



Spring is in the air! by Emma Symons

March is always one of my favourite months as there is so much going on: we had the full moon on the 18th; the spring equinox on 20th; and the sun moved in to Aries, the first sign of the zodiac, at the same time.

On a personal note, this is when I like to have New Year. The spring equinox is a time of balance – when day and night are equal and we know that longer days are ahead. Aries is a fire sign, the spark of creation and the heat that initiates growth, so to me it makes sense that New Year should come when everything is fresh and beginning to grow, instead of in the middle of dark, dreary winter when all is dead.

Spring also brings a renewed energy to everyone and everything, that sudden urge to spring clean and freshen up our homes. It can also be a great time to look at areas of your life that might need refreshing. Does your diet need improving; have you let the exercise slip over winter; have you forgotten about hobbies?

Now the weather is improving (or should be!) take advantage and get outside into nature. When we are outside we are naturally more active. This releases endorphins that make us feel so much better. Exercise outside in green spaces has far more health benefits than working out indoors. Take some time to slow down, sit in the garden or on a bench in the park. Listen to the birds, cycle along a river, or take a trip to the seaside. Being outside can boost our energy and mood, it helps to unclutter the mind and helps us feel more connected to the world around us.

Aries season is also a good time to use that creative energy to pick up a forgotten hobby or start a new one. One of my hobbies is foraging and making plant medicine and natural skincare, so spring is when I'm out in the hedgerows collecting what others see as weeds, and making remedies. If that's not your thing then painting, drawing, crafting are all great ways to relax, zone out for a bit, and calm the mind.

"Nature is painting for us, day after day, pictures of infinite beauty if only we had the eyes to see them."

John Ruskin

Get out there and really look at the beauty of nature.



Get out those green fingers...

As the weather hints at improving, many of us are itching to tend to the rather forlorn looking pots and planters that have been battered over the past few months. Injecting a little colour into window boxes will boost moods and give a sense of satisfaction: summer is on its way! Aside from making your home and garden look spring ready and smart, there are also many positive mental health benefits to gardening:

- Gardening can promote mindfulness, which is helpful in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety
- It helps lower levels of stress and anxiety and is a good way to get out any frustration of the day
- It improves mood: working hands are a distraction from a daily busy mind and can also help improve attention levels too
- It can increase social bonds, especially when helping out a neighbour, getting members of the family involved, or working together to tend an allotment
- It's a hidden form of exercise and can be far more of a workout than you actually realise until you stop to take a break! Research has found that a three to four-hour session of gardening can burn as many calories as an hour at the gym!
- When the sun is out, it can provide an essential boost of vitamin D.

Don't have a garden? Don't worry, indoor gardening is still enjoying a surge in popularity post-lockdown too, and has been fuelled by Instagram's greenery-inspired interior designs and plant-based podcasts. The benefits are still bountiful too:

- Indoor plants may help reduce stress levels as being around plants can make you feel more comfortable, soothed and natural
- Real plants may sharpen your attention
- Working with plants can be therapeutic
- Plants may help you recover from illness faster
- Plants may boost your productivity
- Plants may improve your whole outlook on work
- Plants may improve the quality of indoor air



MINERAL OF THE MONTH BY ELAINE

Sodium is one of the minerals that the body needs to survive: without sodium our muscles and nervous system would not work properly and this mineral helps carry nutrients and water around the body. Our bodies cannot make sodium so it relies on us to provide this in our diets.

We all know that if we have too much sodium in our diets it can cause high cholesterol, high blood pressure and increases the risk of heart disease with calcium levels being depleted with too much sodium. If we have too little sodium, you will experience severe bouts of diarrhoea and kidney malfunction. When cooking, do try and avoid table salt which contains high levels of sodium and use sea salt or a low sodium brand.

Help your gut: FODMAP

FODMAP is a term that covers specific foods which can contribute to IBS, bloating and stomach pains. If you suffer with any of these ailments, give the following tips a go. Lots of IBS sufferers are now following a low FODMAP diet.

There is a high and low FODMAP:

High = foods to avoid

Low = foods to include in your diet

High FODMAP – try and avoid fruits which contain stones, wheat, rye, garlic, onions, apple and drinks which contain artificial sweeteners such as fruit squash and fizzy drinks.

Low FODMAP – include carrots, cucumbers, ginger, kale, blueberries, pineapple, peanut butter, black coffee, gluten-free bread and rice.

Superfood tip

Did you know that kale is a superfood? One cup of raw kale gives you 9% of calcium, 134% of vitamin C and 9% of the potassium you need daily!

Are you ready for a new month?

A new month
Push yourself
Rejuvenate
Inspire others
Laugh lots

