.

The good news is, the fix doesn't need to be dramatic, and it certainly doesn't need to involve guilt.

Start with stimulation, not miles. Ten minutes of sniffing, training games, puzzle feeders or gentle agility work can tire a dog out more effectively than a long walk.

For cats, rotating toys weekly and introducing short, high-energy play bursts can completely change their mood.

Next, change the day, not just the evening. Many pets are alone for long stretches while we're at work. Local dog walkers, pet day-care centres and home-visit sitters can transform behaviour with just one or two mid-day interactions a week. It's often cheaper than repairing skirting boards!

Finally, add social variety. Dogs benefit hugely from regular contact with other dogs, even quiet ones. Cats may prefer human interaction, but they still thrive on predictable routines and gentle novelty such as a new perch, a different window view, a heated mat, or a feeder that makes them think.

Ultimately, loneliness in pets doesn't mean you've failed. It means your animal is asking for something, and usually it's not more treats! Instead, it's connection, stimulation, rhythm and reassurance.

# What's On

## **Bentley Heath Country Market**

Date: every Friday / Time: 10am - 11.30am / Venue: Bentley Heath Community Hall Widney Rd, Bentley Heath, B93 9BQ  
We are a farmers market & craft fair all rolled into one. We are open for business every Friday New producers always welcome! 10am-11.30am  
Email [bhcountrymarket@gmail.com](mailto:bhcountrymarket@gmail.com) to receive our weekly order email.

## **Knowle Male Voice Choir**

Date: every Wednesday during school terms / Time: 7.30pm / Venue: Dorridge Methodist Church, Mill Lane, Dorridge

Ask anyone who sings with a choir or sings anywhere, and they will all agree, Singing is Good for You. Practices are followed by a refreshing trip to the local pub immediately afterwards. If you are interested in joining our choir please contact us at [kmvc14@gmail.com](mailto:kmvc14@gmail.com) or for more information visit [www.knowlemalevoicechoir.org.uk](http://www.knowlemalevoicechoir.org.uk)

## **Friends in Retirement**

Date: varies / Time: varies / Venue: Elmdon Heath Community Centre B91 2SF; Hobbs Moat Assembly Rooms B92 8JN; Knowle Village Hall B93 0NH; Bentley Heath Community Centre B93 9BQ; Solihull Women's Institute B91 3DQ; Whar Hall Community Centre B92 0PG  
FIRS (Friends in Retirement) is a charity where groups of people enjoy a range of activities. Yearly membership is £3 and each activity costs anything from £1.20 to £5. Contact us: [www.friendsinretirement.co.uk](http://www.friendsinretirement.co.uk); email [firs.solihull@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:firs.solihull@yahoo.co.uk); call: 07535 669 018

## **Donate your old glasses**

Working with our sister Lions club in Chichester, your old pairs of used glasses are collected, sorted and distributed each month to eye clinics as far as Papa New Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria and Nepal. Don't worry if your spectacles are broken as they will be recycled for their scrap metal and the funds used to support eye-related projects both in the UK and overseas. Knowle and Dorridge Lions Club are being supported by these opticians in B93: Alan Tyler Opticians - Dorridge, Bannister Eyecare - Knowle, Vision Express - Knowle. Just drop your used glasses into them and we'll do the rest! Thank you!

## **Knowle Renew Café**

Date: every Wednesday / Time: 2pm - 4pm / Venue: Guild House, Knowle  
All welcome, no booking required. A shared wellbeing space where you can enjoy a calm cuppa; spend time with a coffee (activities available or bring your own); have a chat with others; join an optional prayer & meditation session. For more information please visit: [www.kpc.org.uk](http://www.kpc.org.uk)

## **Knowle & Dorridge Round Table**

Date: every other Tuesday  
Knowle and Dorridge Round Table 812 was founded in 1963. We are an organisation run by and for Tablers as a hobby. We bring smiles to the local and wider community by helping and raising as much money as we can whilst having as much fun as we can. We're not just about fund raising. We meet every other Tuesday and indulge in various activities like sports, tours and lots of 'ings' such as gliding, hiking, biking, riding, shooting, kayaking, fishing, rallying, karting, off-roading, making, climbing, bowling, cooking or just enjoying the odd pint (or two). Please email to get in touch: [kandrt@gmail.com](mailto:kandrt@gmail.com)

## **Rapport Social Group**

Rapport is a, non profit making, social group for unattached adults age 50+ on their own and would like to meet new friends. We have a varied monthly programme of hosted events, including coffee mornings, lunches and evening meals, cinema, theatre and National Trust visits, day trips, walks and pub nights. For more information contact Jenny Brown on 07725 094123

## **Free Digital Training for older Solihull residents**

Various times and Age UK Solihull are offering free digital training for older Solihull residents who would like to improve their digital skills. Group courses and one-to-one support is available, for both beginners and those who already have basic digital skills. The training can help with online shopping, video calling, searching for information, accessing online learning, downloading and using apps, and more. For more information, contact Ashlee on 07397 718 455 or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/digital-champions](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/digital-champions)

## **Knowle Probus Club**

Date: 3rd Tuesday of the month / Venue: The Solihull Masonic Centre, Warwick Road, Knowle  
The Knowle Probus club is a luncheon Club for retired and semi-retired Professional or Businessmen living in or around Knowle. We meet for an excellent three course lunch followed by interesting and informative talks. If you would like to know more go to [www.knowleprobus.org.uk](http://www.knowleprobus.org.uk) or Phone Paul on 07713 94228.

## **Age UK Solihull Weekly Thursday Friends Lunch Club for Over 65s**

Date: every Thursday / Time: 12pm - 2.30pm / Venue: Red Lion Pub, High Street, Knowle  
Run by Age UK Solihull staff and their volunteers. Come along for a hot meal, tea/coffee, social activities and great company. Cost is £8 (£6 for hot lunch and refreshments, £2 for raffle, bingo/entertainment). For more information please call 0121 704 7846 (Mon-Thurs) or email [befriending@ageuksolihull.org.uk](mailto:befriending@ageuksolihull.org.uk).

### **Dorridge Probus Club**

Date: first Thursday of the month / Time: 12 noon / Venue: Copt Heath Golf Club, Warwick Road, Knowle We meet for a friendly chat followed by lunch and a talk focussing on members interests and requests. Probus is a friendly, social meeting point for retired and semi retired men. For more details see our website [www.probusclub.net/dorridge](http://www.probusclub.net/dorridge).

### **Drinking cans collection**

Venue: Ale rooms, Knowle  
Please support Ryan's work by dropping off your empty aluminium cans in the blue bin situated right outside the Ale Rooms, Knowle High Street. Ryan from "We Can" collects aluminium drinking cans, crushes them and trades them for money to help buy food to address food poverty locally.

### **Ladies Circle**

Date: Wednesdays / Time: 11am / Venue: Dorridge Methodist Church, Mill Lane, Dorridge B93 8NY  
Ladies living locally meet for a coffee & a chat. Every fourth week there will be singing, speakers or games.

### **Welcome Wednesdays**

Date: last Wednesday of every month / Time: 2 - 3.30pm / Venue: Eascote Park Care Home and Retirement Village, Knowle Road, Barston B92 0JA  
This is a chance meet new people, enjoy a hot drink and a slice of cake, and help raise funds for Age UK Solihull. Everyone is welcome, including carers, older people, and anyone who wants to break up the week and enjoy some company. We ask for a suggested donation of £3 per person to attend, which includes a hot drink and cake. Please let us know if you are planning on coming by calling us: 0121 7047842 (leave a message) or email to: [events@ageuksolihull.org.uk](mailto:events@ageuksolihull.org.uk).

### **The Thursday Friends Lunch Club**

Date: first Thursday of every month / Time: 12 - 2.30pm / Venue: The Red Lion Pub, 1672 High St, Knowle B93 0LY  
Hot meal, activities and wonderful company  
Total cost - £12. (includes lunch, hot drinks, as well as a raffle and bingo).

### **Knit & Natter**

Date: 3rd Monday of the month / Time: 2- 4pm / Venue: Bentley Heath Community Centre, Widney Road B93 9BN  
Bring your own project. Just turn up no charge.  
Contact Dennise on 07899 914 228

### **Knowle and Dorridge Dementia Cafe**

Date: every Tuesday / Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm / Venue: Dorridge Methodist Church, Mill Lane  
The café aims to provide a supportive and friendly environment for individuals living with dementia and their carers. It is designed to be a warm, welcoming space where attendees from the surrounding areas, they can enjoy a variety of activities, socialise, meet people in similar circumstances and find helpful information and resources. Sessions, including refreshments, are £3 per person and will be guided by experienced care professionals and volunteers.

### **South Solihull u3a**

Date: 2nd Monday of each month / Time: 1:45 pm for 2:00 pm start / Venue: Bentley Heath Community Centre, Widney Road B93 9BQ  
We are a very friendly group of retired or semi-retired people aiming to learn new skills and make new friends along the way. In addition to the monthly meeting when we usually have an invited speaker, we also have a wide range of over 20 activity groups meeting throughout each month. For further information please visit: [www.southsolihull.u3asite.uk](http://www.southsolihull.u3asite.uk) and contact our Membership Secretary, Richard: [memberships3a@yahoo.com](mailto:memberships3a@yahoo.com) for an invitation to a 'taster meeting'. We look forward to meeting you!

### **Knowle Fun Run**

Date: 17th May  
Organized by the Knowle & Dorridge Lions Club. Participants can take part in various running distances designed for different age groups and preferences. Registration for most categories remains open until mid-May, with some distances allowing entries up until the morning of the event. While junior participants receive a commemorative T-shirt as part of their entry fee, adult participants have the option to purchase a technical shirt separately. The organizers also facilitate charitable donations during the registration process to support their community initiatives. To register and for more details please visit: [www.knowleanddorridgelions.com](http://www.knowleanddorridgelions.com)

### **Movie Matinee**

Date: 6th June / Time: 2.30pm / Venue: Knowle Village Hall  
If you like film music ,then the Strolling Players invite you to join them at their summer concert on 6th June. Come and enjoy a medley of songs from the Silver Screen, including favourite numbers from the world of Disney, "The Wizard of Oz," the Bond movies, "The Lord of the Rings", "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" and many more. Tickets - £10.00: available from 01564 777634.

### **Balsall Common Fun Run**

Date: 13th September / Time: 12pm / Venue: Balsall Common Primary School  
The Balsall Common Fun Run is organised each year by The Lily Mae Foundation, a local charity that supports parents and families, living in the West Midlands and Warwickshire, who have lost a baby to Stillbirth, Neonatal Death, Miscarriage or to a Medical Termination.  
To book your place please visit: [www.stuweb.co.uk/events/2026/09/13/4555/](http://www.stuweb.co.uk/events/2026/09/13/4555/)

*While we do our best to ensure the accuracy of our listings, events may be postponed or cancelled without notice. Please confirm with the organiser before making any plans for attending events. For your news, events and group meetings to be featured free of charge on our What's On Page please email Ksenia: [info@stonesthrowpublications.co.uk](mailto:info@stonesthrowpublications.co.uk)*

# Spring energy dip



*Spring – it's the season that's meant to reinvigorate, revive... the time of the year when we come out of our collective shells and feel, well... better!*

*So what is the disconnect of the spring energy gap? And how can we find a way past it?*

## THE PROBLEM

The clocks have changed, daylight returns, gardens come back to life; yet for many people, April brings a surprising dip in energy rather than a lift. Tiredness lingers, motivation drops, and bodies feel heavier than they should after winter. It's a quiet contradiction that leaves many wondering why they feel flat just as the year seems to be waking up.

This disconnect has a name: the spring energy gap.

## THE BACKGROUND

It happens because our bodies don't switch seasons as quickly as the calendar does. After months of lower daylight, reduced movement and disrupted routines, many people emerge from winter running on depleted physical and mental reserves. Immune systems have worked harder, sleep patterns have drifted, and daily movement has often become more limited... all of which combine to leave energy stores low.

Vitamin D levels are one factor. Sunlight is our primary source of vitamin D, and by the end of winter, levels are often at their lowest. Low vitamin D has been linked to fatigue, low mood, muscle weakness and increased susceptibility to illness, and these are all common complaints in early spring.

Sleep is another hidden contributor. Brighter mornings and later evenings can quietly disrupt sleep cycles, particularly after the clocks change. People may go to bed at the same time but fall

into lighter, less restorative sleep, creating a cumulative energy drain that builds across weeks.

Movement also plays a role. Winter habits tend to involve more sitting and less spontaneous activity. Even those who exercise regularly may still experience stiffness, slower circulation and reduced flexibility after months of lower overall movement.

There is also mental fatigue to consider. Winter brings a steady background load of stress - shorter days, financial pressures, seasonal illness and social slowdown. By April, this low-grade strain hasn't yet lifted, even though the weather has improved.

## THE SOLUTION

The solution isn't a dramatic reset. In fact, extreme changes can deepen fatigue rather than resolve it. What works best are gentle, consistent adjustments. Morning daylight exposure – even 10 minutes outdoors – helps reset internal body clocks.

In addition, light daily movement improves circulation and joint comfort; while regular mealtimes support stable energy levels.

Hydration improves focus and reduces headaches while, finally, earlier bedtimes can repair sleep quality after the clock change.

Ultimately, the spring energy gap isn't a failure of motivation – it's a natural seasonal transition. Once bodies catch up with the calendar, energy usually returns quietly and steadily... often without people realising exactly when it happened.

Ultimately, April isn't about pushing harder - it's about allowing your body to rejoin the year at its own pace.

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# Horoscopes: April



## ARIES

(MARCH 21 - APRIL 20)

Venus has arrived at the financial angle of your chart and is shining a powerful light on how you make your money; your earning ability is ripe for change, be sure to take advantage of a brilliant opportunity to meet new people who can influence your progress and success. The powerful new moon in your sign on the 17th suggests that bold decisions have the potential to bring positive results.

## TAURUS

(APRIL 21 - MAY 21)

The dynamic energy of Venus in your sign, plus revolutionary Uranus coming to the end of your sign, have the potential to make April the most important month of the year. This is your cue to shift gear and turn up the pace in all areas of your life. Lucky planet Jupiter shines a beneficial light on positive communication, suggesting the opportunity for you to welcome in a new sense of confidence and joy.

## GEMINI

(MAY 22 - JUNE 21)

Your career and some new and exciting connections are in the spotlight this month as these two areas of your chart are dominant. Jupiter, planet of expansion and growth is now gathering speed offering challenge and change in all directions. Saturn and Neptune, both in fiery Aries suggest a new passion for life as you find yourself driven to make improvements that broaden your horizons on a grand scale.

## CANCER

(JUNE 22 - JULY 22)

Mercury and Mars both in intuitive Pisces, occupy the sector of your chart concerned with your higher mind and travel. You'll be feeling energetic about making some exciting plans for the future. Abundant Jupiter is now moving direct in your sign and shining a helpful light by empowering you to make the right decisions. The powerful Aries new moon on the 17th offers the opportunity for a change of direction.

## LEO

(JULY 23 - AUGUST 23)

The powerful new moon in fiery Aries on the 17th offers you an opportunity to make some outstanding business connections, particularly where foreign travel is concerned. A possible career change comes to light and some brilliant prospects are up for grabs. Venus illuminates the highest point of your chart, be sure use your intuition and focus on turning exciting ideas into long term projects.

## VIRGO

(AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 22)

Relationships and partnerships are on your agenda this month. You'll certainly be feeling the need for tenderness and soft words as communicative Mercury, your ruler, occupies this area of your chart. The powerful Aries new moon on the 17th pushes you to see a completely different view point in significant areas of your life, a new beginning is looming, particularly concerning finances, investments and shared resources.

## LIBRA

(SEPTEMBER 23 - OCTOBER 23)

April presents a powerful blend of opportunities and challenges for you as the cosmic energies are urging you to find a better balance in all aspects of your life. Saturn, Neptune and the radiant Sun are in your opposite sign, and the Aries new moon on the 17th brings up some important and lasting decisions that will need to be made. Venus arriving in Gemini on the 24th offers a positive breakthrough.

## SCORPIO

(OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 22)

This month, you are encouraged to review all aspects of your working life by delving deep into your work life balance. The emphasis on the powerful Aries energy is urging you to seek new directions as you move into a new phase of inner transformation. Trusting your inner strength and resolve will hold you in good stead for the important changes that are to come. Venus, in your opposite sign of Taurus until the 24th helps you to stay grounded.

## SAGITTARIUS

(NOVEMBER 23 - DECEMBER 21)

Your health, daily rituals and wellbeing are your main focus this month as abundant Venus in down to earth Taurus assists you with inevitable change. As a free spirit, you know that adjustments and transformation are part of life and as your vision of the future becomes clearer you'll feel more confident and ready for anything that comes your way. Dynamic Mars arrives in your love and romance area on the 10th, be ready for surprises!

## CAPRICORN

(DECEMBER 22 - JANUARY 20)

Your home and family are in the spotlight this month illuminating some issues that need addressing. Mercury in Pisces suggests that deeper healing is possible with the added potential for successful communication. Get ready to release your inhibitions and embrace a new way of living as the new moon in dynamic Aries on the 17th offers you an energy boost, enabling some major shifts to take place.

## AQUARIUS

(JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 18)

Passionate communication is high on the agenda for Aquarians this month as this sector of your chart fills up with dynamic Aries energy. Mars arrives in this sign on the 10th followed by the powerful new moon on the 17th. Uranus, your ruler, is also on the move arriving in Gemini on the 26th. The cosmic message is indicating a month of breakthroughs enabling you to expect the unexpected and push forward.

## PISCES

(FEBRUARY 19 - MARCH 20)

The creative and inspirational influence of communicative Mercury and dynamic Mars both in your sign until mid-month indicate that sharing your ideas should be your main focus, even if you feel a little shy about opening up to strangers. The powerful Aries new moon on the 17th will no doubt shake things up as cosmic alignments indicate some valuable new insight are yours for the taking, as long as you embrace an entirely new perspective.

*Christine Chalkin, Inspirational Astrologer and Life Coach*

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## Blueberry Cinnamon Breakfast Swirls

### INGREDIENTS:

#### For the dough

420g Strong white flour, plus extra for dusting  
4 tbsp caster sugar  
2 tsp Dried fast-action yeast  
100ml Milk  
40g Butter, plus extra for greasing  
Oil, for greasing

#### For the filling

150g Blueberries, halved  
Zest of an orange  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
Nutmeg  
4 tbsp brown sugar

#### To finish

1 Beaten egg  
70g Icing sugar  
1–2 tbsp lemon juice or water  
Fresh whole blueberries, to decorate

### METHOD

**Dough:** Pour the milk and 100ml water into a saucepan with the butter. Heat gently until the butter is melted. Leave to cool until it's lukewarm.

Place the flour, sugar, and yeast into a bowl (or the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with a dough hook). Make a well in the centre. Pour the milky mixture into the well. Either mix with your hands or in the mixer on the slow setting with the dough hook. Knead for about 5 minutes, or until a smooth dough has formed.

Oil a large bowl and place the dough inside. Cover with cling film and leave to rise in a warm place for about 2 hours. When the dough has doubled in size, place on a lightly floured surface and knead for a second time by hand for a few minutes. Butter a 23cm/9in round springform tin.

Roll the dough out to a rectangle. Scatter the orange zest, ground cinnamon, nutmeg, and brown sugar over the dough, then top with the blueberries. Strating from the long side, roll up the dough as though you were making a Swiss roll. Slice into 9 swirls using a sharp knife. Place the swirls gently into the buttered tin, eight around the edge and one in the middle, cut-side up.

Brush with oil, cover with clingfilm and place in a warm place to rise for about 30 minutes this time, or until doubled in size again.

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6.

Brush the top of the buns with beaten egg and bake for 20–25 minutes, or until golden-brown and cooked through. Place on a wire rack to cool.

Mix the icing sugar and lemon juice in a bowl until the consistency is suitable for drizzling. Drizzle over the swirls. Scatter over the fresh blueberries and enjoy.



# April Gardening Jobs

*April is a busy one out in the garden as gardeners sow, plant and prepare their plots in preparation for summer.*

*Perhaps the busiest month in the garden, April is a delight to behold as the vegetable plot begins to take shape, the flower garden has fresh blooms and lawns are a beautiful baize inviting workers to stop a while and smell the early flowering roses like the tough but stunning *Rosa rugosa*.*

## VEGETABLES

If you have been forcing some delicious rhubarb there should be plenty of sweet pink stems to harvest this month, and your late winter crops of leeks, spring greens, kale and broccoli should still be providing a lot for the dinner table. And, towards the end of the month early potatoes will be succulent and delicious eaten on their own with just a little butter.

This month you can begin sowing outdoors in earnest, including peas and broad beans, spring onions, beetroot and carrots. But make sure you don't risk sharing these precious seeds with the birds! Cover them with sticks, twigs or by making use of cuttings from blackberry bushes. Fine netting is probably the best thing to use to keep your plants safe, but you could try items like hanging foil and old CDs to scare birds away. Feeding the birds their favourite food might also help to reduce their interest in your tender plants.

Frosts are not unheard of in April so keep an eye on the forecast and make sure you have cloches and fleeces ready to protect tender shoots. Also, protect early potato shoots by regularly hoeing up soil.

## FLOWERS

Because spring weather and temperatures can veer unpredictably from cold and wet, to an early heatwave as in April 2025, only hardy annuals should be sown directly into the soil outside. These include cornflowers and poppies, fragrant sweet peas and sunflowers. Half-hardy annuals such as cosmos and tobacco plants should not be risked outside and only planted inside, or under glass this month. They can be transplanted outside later.

## LAWN

Lawns are growing fast and will need feeding this month. Choose a feed product with a high nitrogen content as this will encourage plenty of green growth – there are numerous dedicated spring and summer granular feeds will have the right nutrient balance for your spring lawn. Wait to feed until you have mowed the lawn a few times and after you have done your thorough spring moss raking.

## OTHER WORK

As well as plants, weeds are also growing fast this month, so regular hoeing is required to keep on top of the problem in the vegetable and flower garden. Mulching can reduce weed growth and helps to keep moisture in the soil as the sun gets stronger and the temperatures rise.

If not already done, April is a good time to check, repair or replace any parts of your water retention system, check gutters and water butts, or consider investing in upgrading your system, to make the most of any April showers!



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# JAMIESON CHRISTIE CHARTERED FINANCIAL PLANNERS

## TIME FOR A CHANGE?

Talk to us about a review of your previously transferred pension benefits plus

- Retirement planning and pension consolidation
- Tax efficient investing including business sales and inheritance
- Socially responsible investing for growth and/or income
- Inheritance tax and estate planning

**Contact us to learn how we can help.**

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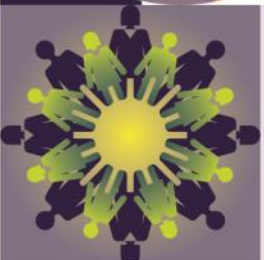
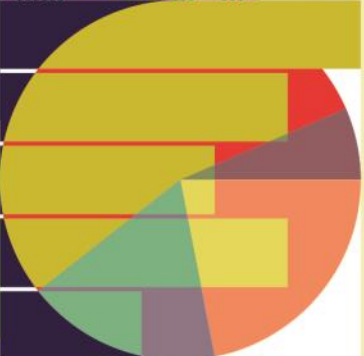
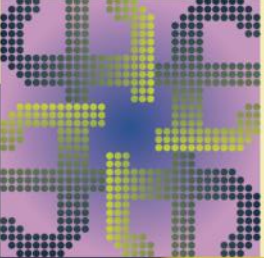
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