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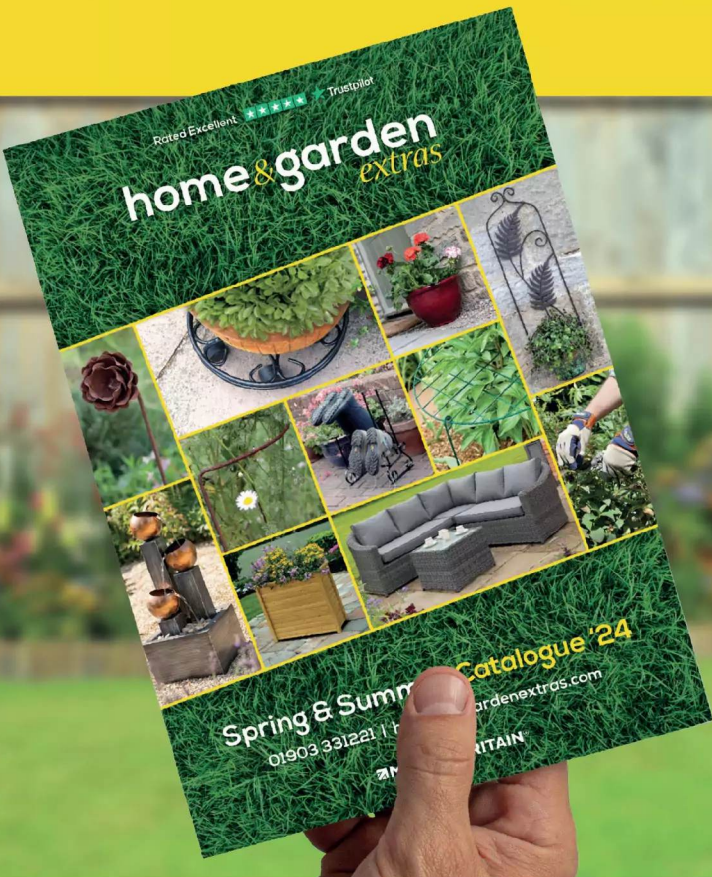
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Look inside!

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Are early blooms a cause for concern?

There's no question things are stirring earlier than usual. Daffodils in my garden came into bloom at least a week earlier than usual, while in mid-February I saw hedges – I think blackthorn – blossoming as I drove to work. Normally they don't flower until early March.

This winter has been pretty dreary, and exceptionally wet, but also undoubtedly milder than usual and that has led to these early flowers. Very pretty, no question, but I'm not sure we should welcome them quite so soon – and surely there will still

be some sharp frosts to come?

I'm grateful the apple and plum trees in my garden are still biding their time – even

then, they can often be caught out by cold weather in April and May.

That said, I see now as the best time to start my seed sowing. Many of you love sweet peas, so we have the ultimate Q&A guide for these fragrant sensations (page 12). I'm also sowing cosmos, rudbeckia and coreopsis (all given away for free with Garden News!) – hopefully a feast for pollinators later in the summer.

Check out our favourite summer bulbs, too – on page 16 we pick six of the best to bring life to containers or borders. They're always so colourful and well worth including in your plans.

In short, we're now headlong into planting and sowing season: such an exciting time of year in the garden. Also one when I once again realise I don't have room for everything I want – but that's part of the fun! Have a great gardening week.



Simon

Garden News
Editor

Get in touch!

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Our cover star: *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Painted Lady'

Don't miss our expert Q&A guide on how to grow the best sweet peas this year – see page 12.

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GARDENS SCOOP TOP AWARDS

Some 22 schemes are recognised in design industry prize-giving, reports Ian Hodgson

A total of 22 gardens by professional designers have been recognised by the Society of Garden Designers (SGD) at its 2024 SGD Awards.

Schemes include public and private gardens, both large and small, with some open to visitors.

The new Wellbeing Garden at RHS Garden Wisley, designed by Chelsea gold medal winner Matt Keightley, bagged the prize for the Best UK Commercial or Community Landscape. Judges noted its well-considered planting and great use of texture, colour and shape within a very difficult space.

Designer Stefano Marinaz triumphed three times, scooping the Judges' Award, the Medium Residential Garden Award and the Design for the Environment Award, all for his scheme at Church Barn, near Braintree, Essex. Stefano replaced the lawn with perennial planting, featuring grasses *Sesleria autumnalis* and *Sporobolus heterolepis*, combined with perennials and underplanted with bulbs. Multi-stemmed shrubby trees, amelanchier,

Clerodendrum trichotomum, *Koeleria paniculata* and *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Merrill' also provide seasonal interest. Judges called the project 'a beautiful, understated nod to modernity' and were impressed by the complex planting.

The People's Choice Award, determined by public vote, went to Adam Vetere for a treetop garden in Berkshire. The garden, which also won the Small Residential Landscapes & Gardens

The Wellbeing Garden at RHS Garden Wisley

Andy Sturgeon's roof garden at Battersea Power Station

Award, was described by judges as demonstrating 'great skill in working within a limited flat space at the top of a very steep site'.

The overall SGD Grand Award, also known as the Garden of the Year Award, was presented to Andy Sturgeon for the rooftop gardens he designed for London's iconic Battersea Power Station. Judges remarked on the "fantastic endeavour, scale and creativity of the project." The Chelsea gold medal winner worked with the "heritage of the building while creating human scale environments on an exposed London site."

The scheme, which is only open to residents, was a double winner, also receiving the UK/International Roof, Podium or Raised Courtyard award.

■ For more information visit sgd.org.uk.



LIFETIME HONOUR FOR INNOVATIVE PLANTING DESIGNER

A professor spearheading the development of naturalistic plantings received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the SGD.

James Hitchmough (left), now Emeritus Professor of Horticultural Ecology at the University of Sheffield, has created landscapes around the world, including the 2012 Olympic Park, Chatsworth House and RHS Garden Wisley. In a keynote talk to the RHS last year, Hitchmough said

exotic species offered the best solution for greening urban areas to tackle climate change, and scientists and gardeners needed to collaborate to create a planting palette to tackle future challenges.

"James Hitchmough has been one of the most remarkable and influential people in the landscape industry in the last quarter century, both in the UK and internationally," said SGD vice chairman John Wyer. "He has always questioned the status quo - usually with great humour."



The woodland competition winner must help benefit communities

New public forest competition launches

A competition to establish a new community forest has opened to the public, with £10 million of Government funding available.

Inspired by the original National Forest, which transformed a large area of the Midlands from

an industrial landscape to a thriving 200 sq mile treescape and wildlife habitat, the initiative invites organisations from across England to promote local areas to become a Forest for the Nation.

The winning applicant must identify how the new forest

will positively benefit local communities as well as nationally impacting people, nature and the environment. Projects entered for the competition could include those showing innovation in woodland creation or nature recovery,

'Glowing' petunia launched in US

A race of petunias that glow in the dark has been launched to gardeners in America.

Petunia 'Firefly' has been specially bred to be bioluminescent - its remarkable ability genetically engineered by importing relevant genes from naturally bioluminescent mushrooms and splicing them into the genome of the petunia.

The United States Department of Agriculture has approved the venture, enabling the plants to be safely grown and bred in the US. Each white-flowered plant is being sold for \$29 (£23).

The development builds on work that revealed similarities between mushroom bioluminescence and plant metabolism. A team of 26 scientists, working across nine research organisations, created the brighter plants by optimising genes isolated from multiple species of luminous mushrooms. The genetic modifications can enhance bioluminescence in a variety of plants by up to 100 times.

■ Find out more by visiting light.bio.

Luminous petunias are a genetic breakthrough

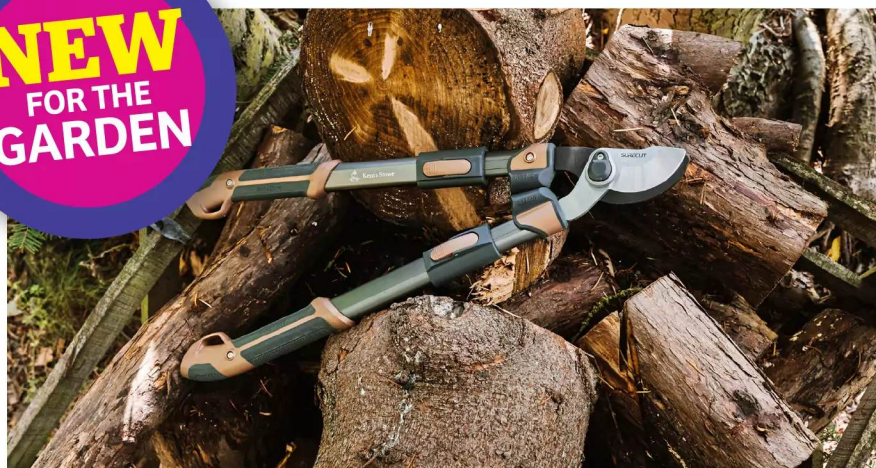


or which boost community engagement within woodlands.

Forestry Minister Rebecca Pow said the new Forest for the Nation "will create a lasting legacy and benefit future generations".

■ For more details, search **Forest for the Nation** at gov.uk. Entries close on March 18 and the winning bid will be announced in the autumn.

**NEW
FOR THE
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KENT & STOWE SURECUT LOPPERS FROM £24.99

● Bring extra power to your cutting efforts with these lightweight loppers that have an aluminium body and rubber grip handles. Available in five models (Mini Loppers, Standard Model, Extra Power,

Extra Power Hard Wood and Extra Power Ratchet), the new Reflex Energy System has shock-absorbing rubber bumpers for maximum results with minimal exertion. **From: marshallsgarden.com.**



CJ WILDLIFE HOUSE SPARROW MULTI NEST BOXES £16.99 EACH

● These pine wood nest boxes are designed to allow house sparrows to nest in colonies as they do naturally. Available with different hole positions, on the left, right or in the middle, they can be placed side by side to keeping nesting groups close. Screws and fixings are included, and the boxes are sold individually. Weight approx 1.6kg. **From: birdfood.co.uk.**

FLYMO SIMPLISHEAR FROM £69.99

● This powerful, lightweight, battery-powered 2-in-1 grass and shrub shear has a 20cm high-quality blade, ideal for tackling shrubs and small hedges, as well as lawn edging. Changing blades is easy, convenient and adjustment free. Available as product only or as kit with 18V battery and charger. **Available from the end of March on all good retailer sites.**



GARDENA 4 IN 1 GRIPPER £34.99

● This garden helper takes the strain out of tidying up, be it picking up fallen fruit or branches, or even moss and chewing gum. Small rake attachments can be added to extend it, and an ergonomically shaped handle makes it comfortable and easy to operate. Made from more than 70% recycled material. **From: amazon.co.uk from early March.**



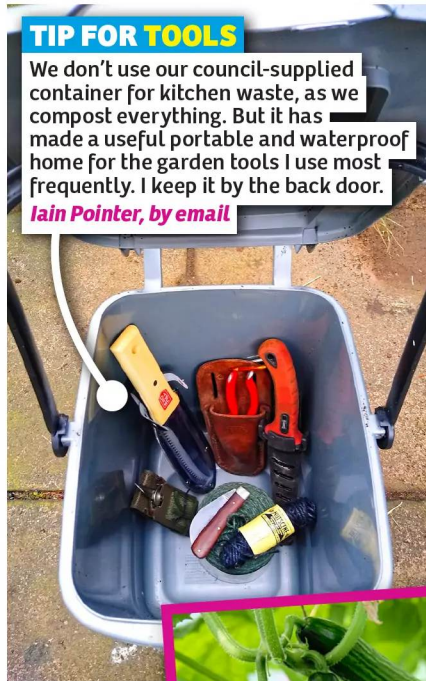
Your garden GEMS!

Top gardening tips from our readers

TIP FOR TOOLS

We don't use our council-supplied container for kitchen waste, as we compost everything. But it has made a useful portable and waterproof home for the garden tools I use most frequently. I keep it by the back door.

Iain Pointer, by email



SUPPORTING ROLE

Use old tights, suspended from a stick, to support cucumbers and stop them trailing on the ground.

Jazz Singh, Coventry



SPICY SECRET

I use lukewarm tap water for watering when I sow chilli seeds. It speeds up germination and produces healthy plants with a good crop.

Wendy Masters, by email



WOOD YOU BELIEVE IT!

My son-in-law built a firewood storage unit from recycled old bed panels and louver doors from a cupboard – useful for added air circulation. We're really pleased with the result, and it's made our winter routine far more convenient.

Maureen Jones, Porthyrhyd, Llanwrda

Simon says: Well done to your son-in-law, Maureen, on being so creative. It looks great, and it's such a great way to recycle.



WIN!

A Gardman Beach Hut Nest Box £17.99

Maureen wins a green Gardman Beach Hut Nest Box, which is a great way to help birds during the breeding season, courtesy of Westland. For more details about this product visit gardenhealth.com.



SEED SHIELDER

I've cut up a pallet to make into a feeder that will hopefully protect seeds a little bit from any bad weather. It can also be screwed onto a tree or fence.

Steve Watkin, by email



MOSSY TAKEOUT

Now it's nearly nesting time, any moss I remove from the lawn or the surface of potted plants, I place in a hanging basket and leave it out for birds to help themselves.

Pete Hammond, by email



Got a great idea or time-saving tip? Share them with our readers. See page 3 for our contact details

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Garden OF THE WEEK

Gardener Derek and Angela Townsley

Location Pinetrees Cottage, Aberdeenshire

Size 3/4 acre

Soil Shallow acidic soil over broken rock

Been in garden Since 1994

Open July 20-21, 2pm-5pm, with neighbouring Whin Cottage, £6. Also by appointment June-July 2024. See scotlandsgardens.org and search Banchory Devenick

In perfect shape

Cloud-pruning and pops of colour make this sheltered Scottish garden as pretty as a picture

Words Liz Potter
Photos Ray Cox

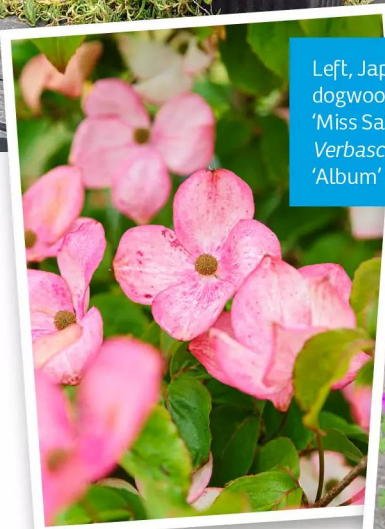
With its shapely shrubs, cloud-pruned trees and topiary, this verdant hilltop garden near Aberdeen is full of foliage texture and colour. It was created from scratch over the last 30 years and enjoys wide open views - and the bracing winds that come with them!

"Ours is a challenging site," explains owner Angela Townsley, who lives here with her husband Derek. "We're high up a hill with a pine forest to the north, open fields to the south and the garden is exposed to the wind from all directions. Over the years we've planted it fully in the hope the plants help to protect each other in time."

The couple bought the land from a farmer, with just an old, derelict bothy on site and cows

grazing nearby. "We had plenty of manure but no flowers or shrubs," says Angela. "There was one overgrown hedge and two large beech trees; everything else was long gone. The building was in such poor condition we had to demolish it, then use the old stone to face the new house." Fortunately, Derek is the director of a construction firm, so building the new house, retaining walls, paths and terraces was all part of the plan.

One of their first projects was to create a fish pond for their 40-strong collection of carp, tench and rudd. "We were still living in our previous home just a mile down the hill," said Angela. "So once the pond was finished, we transported the fish up here in containers. They adapted well, but the local heron kept taking them. Eventually, we created a second pond inside a polytunnel for their protection. We have some that are now about 30 years old."



Left, Japanese dogwood *Cornus kousa* 'Miss Satomi'. Right, *Verbascum chaixii* 'Album' with hypericum



Japanese maples bearing orange, red and green summer foliage mingle with rhododendrons, *Picea abies*, Japanese larch, *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, yew and box topiary around the pond



Once the house was built, the rest of the garden was fitted around the pond. Today there are three 'garden rooms', encompassing a barbecue area and fruit garden, two outdoor ponds, an alpine house and the polytunnel. "The design has just evolved with no real planning," says Angela. "We just put in some borders and planted them up, hoping things would grow. We've mainly planted small trees and shrubs, such as rhododendrons, Japanese maples, box and yew topiary, which help to give the garden structure and interest all year. Even though the wind is a problem here, our acers have survived well, which seems to surprise everyone who visits!"

Once they'd planted up the area closest to the house, the couple annexed part of the pony paddock, planting a leylandii hedge around the edge, hoping to create a bit of shelter. "We then added an alpine house to keep some of our tender plants in," says Angela. "I like to collect South African bulbs such as massonias and nerines, plunge planting

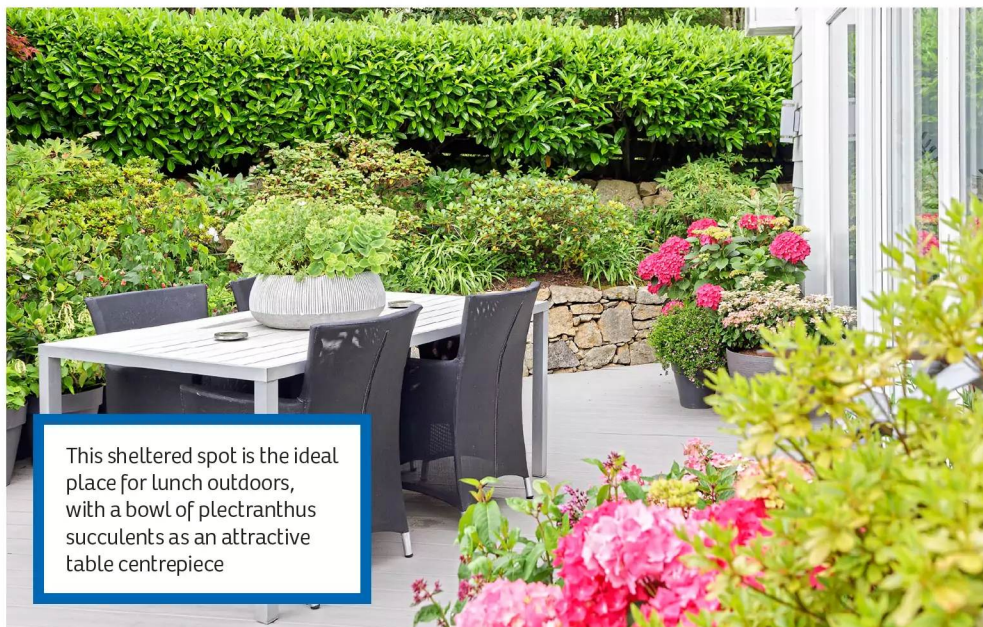
Wisteria and a climbing rose adorn the front of the house while the gravel path has yellow alstroemerias and black ophiopogon tumbling over its edges



A container display in the alpine house includes white dianthus 'Arctic Star', pelargonium 'Picasso' and *Sempervivum tectorum*



This sheltered spot is the ideal place for lunch outdoors, with a bowl of plectranthus succulents as an attractive table centrepiece



their terracotta pots into a sand bench for good drainage."

The chic, dark grey summerhouse was built on the far side of the main pond, using leftover patio doors from one of Derek's building projects. "It's the perfect place to hide away in, when the wind is playing havoc with the garden," says Angela.

Glossy evergreen hedges divide the garden into sheltered rooms. "I think if you keep the hedges trimmed nicely and the lawn edges tidy, you can get away with the rest of the garden

A secluded bench offers a view over the pond, framed by roses and a cloud-pruned golden 'pom pom' yew



Continues over the page

Angela's favourite Japanese maples...

**Garden
OF THE
WEEK**



'Bloodgood'
Handsome purple maple in spring, with bright crimson foliage in autumn. Prefers a sheltered shady position. H&S: 4m.



'Katsura'
Lobed leaves start bright orange in spring, fading to yellow with a pink margin. Best in light shade in a sheltered spot. H&S: 4m.



'Ōsakazuki'
The large, bright green leaves of this acer turn brilliant red in autumn. It prefers a sheltered shady spot. H&S: 4m.



'Garnet'
Feathery deep red foliage from spring into summer, turning brighter red in autumn. Needs shade and a sheltered spot. H: 2m, S: 3m.

not being perfect," says Angela. "Derek is in charge of all the hedge trimming and cloud-pruning - he shapes the golden yew and Japanese larch (*Larix kaempferi*) by the pond as well as trimming the topiary into spheres and spirals. He's also created a pair of 'caterpillar' hedges along the path to the front door."

The garden eases gently from one season to the next. "I do enjoy early springtime when the rhododendrons burst into flower," says Angela. "There are hellebores, and trilliums that I grow from seed each spring. I think this is the time the garden is most special; everything is fresh and the colour from the rhododendrons is at its best. Spring is such a special time for gardeners - once you see the first snowdrops popping up it's so exciting. Then at the end of May, when the rhododendrons are in flower, everything comes through in a blaze of colour." Hydrangeas and roses provide a splash of colour as the season progresses, alongside dazzling pelargoniums in pots.

"We aren't hung up with colours in the borders," says Angela. "If it's a nice plant, and I can find a space for it, I'll plant it, no matter what colour it is. I simply tell people it's a cottage garden, so they don't expect it to be perfect. Besides, I remember visiting Christopher Lloyd's garden, Great Dixter in East Sussex, and thought to myself if he can get away with muddling up the colours, so can I!"



Derek laid the circle of salvaged bricks himself, with gravel infill and a central plinth to create a circular alpine garden. On the top is a fragrant thyme

The path to the front door is edged with box spheres clipped by Derek to make two caterpillar hedges



Inspired by garden visits, the couple open their own for charity in July, with neighbouring Whin Cottage, as part of Scotland's Gardens Scheme. "Visitors are always asking when we'll extend the garden into our fields next door. But I'd rather leave that project for the next owner, so they can put their own stamp on the garden. It's all too easy to create a big garden and feel overwhelmed by it. I'd rather keep this to a size I can manage."

... and her jobs to do now

1 Pond maintenance. Besides feeding and caring for the fish in the polytunnel pond, the outdoor pond needs an annual tidy-up around its edges.

2 Pruning the hedges. Derek's main job is to keep all the hedges clipped to height - the leylandii to a maximum of 2.4m. This ensures there's a neat backdrop for the planting, but also good shelter and privacy. Other hedge-trimming jobs

include shaping the topiary and cloud-pruned yew and larch and maintaining the caterpillar hedge that leads to the front door.

3 Tending the alpine house. Angela's collection of South African bulbs, such as massonias and nerines, are planted in September to flower the following summer. Trilliums are sown from seed each year - these are protected in a cold frame over winter and take four years to flower.

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KF0696	Potato 'Charlotte' 5kg £39.95	£19.99		
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YOUR SWEET PEA QUESTIONS ANSWERED!

These expert tips will help your plants flourish this year

Words: Graham Rice

There's hardly a gardener in the country who doesn't love sweet peas. They've been grown for over 200 years, so you'd think we'd all know how to grow them by now. But there are still questions about the best varieties and how to grow them. Here are handy answers to the top 10 questions about sweet peas.



Sweet peas are prized for their beautiful blooms and, in some cases, gorgeous scent

1 Which have the strongest scent?

The first rule is: there are no rules! Some old-fashioned varieties are well-scented, some have no scent. Some modern varieties have no scent, some newcomers are the best scented of all. There are scented varieties across the colour range, although dwarf varieties – I have to say – tend to be poorly scented. On top of that, scent is strongest on dry and sunny days and we all tend to lose our sense of smell as we get older. The best advice? Be guided by the scent rating mentioned on a reputable supplier's website or in their catalogue.

The right variety will fill a room with fragrance



2 Which are best for cut flowers?

The ones with the longest stems, with the most flowers on the stem and the ones that last the longest. These are usually the Spencer varieties, especially those recommended for exhibition. But it's also a matter of how you treat them after cutting.

■ Cut sweet peas first thing in the morning, before the summer sun extracts moisture that has built up in the leaves overnight.

■ Choose stems with some flowers open, but with at least two unopened buds at the top.

■ Put the stems in cool water as you pick them. When you arrange them, add flower food to the water to extend their vase life by two or three days.

Cut sweet peas early in the day



3 What are the best ones to grow in containers?

Some dwarf varieties, including 'Pink Cupid', make spreading plants no more than 30cm high and are ideal in windowboxes. At 1m tall, the Solway Series is very impressive, but needs support. Grandiflora and Spencer sweet peas can also be grown in containers but need plenty of root space; a half barrel is ideal. They'll appreciate regular watering and feeding.



Sweet peas will need sturdy supports

'Pink Cupid'

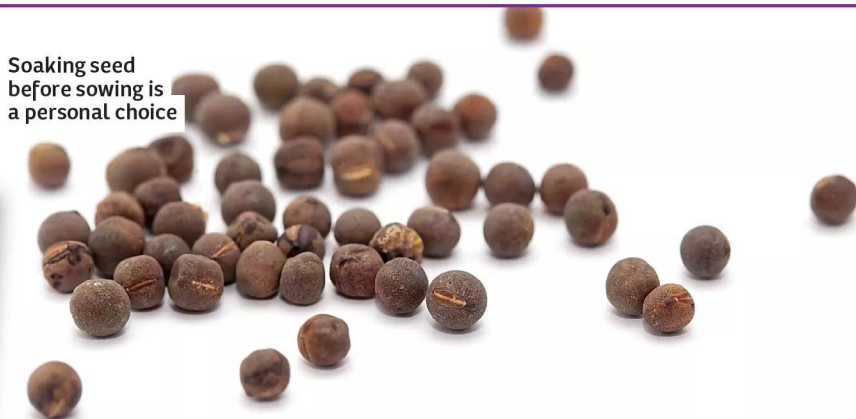
4 When should I sow seeds – autumn or spring?

The recent trial of sweet peas at RHS Garden Wisley revealed the answer. The same varieties were sown both in autumn and in spring and both produced prolific plants. Those sown in autumn flowered earlier and created larger plants with more flowers, but the spring-sown plants came into their own as the autumn-sown plants were fading. So the answer is this: for the longest-flowering season, sow in autumn and again in spring.



Spread out your sowing season

Soaking seed before sowing is a personal choice



5 Do I need to soak or chip the seeds?

No. I always used to chip my sweet peas before sowing them, to improve germination. Most sweet pea seed was produced in California and the hot summer climate produced seed with a hard case that didn't always allow moisture into the seed. Chipping the seeds, or soaking them, helped the seeds to absorb moisture. Now, as much more seed is produced in Britain and in other cooler climates, soaking or chipping is not usually necessary.

Pinching out plants encourages new shoots lower down



6 When should I pinch out my sweet peas?

It's not so much a matter of the height at which the plants are pinched, but their stage of development. For seedlings grown from autumn-sown seed, pinching is not usually necessary as the plants will develop sideshoots naturally. Plants developing from seed sown in winter or spring should be pinched when the seedlings have developed four leaves. Nip out the tip along with the first leaf. This will encourage new shoots to develop low down on your developing plants.

Continues over the page



Watering sweet peas in dry spells makes a big difference

7 How should I feed and water my plants?

In good or well-prepared soil, sweet peas won't usually need feeding, although on poor soil the plants will appreciate a weekly dose of liquid tomato feed. Watering in dry spells will make an impressive difference to plants grown in the open ground but use a drip system rather a sprinkler, which will waste water. Sweet peas in containers should be fed and watered in the same way as your other summer-flowering plants in containers.

8 How can I control pests and diseases?

Mostly, sweet peas are free from destructive pests and diseases but problems do sometimes arise. They include:

Aphids: Be vigilant, as aphids spread destructive viruses. Remove them as soon as you see them.

Mice: Protect seeds and your seedlings from these by using traps.

Slugs: Emerging seedlings are particularly vulnerable, so protect them using your preferred treatment.

Pollen beetles: These small black insects gather in the flowers. Stand cut blooms in a dark corner near an open window and they will move to the light.

Powdery mildew: A dusty white coating on the leaves is a sign of this fungal disease. Water deeply at the roots when you water, to help prevent it.



Look for varieties classed as 'good for exhibition'

9 How can I grow sweet peas with longer stems?

The first flowers to open are usually carried on the longest stems, and then the stem length of the new flowers shortens as the weeks go by. So choose varieties marked in the catalogue as good for exhibition, because they are likely to be known for a good stem length. Also, make two or three sowings through spring, and one in autumn; the first flowers from each sowing will have the longest stems. Finally, as the plants develop, if you nip off all the sideshoots - as exhibitors do - you'll definitely get longer stems, carrying more flowers.



Aphids can spread viruses

10 Where can I buy seeds?

Some garden centres stock a good range of sweet pea seeds, but a mail order company will likely have more options. Smaller mail order specialists such as Eagle Sweet Peas (eaglesweetpeas.co.uk) and Matthewman's Sweet Peas (sweetpeasonline.co.uk) focus on a wide range of exhibition varieties. For other specialists with a comprehensive range, try English Sweet Peas (englishsweetpeas.co.uk) and Roger Parsons Sweet Peas (rpsweetpeas.com).



Online stockists offer a good selection of varieties

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Suttons' new spring varieties deliver just what's required to continue to inspire the nation's gardeners, with new additions throughout for 2024!
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6 bulbs to plant

It's time to get going for a dazzling display of blooms in summer and beyond

Words Lewis Normand

With the exception of dahlias, many summer-flowering bulbs don't get the love and attention they perhaps deserve. It might be because they need to be bought and planted while we're still admiring the wonders of the new year's snowdrops and winter aconites. Or maybe it's because some summer bulbs don't always perform well when planted out and people are put off by failure. However, it's worth investing a little time and money in some reliable bulbs and there are many excellent options to add colour and interest to your summer garden.

LIATRIS SPICATA

Not a true 'bulb', but can be bought as corms. Given the right spot, liatris will flower from July (sometimes in June in really hot weather) through to September. It's surprisingly versatile in terms



of soil type but can prefer more moisture rather than less. You can tell if they need more water because the foliage curls up. It's also tolerant of shade but best in a

sunny spot. In time, flower spikes stretch up to 1.5m, with masses of wire-thin petalled flowers forming a bottle-brush shape. Pink, violet and white-flowered

forms are available as well as shorter-growing varieties. The fine foliage too is a textural delight, too. It's popular with bees and other beneficial insects. H: up to 1.5m.

TRITELEIA LAXA 'QUEEN FABIOLA'

'Queen Fabiola' and 'Rudy' are two of the best-flowering varieties. With their wiry stems, the vibrant blue, star-shaped flowers float and bounce with any wind movement. They're very effective when planted in pots because they can be moved closer to your eye line, whereas they can become lost when looked down on in a border. Try growing them in windowboxes as an interesting addition to the planting palette. Good sun is important for success, otherwise they are undemanding. H: 30cm.



NOW!



GALTONIA VIRIDIFLORA

Both *G. candicans* and *G. viridiflora* make excellent garden plants and look amazing grown with the Mexican feathergrass *Stipa tenuissima*. This robust bulb will produce tall spikes, holding pendant star-shaped pale, lime-green flowers from July to September. The foliage is interesting too, with big straps of grey-green leaves reminiscent of giant snowdrop *Galanthus elwesii*, only much larger. Decent drainage is important to ensure bulbs survive winter and can be grown in pots successfully. H: 50-90cm.



NERINE BOWDENII

Nerine is really more of a bulb for autumn with its vibrant pink floral fireworks making an appearance from September onwards. It may take a couple of seasons for these plants to perform reliably in your garden, but it's worth the wait. They like having fairly

congested roots and need to be planted in a spot that bakes in the sun. They'll put on an impressive show in borders but do well in pots too – and once you've mastered growing them, there are lots of different varieties and other, less robust species to try in shades of pink, white and even red. H: 45-60cm.



ORNITHOGALUM THYRSOIDES

Spikes of white, bell-shaped flowers are produced between May and July and occasionally for longer. Opinion on hardiness varies. It can happily grow outdoors in pots or beds without trouble year-on-year, but some gardeners lift bulbs and overwinter them in a cool greenhouse. To hedge your bets, try growing them in a sunny spot in a pot you can move under cover in winter. They look great with small grasses and dark-leaved plants such as heuchera 'Obsidian'. Give them plenty of sun and avoid planting too deep (5cm is plenty) to ensure success. H: up to 60cm.

TULBAGHIA VIOLACEA

If you don't like the smell of garlic, you may not like these, though it's normally noticeable only on hot days when the plant is baked. This rhizomatous (not a true bulb, but a rhizome) perennial plant has handsome silvery-grey leaves and small, pinky-purple flowers in summer – like a cross between an allium and agapanthus. Grow in a sunny spot with well-drained soil. Good soil fertility will help them to form dense clumps, but roots sitting in water will rot. There are several forms available; the variegated variety called 'Silver Lace' is always popular. H: 60cm in flower.



HOW TO RESCUE YOUR WATERLOGGED LAWN

After a soggy winter, it's time to initiate a revival action plan and restore your grass to gorgeousness!

Words Marc Rosenberg

We've had one of the wettest winters in recent memory, so the nation's lawns are in a shabby state, following months of torrential downpours. While grass is resilient, increasingly wet winters, resulting from climate change, are taking their toll on even the toughest turf. Here, we reveal how to restore grotty grass to a lush, green sward.

Most lawns will recover with a bit of TLC

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

If grass has been submerged under water for a week or so, it'll usually bounce back - as long as the sward is healthy. Prolonged waterlogging, however, can drown roots and encourage a spongy blanket of moss, with algae visible as water subsides. Fine-leaved grasses that create a manicured sward are less resilient and can perish, allowing tough, coarse grass species to dominate. Resulting patches of sparse grass risk being colonised by broad-leaved weeds. Fortunately, all these issues can be remedied.



If your plot is susceptible to flooding, a buried drainage feature may be the answer!

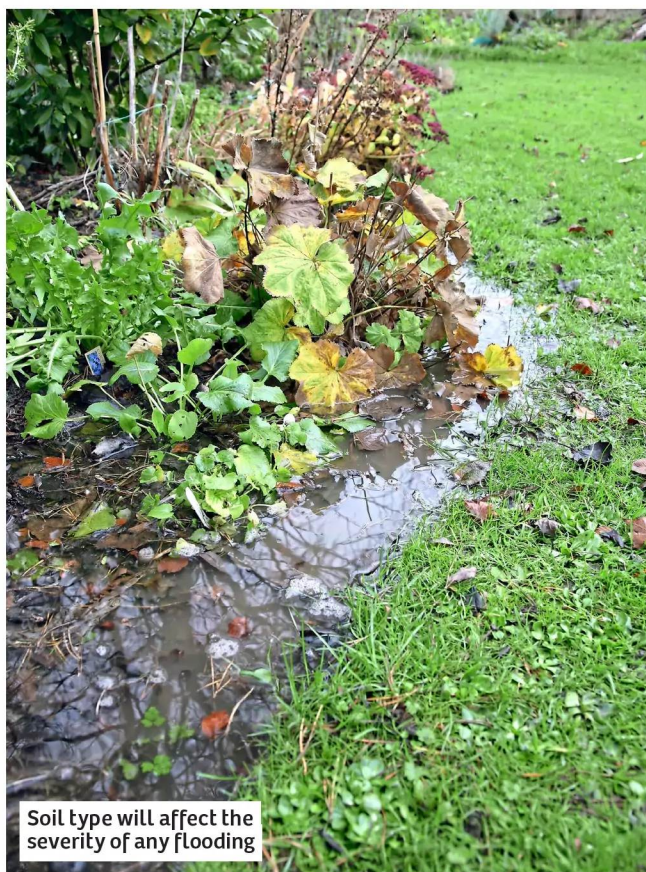
ASSESS YOUR FLOOD RISK

The risk of damage to lawns from waterlogging will depend on the type of soil that lies beneath the turf. Heavy clay soils, renowned for their nutrient-retaining ability, are most likely to suffer from flooding during winter because they're slow to drain. Lawns on light, sandy soils are less likely to become boggy, but grass can appear a sickly, pale shade of green by spring, putting on sluggish growth due to nutrients having been washed from the soil. Even lawns that sit on the holy grail of soils - well-drained, but moisture retentive - are likely to be nutrient-depleted after months of heavy rain.



INSTALL A SOAKAWAY

Where lawns sit on heavy soil, the lowest lying area will be prone to accumulating run-off and becoming submerged under water. If you need to alleviate the problem, but don't fancy embarking on a civil engineering project, installing a basic soakaway can boost drainage. Remove the turf and dig a substantial hole at least 1m deep. Fill the lowest 70cm of the hole with large stones and broken bricks, topped by around 15cm of smaller stones mixed with gravel. Firm down well. The uppermost section should be filled with around 15cm of topsoil and trodden down, so it sits level with the lawn. Fresh grass seed can then be sown (or lower the level of topsoil slightly if the original turf is to be settled back in position).



Soil type will affect the severity of any flooding



Use a hollow tine aerator every few years to boost drainage

LET IN AIR TO HELP DRAIN THE SOIL

Aeration - spiking a lawn - is the best way to relieve soil compaction and help water to drain away. It allows oxygen to penetrate, which is essential for healthy root development. Lawn aeration is usually carried out in autumn, every couple of years, but where relentless rain has left lawns saturated, springtime action can be necessary. Wait until floodwater has subsided, then sink a garden fork 10-15cm deep into the ground at 15cm intervals. Wiggle the fork back and

forth a little to open the holes up, before withdrawing it. For areas that are prone to heavy flooding, a hollow tine aerator will pluck plugs of soil from the ground, significantly boosting drainage, but it should only be used every few years. Brushing a lawn top dressing into the holes, using a broom, will help to maintain drainage. Aerating can be a labour-intensive job, so don't feel obliged to tackle the entire lawn. Prioritise areas that are prone to compaction and waterlogging.

Continues over the page



BANISH THE INVASIVE MENACE OF MOSS

Take damp conditions, mix in shade, add compacted ground and acidic soil, and you have all the ingredients for lawn moss to thrive. This unsightly invader relishes the opportunity to set up shop in run-down, nutrient-depleted lawns, where grass is patchy. Even lawns on free-draining soil are not immune because moss will thrive on infertile soil. If you mowed your lawn too close last summer, that will have given moss a helping hand, too. Traditionally, gardeners have used sulphate of iron to eradicate moss - it'll turn it black within a fortnight so it can be teased from turf using a spring-time rake. Remember that powered scarifiers are too brutal for use in spring, and heavy scarification should be carried out in autumn, so lawns have time to recover before temperatures rise in the following spring, and growth begins in earnest. Modern, natural lawn treatments, such as Westland's Moss Master, will kill and digest moss without turning it black, saving the time and hassle of raking it out.

Moss can take over grassy areas if left to its own devices!

RESTORE LAWN ORDER

Whether you're a fan of formality, with long, straight borders, or prefer sweeping contours that flow naturally, boundaries between lawns and flowerbeds can appear dishevelled. A half-moon edging iron makes light work of redefining edges and banishing grass that's creeping into borders, but more radical action is needed where lawn edges have collapsed. A simple trick is to cut out a square of turf in the area with a broken edge. Use a spade to cut around the edges, then slide it under the turf, so it sits on a bed of soil around 6cm deep. Carefully lift the square of turf and rotate it by 180 degrees, so the freshly cut, straight edge aligns with the border. The gap, now nestled in the lawn, should be filled with topsoil and sprinkled with grass seed.



Redefine lawn edges by digging out and turning sections of turf

TLC FOR YOUR LAWNMOWER

Easter falls early this year (Good Friday is March 29), and the bank holiday signals the start of the mowing season - as long as grass is growing, conditions are mild, and the ground is dry. Now's the time to get your mower serviced, so the clean, sharp blades make a healthy cut. Raise the height of the blades for the first few trims to reduce stress on the lawn early in the season, then gradually lower the height of the cut.



Your lawn will likely need a boost after winter

TIME TO REPLENISH LOST NUTRIENTS

A spring lawn feed is essential to replace nutrients that leached from the soil over winter. To choose the formula that's right for you, it's vital to understand the differences between synthetic and organic treatments. Traditional feeds, such as Miracle-Gro EverGreen Complete 4in1 are high in nitrogen, kick-starting lawns into producing fresh green growth. They also contain a selective herbicide to kill weeds and iron sulphate to destroy moss. Organic lawn feeds, such as RHS-endorsed Recovery from Viano, focus on improving soil structure, so it retains nutrients and moisture, while boosting biological activity to stimulate lawn growth. Recovery claims to be tailored for use after periods when lawns have been subjected to stress, such as flooding and drought.



Check over and clean your mower so it's action-ready come spring

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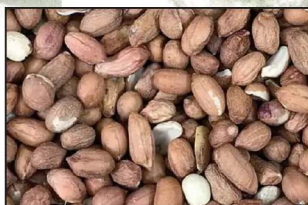
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Carol Klein THIS WEEK AT GLEBE COTTAGE

The latest from Carol's beautiful cottage garden... plus her diary for the week!

Get vertical THINKING!

Consider beyond the walls for ideas on how to enjoy towers of flowers

It's easy to think of our gardens as being composed of flat beds that use all the floor space, but none of the three-dimensional space that is there for the taking. Using vertical space increases the room we have to play with exponentially. The only trouble is, our ideas are often limited by what wall space we have, as that tends to be the only place we think of for plants going up in the air.

Here, at Glebe Cottage, our wall space is very limited: there's the house and my shed, and that's about it. We don't even have the benefit of boundary fences or walls because we don't have to separate our garden from immediate neighbours.

But, surely, we all dream of a walled garden with the chance to grow exotic climbers or train a wisteria or fruit tree?

We're lucky having a good-sized garden, and even though it may be short of walls, there are inventive ways to bypass or overcome that issue. Whatever the size of our gardens, we can all dream up ways of making the most of the third dimension!

It sounds pretty obvious, but climbers need to climb, so some sort of structure needs to be provided. If it's annual climbers you're thinking of - sweet peas and nasturtiums perhaps - or some of the more exotic annuals, such as *Thunbergia alata* (black-eyed Susan) or *ipomoea* (Morning

Glory), then bamboo canes - or if you're lucky enough, hazel sticks - can be made into an obelisk or wigwam.

Neil made me some truly wonderful supports for the Cupani sweet peas we used for our Hampton Court show garden last year. He simply stuck four tall hazel poles into the compost in tree pots and used twine to go from one to the other all the way up. It took a while, but it was worth it. We ended up with towers of flowers. They came home with us and are sitting in our polytunnel, ready to be used again. I carefully untied the old stems and removed them. These really were a work of art - thank you Neil!



Create an obelisk to host climbing sweet peas

Last year, we used simple obelisks - four tall canes tied at the top, adorned with sweet peas - to lend some height in the brick garden. Later, there are tall grasses throughout this area, but they don't come into their own until the autumn so it's great to use these temporary towers for extra impact through summer.

In other parts of the garden, there are more permanent structures supporting clematis and roses. There's a short wooden pergola, and one rose, 'Sander's White' has been there for ages.

Climbing roses are ever popular and fall mainly into two groups: true climbers and ramblers. Climbing roses tend to have large flowers over several months and are ideal to grow against a wall, up a pillar or arch, and perfect for pergolas. If you have trees, you can probably accommodate a rambler, though some can reach 18m across, so be prepared!

Growing climbers through existing plants is a great solution, and they don't have to be trees. If you're lucky enough to have a hedge - especially if it's mixed and interesting - try adding a honeysuckle, a clematis, or a climbing rose.

You don't even have to pay for supports. Many free-standing shrubs in beds and borders make excellent hosts, too and can provide extra colour when their host is out of flower.

WHAT'S LOOKING GOOD NOW

A perfect posy for mothers

As we approach Mothering Sunday, this time of year always makes me think of primroses.

On a walk a few weeks ago, I saw my first primrose, and it filled me with hope and reassurance. Since then, the numbers have multiplied, and their pale flowers look out at the base of every hedge and scattered along the bank.

The primrose is one of our most widespread wild flowers, and though its habitat has been under threat in recent years, with disappearing hedges, copses and woodland, it has had a comeback by adapting to man-made environments, such as motorway embankments. We can help guard against its demise by growing

it in our own gardens. Anywhere akin to its natural setting will suit, but it will fit in almost anywhere, providing it has moisture, a bit of shade and humus-rich soil.

Although there are thousands of varieties, to my mind, none of them hold a torch to our wild primrose. I remember how thrilled I was when, on Mothering Sunday, our girls presented me with a little bunch of primroses, gathered from the garden.



'Whatever the size of our gardens, we can all dream up ways of making the most of the third dimension'



my gardening **DIARY**

MONDAY Looking out from the kitchen door, you get a view of the hedge in the field next door. It has taken on a faint acid-yellow bloom as thousands of hazel catkins shake themselves free and dangle in the breeze, creating a misty effect as the pollen becomes airborne on sunny days.

TUESDAY

When we came here 45 years ago, in the next-door garden at this time of year, we would see blue, starry flowers appearing. When we identified them as *Chionodoxa luciliae*, I bought some bulbs and planted them on the shady side of the garden.



WEDNESDAY

Having tried growing aubergines from seed that germinated fine, but didn't fruit well, we ordered some grafted plants. They produced masses of delicious fruit. We're hoping to do the same again this year.

THURSDAY

Our *Wisteria macrobotrys* is growing under gutters and wrapping itself round a chimney. We need to winter prune it, taking the shoots back to two or three buds. This will ensure long racemes of scented flowers.

FRIDAY

Sowing scabious seed 'Ace of Spades' and a white variety collected from a self-sown plant last year. These are hardy annuals, but will sometimes do an extra year.

SATURDAY

Dividing a couple of hostas that have got too big for their position. Although it's a Herculean task, the best way of doing this is to lift the whole clump with as much root as possible, then chop it into even-sized chunks, replanting the mother plant and moving new pieces to a fresh site.

SUNDAY

We're taking down the nest boxes, repairing them where necessary and cleaning them out. We want to add a couple of swallow terracotta cups on the outside of Neil's shed because they can no longer access the inside as they used to. Might even try using an old bra!

Carol Klein

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Pear 'Garden Pearl' Patio Tree

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Peter McDermott
Head Gardener



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Over the FENCE

REAL
readers'
gardens!

Green shoots are pushing through!



Finella Davenport

A suburban garden in Cheshire, with flower and shrub-filled borders, raised beds, a rockery, and fruit grown in containers and the ground.

A covering of snow looked pretty, but didn't last long. During the very chilly spell, I gave the ranunculus I started off in the cold frame some additional protection with bubble wrap. At least some have sprouted. I've not grown ranunculus before, and I'm eager to see the blooms. When the frosts are over, I'll plant them into patio pots or raised beds.

More green shoots are pushing through the soil, while dainty but tough *Iris reticulata* have recently popped up, as has a clump of yellow crocuses. Elegant hellebores continue to bloom. Although the skeleton trees look stark, there's beauty here, too, especially when the sky is clear, and the sun illuminates the



Raspberry canes have had a trim

It's my first time growing ranunculus

Iris reticulata

landscape. I love how blueberries catch the light - the buds and leaves are a gorgeous ruby red. More recently, though, we've had rain and wind, and a fence panel came loose during a storm, so that will need slotting back.

I'm continuing to clear away plants that are past their best. These are composted or chopped up and added directly to beds. I prefer to work regularly in the garden, even if it's not for long: just getting a few jobs ticked off the list is

an accomplishment. I've cut down canes of 'Autumn Treasure' raspberries: they're a spine-free variety that don't require supports. I've made a start on pruning the rose shrubs, which I'm reducing by about a third to half in height, then removing branches that are crossing over, to give an open structure.

Our compost needed a turn, to mix up the contents. We have a two-bin system, so we can move material between them and use up one lot while the other pile is still breaking down. Plain cardboard boxes from Christmas gifts have been ripped up and added in - a great way to reuse them!

My highlight

Spotting jays and blue tits in the garden. And my forced hyacinths have sprouted!

Planting roses in the front garden



I can't wait for all these potted bulbs to flower

The tidy-up is in full swing now

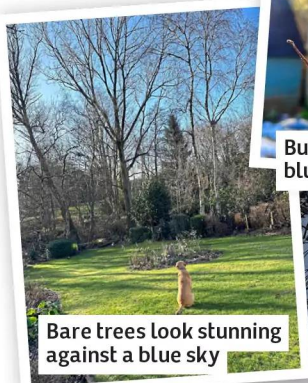


Tony McCabe

A small garden in Merseyside that is packed with a variety of different features.

Wet and windy weather at last gave way to my favourite: snow. It only lasted a day, but I loved it. The garden tidy-up has moved on apace, with most of the winter debris bagged and away to the recycling centre, and the two green bins full to the brim.

There have been some wonderful sunsets this year,



Bare trees look stunning against a blue sky



Buds on the blueberry



This snowy scene didn't last long

Hellebore blooms are a delight for all to admire

Even though my growing season hasn't yet started, there has been no shortage of time spent in the garden. A highlight was taking part in the RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch. Sadly, in my particular allotted hour of observing garden visitors, the birds were not as forthcoming as they usually are. Typical! Just two robins and one blue tit to report.

There has been plenty of growth from spring bulbs planted in pots - mainly daffodils, tulips and alliums - but the biggest joy was the appearance of the first snowdrop of the season. I planted a few bulbs in autumn 2021 and more 'in the green' in spring 2022, and now I have a few nice clumps, which are slowly naturalising in my front garden border.

Elsewhere, the hellebores continue to be a delight, and I get comments from passers-by on the busy main road I live on that it's lovely to see plants in flower in the colder months. They

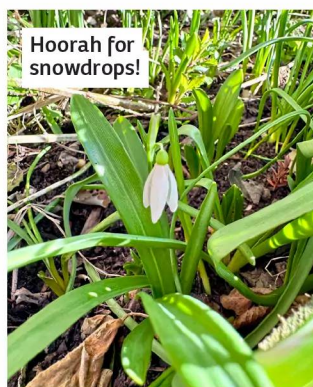


Mel Darvill

A 6 x 6m north-facing, new-build garden on the East London/Essex border; primarily a container garden, with lots of climbers for fence and shed coverage.

are in pots by my front door, so I get to enjoy them every day, too.

I've continued to add to my collection of roses by planting yet another bareroot. I always add



Hoorah for snowdrops!



Everyone is enjoying seeing the hellebores put on a show



My daughter is an excellent helper

bareroot plants where I can, as they're a much more affordable option than potted ones, as well as being more environmentally friendly, with less plastic and compost than their potted counterparts. I've planted the new rose in the front garden, and I can't wait for it to flower.

I've also begun pruning back my established shrub roses and lightly pruning the climbing ones. My five-year-old daughter enjoyed helping; I always take the children up on their offers of helping in the garden when I get the chance, as I think they benefit

so much from being immersed in nature - as we all do.

You can see more of Mel's garden on Instagram at @melslittlegarden.

My highlight

The first snowdrops of the year!



You can't beat a good garden clear-up!



Bright berries

through, and there's a little burst of colour from the red berries of *Iris foetidissima* and blue flowers of vinca, while *sarcococca* and *Lonicera purpurea* add delightful perfume.

and I managed to snap one just as our solar lights came on.

The promise of spring is everywhere: snowdrops, daffs and hyacinths are all pushing

greenhouse, last summer's pots are emptied, with the inevitable discovery of vine weevil grubs lurking in the compost. The dwarf peach

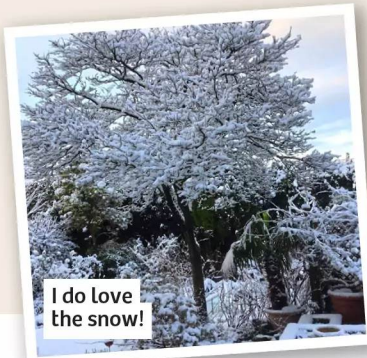
is on the staging, so dreaded peach leaf curl can be avoided, but my bee impersonation will be required to ensure pollination!

At this time of year, I keep the majority of seeds snug in their packets, but onions ('Ailsa Craig') were sown near the shortest day and are ready to be pricked out. A few cell trays will be sown with annual flowers, as they're tough enough to withstand a little cold under fleece in our



Lonicera is a fragrant joy

greenhouse. I'll wait until March for the majority of my sowings; experience has shown that later sowings usually catch up. The next big job is pruning the mature ivy on the back fence before the birds start pairing up.



I do love the snow!

My highlight

It has to be the snow!

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What to do THIS WEEK

Meet the team

Every week our team of experts guide you through what can be done in the garden now.



Ian Hodgson
Kew-trained garden designer Ian enjoys all aspects of gardening and grows unusual plants.



Karen Murphy
An all-round gardener, Karen grows fruit, veg and ornamentals, and loves wildlife.



Geoff Stebbings
Geoff trained at Kew and is a general horticulturist, author and former head gardener.



Rob Smith
Television and social media star Rob is also a seed guardian for the Heritage Seed Library.



Karen Gimson
Garden designer and home cook Karen talks on BBC Radio Leicester about fruit, veg and flowers.



Nick Bailey
Nick is an award-winning garden designer, author, columnist and television presenter.



Debi Holland
RHS-trained horticulturist and professional gardener Debi has a passion for plants, wildlife and nature.

PLANT AN ALPINE TROUGH

It makes an attractive feature to brighten up the patio all year round

Alpines are ideal plants for small gardens. They can be grown at the edge of borders, raised beds and pots, and although many bloom in spring, they can add interest all year, and most are easy to grow. Many of the most popular alpine plants are starting to bloom, and garden centres will be stocking up, so now's the perfect time to create a display.

One of the joys of an alpine garden or sink is you can incorporate rocks and gravel to 'landscape' the pot or trough. Use contrasting plant forms and shapes, coloured foliage and a range of flowering times, and include some flowering bulbs for extra seasonal bursts of colour.

Most alpine plants prefer a sunny site, and compost must be well-drained. Make sure any container has plenty of drainage holes and put gravel or broken pots in the base to aid drainage.



JOB OF THE WEEK

The compost should contain loam if possible, and mix in gravel or grit to further aid drainage. Most alpine plants don't need a nutrient-rich compost, and you can liquid feed through summer, when extra watering will be needed, or

choose succulents, such as sedums, lewisia, delosperma and sempervivum, which will tolerate drought. You can cover the surface of the pot with grit, gravel, stones or shells, according to your taste, after planting.

STEP BY STEP



1 Fill a container with a compost that drains well. A mix of loam-based compost and grit is ideal. Use Perlite if you need a lighter compost.



2 If placing large rocks to simulate a natural landscape, place these before the plants, so it looks as though the plants are growing naturally.



3 Water young plants before planting, then arrange on the compost. When happy with the look, plant so the rootball is at or just above compost level.



4 Once planted, water the alpine plants well in order to settle in the plants, then cover the surface with a mulch of gravel or stones to suit your taste.

What to do **THIS WEEK** In your flower garden

CHOP BACK CORNUS AND WILLOWS

Prune them now for more vibrant stems and use the cuttings to make new plants

Cornus (dogwood) and salix (willow) dazzle through dreary winter months, but as old stems thicken they become dull and lose their sheen. Every two or three years, cut all the stems to the ground at the end of winter. Coppicing stimulates vigorous, bright, upright stems as the shrub puts its energy into new growth.

For a less drastic prune, only cut out the oldest stems and leave younger material so there is a rotation of foliage-bearing stems for the forthcoming year.

For maximum impact plant en masse, but it can be expensive to populate gardens with new plants, so pot on suckers and take cuttings from some of your

prunings. These hardy stems are remarkably easy to propagate.

Providing all-year-round interest, these deciduous shrubs host nectar and pollen-rich flowers and fruits which are a hit with wildlife, from caterpillars to pollinators to

birds. They can grow in any soil type but favour moisture.

Cornus alba 'Sibirica' boasts fiery red stems and *C. sericea* 'Flaviramea' luminous green. *C. sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' has warm yellow, orange and red embers from base to tips,

while *Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis' and 'Yelverton' have stunning orange-scarlet stems.

Start cuttings directly into a well-drained patch of soil outside or in pots and keep in a sheltered corner or a cold frame.



STEP BY STEP



1 Hard prune cornus and salix to restrict size and remove dull old stems. This is known as coppicing and makes way for bright new growth.



2 Cut healthy, pencil-thick stems approximately 25cm in length. Use sharp secateurs to remove sideshoots and leaves.



3 Allow three to four buds per cutting. Make a flat cut under a node at the bottom and a slanted cut above a bud at the top.



4 Stems take months to grow so dedicate a spot that can remain undisturbed. Push cuttings into the ground or a pot and water them in.



Tidy streptocarpus

After a long winter with not much activity, it's time to whip streptocarpus into shape to prepare them for a fabulous flowering season. Firstly, snip off any dead or dying flower stalks and leaves from the plant to tidy it up. Keep plants in good light with ventilation and a bit of shade. Start watering plants more frequently and feeding them every couple of weeks with a special streptocarpus food, or another high potash plant food, such as tomato food.

Install a water butt

Water butts provide an easy way to catch run off from sheds, houses and greenhouse roofs. They seamlessly tap into down pipes and take up little room but if you haven't got space for one you can leave out recycled empty containers – in a dry spell every drop can count! Saving rainwater has many advantages; it can reduce the strain on the environment and local resources, save money on pricey water charges and avoid you running dry in a drought. Rainwater has a lower pH than tap water, is slightly acidic, has no added chemicals and is free!



Oversow patchy lawns

Winter takes its toll on our lawns and you may be left with one that's a shadow of its former self. Either through compaction or a bit of wear and tear, some parts of it may have become patchy and bare, so it's time to rectify this. Choose any good quality strong grass seed, or invest in a product such as Patch Magic from MiracleGro, which is a seed and feed treatment. Soon enough, the patches will be filled in and you'll have your dream lawn back again.



Feed spring bulbs

Flowering bulbs are one of the joys of spring and as daffodils bring colour to our gardens, it's only fair to reward them for their beauty. They're in full growth now and returning nutrients to their bulbs, so it's the perfect time to feed them. In pots you can water them with a general liquid fertiliser. This will also benefit any bedding plants in the pots and keep violas and pansies growing strongly. In borders, just sprinkle on general granular fertiliser. Bulbs growing in grass can't easily be divided to rejuvenate them once planted, so feeding is especially important. It will also feed the grass.

Trim hebes

Hebes are evergreen and appreciate a trim in spring. It's been a long winter and some may have suffered frost damage. Pictured is *Hebe parviflora angustifolia*, a fluffball of a plant that has lovely white flowers and is so reliable in most garden spots. It's robust and will cope with most conditions but will likely need a tidy now. Old blooms can be cut off and the whole bush cut to shape. Only a light trim is needed, but if you have a little heavier frost damage, or the bush is getting out of hand, you can cut some areas quite far back and it will recover well.



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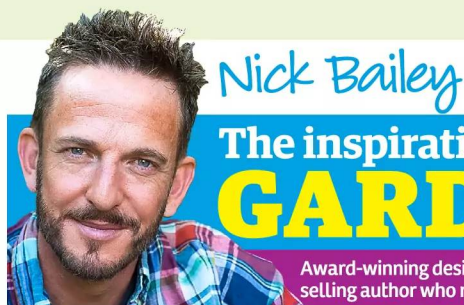
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AHNG



Nick Bailey

The inspirational **GARDENER**

Award-winning designer, TV broadcaster and best-selling author who makes the ordinary extraordinary

EVERY GARDEN NEEDS A HEART OF GLASS!

A greenhouse offers year-round growing potential as well as protection for precious plants

At the heart of every garden I've cared for is a glasshouse of some description

— be it a grand Victorian wrought-iron mega-structure or humble, small aluminium workhorse. Irrespective of scale, they all do the same thing, which is provide a protected environment to allow you to grow year-round, protect plants and cultivate tender species. But they are also a garden's HQ; somewhere to stash horticultural kit and provide a warm spot on a winter's day.

I'm just settling into a new garden, which doesn't (currently) have a glasshouse at its heart, and I'm making

decisions on what will work best for me. So, if you're considering a glasshouse (go on, you know you want to!), here's my guide.

Size, type and cost

Its size will be determined by space and budget, but I'd always advise getting the biggest one you can accommodate. A 1.2x1.8m is enough for most small gardens, whereas a 3x1.8m suits medium gardens. But, of course, this depends on how much you want to grow. I'm going for a 3.5x2.5m, which is arguably quite big for my garden, but I want to use a chunk of it for sitting in, too.

In terms of type and cost, the fanciest glasshouses money can buy usually have a dwarf

brick wall and cedar or steel frame. A 3x1.8m glasshouse in this style could easily set you back more

than £8,000. More economical are full-glass cedar houses, coming in at £3,000-£5,000.

However, the best value comes in the form of aluminium glasshouses — a 3x1.8m is typically closer to £500.

If budget is tight, check out your local free listings online, such as Freecycle or Facebook Marketplace. There are always free glasshouses listed. I've acquired two in the past this way. The deal is usually to take it down from the current owner's garden and rebuild it in yours (around two days' work).

A greenhouse, such as this one from Hartley Botanic, can be an asset to any garden



Even in the smallest of spaces, it's still possible to squeeze in a greenhouse

Another option, which is often overlooked, is the mini glasshouse, typically 1.8mx60cm, which you site on a south-facing wall. They work brilliantly and, with several shelves installed, come close to a 1.2x1.8m glasshouse in terms of growing space. Whatever you pick, be sure to get safety glass, not horticultural glass — it's infinitely safer.

Location and base

It goes without saying, a glasshouse should be in the sunniest spot possible, but, technically, just six hours of sunlight counts as full sun, so your options may be wider than you think.

Aim to have the pitch facing south, to maximise light entry. In terms of the base, perhaps the most economical is to mount the house on sunken cedar sleepers, but a full concrete base can work, too. Internally, you have the option to leave the soil exposed for growing, with a path through the middle, or pave the lot and grow in containers. However you do it, it will undoubtedly become the heart of your garden.

Make the most of the growing conditions

We often focus on spring and summer in the glasshouse, germinating seeds and growing tomatoes and cucumbers. But autumn and winter also present a host of growing opportunities.

Herbs lifted and potted from the garden can be kept in production through autumn and into winter. Numerous edibles can be grown, including lamb's lettuce, microgreens and cut-and-come-again lettuce.

Tender plants can be protected and brought into flower earlier, and beautiful, fleeting potted bulbs, such as *Iris reticulata*, can be grown and displayed. You can also cultivate citrus, which often continues to flower and crop through winter along with exotic-looking carnivorous species (which help control pests) and sweet peas, which can be started in autumn for earlier summer flowering.



A glasshouse will protect tender plants in the colder months

What to do **THIS WEEK** *On your fruit & veg plot*

SOW SOME BRASSICAS

**Start off crops that
will be harvested in
summer and autumn**

With the main seed-sowing season almost upon us,

it's good to get going with crops that benefit from an early start and will germinate at lower temperatures.

Brassicas that provide crops from autumn to spring are usually sown in late spring or early summer, but the ones you can sow now for harvesting in summer into autumn include calabrese, summer cauliflowers, kale and summer cabbages.

Cauliflowers are notoriously tricky to grow well but summer varieties are the easiest. Summer cabbages are varied and quick and calabrese is compact and fast to crop compared to sprouting broccoli, which takes about nine months from sowing to harvest.

All these seeds germinate quickly too, taking around 10 days if kept at about 18C in a propagator. They can be transplanted into small pots or cells to grow on and, because the seedlings will tolerate light frosts, they can be planted out into the garden in April. Seeds should be sown little and often to avoid a glut of too many cabbages at one time. They can be sown throughout spring up until May for later crops. All prefer a soil that is alkaline and firm. Clay soil is ideal.



TOP TIPS



Seedlings should be grown in bright, cool conditions and planted out when they have four or five leaves, when they're young and vigorous.



Avoid leaving seedlings in trays too long or they may suffer from nutrient deficiency. Purple-tinged leaves are a sign of lack of nitrogen.



Most brassicas are prone to the fungal disease clubroot. It's most common on acid soils and if present it's best to grow clubroot-resistant varieties.



Mealy aphid is a common pest. It's first spotted when young leaves are distorted, with enlarged white veins. Pick off affected leaves.

Grow alpine strawberries

Alpine strawberries give a plentiful harvest and, as ever-bearers, fruit until the first frosts. They need a period of cold before starting into growth so keep them in the freezer for around three weeks before sowing. Sow in trays filled with moist seed compost, then sprinkle the seeds evenly onto the surface; don't cover them as they need light to germinate. Placing the tray on capillary matting will help to keep it evenly moist. Leave the tray in a warm place like a greenhouse, ideally at a temperature of 15-24C.



Harvest the last kale

Even at the tail end of winter there are still tasty crops to be found and kale is one of the hardiest, providing something to harvest on even the coldest days. Iron-rich kale leaves are easy to harvest and only need a brief steam to be dinner plate-ready, providing a super-fresh helping of one of your five-a-day. Enjoy the last of these nutritious leaves before the plant goes to seed or becomes woody. If plants are looking tired, make your final harvest then pull them up to create space on the veg patch that you can start preparing for sowing.



Plant horseradish

If you want to grow horseradish it's easy to raise from pieces of the root, also called thongs. You can get them from specialist growers now or simply cut a 5cm piece of root from an existing plant. You could fit in around three thongs in a

30cm container. Fill the pot with multi-purpose compost and make a hole deep enough for the length of the thong, plus an extra 5cm layer of soil on top. Cover the hole with compost and place in a sunny or partially shaded position.

ROB SMITH

KITCHEN GARDENER

Helping you get your best-ever fruit and veg



I'm sowing summer brassicas

Last jobs before spring arrives!

There's pruning to do as well as starting off brassicas

With spring knocking at the door,

there are a few last-minute jobs which need completing before the temperature starts to warm up, and buds begin to break. I'm pruning the last quince and medlar trees to improve their overall shape and help prevent damage from heavy fruit snapping thin branches.

I'm reducing the length of last year's growth back to two or three nodes and making sure they're on outward-facing branches. This will prevent the branches from growing inwards and creating a 'thicket', where they could rub together and introduce disease. It will also prevent the medlar branches, which have several thorny protrusions, from scratching me while I



KITCHEN GARDENER
Rob Smith

TV gardener and social media star. Also a seed guardian for the Heritage Seed Library

harvest them!

As both trees thrive in the wetter part of the garden because they like it moist, I'm checking the supports to make sure the tree isn't suffering from wind rock again, as this will hinder growth and fruit production, due to roots snapping and being unable to provide nutrients. If you have an

apple or pear tree, it's your last chance to prune that as well.

It's also time to get ahead with some summer brassicas, especially pointed cabbages and cauliflowers (which I use for piccalilli). There are varieties which can be sown now, either on a windowsill or in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame, happily producing stocky little plants, which can be transplanted in a couple of months.



Pruning is important to protect trees

'Greyhound' and 'April' are reliable cabbages that will produce sweet, crisp heads in early summer, while 'Snowball' and 'All The Year Round' are great cauliflowers for harvesting from June. I prefer to

start seeds in modules, which can be transplanted instead of direct sowing - I find it prevents slug and weather damage, and gives the plants the best start to life - with two seeds per module, thinned to the healthiest seedling.

While peas such as 'Early Onward' are best sown from March, 'Vivado' and 'Douce Provence' can be started now for an early crop. I've been saving toilet roll tubes for sowing peas - standing them in a seed tray and filling them with compost is the best way to start. It's also good to water them very sparingly, as you'll end up with soggy, collapsing tubes if you give them too much.

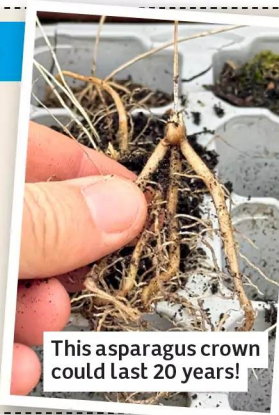
If you prefer a simpler way to sow your peas, try scattering the seeds in a seed pan or low

Asparagus will reward patience

One of my favourite spring veg to grow is asparagus. Last year, I started a purple-speared variety off from seed: the idea was to put them in the flower borders to add height and texture while also allowing me to harvest more spears without using up valuable raised bed space.

I'm now potting the tiny crowns up into large modules, with the aim of planting them out after

the last frost. However, I won't harvest from these plants for at least another year, to give the crowns a chance to bulk up and produce strong roots, meaning better plants in the long run. After all, these delicious plants are perennial and will be in the garden for around 20 years, so I want them to be the best they can be.



This asparagus crown could last 20 years!



Cabbage 'Greyhound' crops in early summer

PHOTOS: DARREN LAMON, SHUTTERSTOCK/STEPHEN FARHALL



Starting seeds off in modules



Some pea varieties can be started now

plant pot. Then, when they're large enough to handle, you can shake the compost off and plant them as bareroot plants. This allows you to start lots of peas off in a small area and always works well for me.

My autumn-planted garlic and shallots are doing well, but with all the rain we've had over winter, I want to add some nutrients back to the soil and give the plants a boost. Top dressing

with a high nitrogen fertiliser will help prompt the leaf growth and ultimately increase the size of the bulbs over the next couple of months. Chicken manure or farmyard manure will work well, as long as you don't pile it up against the plants or damage their roots when working it into the soil. Alternatively, you can use a specialist onion/garlic/shallot granular feed, which you'll be able to get online or at any good garden centre.

NEXT WEEK Sorting out my tomatoes



Homegrown

with Karen Gimson



Pumpkin and tomato soup

Pumpkins and squash usually store through until spring, but, this year, they've started to go soft early – weather conditions during growing and curing are probably to blame. I'm not going to grow the mini squash

this year; I'll concentrate on the larger 'Crown Prince' variety, as this kept better than the rest. This tasty recipe also utilises my home-grown frozen tomatoes. Just right for cold-weather dinners!

Ingredients

Serves 6

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion
- 1 leek
- 1 red pepper
- 1 large carrot
- 400g peeled-weight pumpkin 'Crown Prince' or butternut squash, cubed
- 300g frozen tomatoes or 1 can of tomatoes
- 200ml water
- 1 x 400g can of cooked mixed beans in water (chickpeas, borlotti, red kidney and cannellini beans – we use organic Suma beans, which have no additives)
- Salt and black pepper

- 2 tbsp fresh herbs, chopped: parsley, thyme, rosemary, or 1 tsp dried mixed herbs
- Few tbsp grated Cheddar cheese plus bread to serve.

Method

- Cook the onion and leek in the olive oil on a low heat for 5 minutes.
- Add the chopped pepper, carrot and pumpkin, and cook for another few minutes.
- Add the tomatoes, water and half the beans.
- Cook for 20 minutes or until the vegetables are soft.
- Add salt, pepper and herbs.

- Liquidise briefly with a hand-held blender, or mash with a fork.
- This soup can be completely smooth or half and half (we like it chunky!).
- Add the reserved beans and heat through before serving.
- Sprinkle with cheese and serve with bread.
- Note: You must use cooked beans for this recipe. If cooking with dry beans, check soaking and cooking instructions carefully.

Read more at bramblegarden.com. Instagram @karengimson1.

NEXT WEEK Crunchy orange triangle cakes

GARDENING WITH THE EXPERTS

The world's finest share their tips for success

Roll out the barrels!

Spend time now on the prep work for your parsnips

What extremes of weather we're experiencing these days! November through to December was so wet, we were unable to harvest around a tonne of potatoes from our land. This was followed by a relatively dry January, but it froze hard at night, which meant my heating bills in the greenhouse shot up. This was quickly followed by gale-force winds and more rain!

So, at this time of year, it pays to have a max/min thermometer in the greenhouse, as this will tell you the following morning how low the temperature dropped during the night, and if your heater was able to maintain the temperature you set your thermostat at. If you're growing leeks and onions, they'll be fine, even if the temperature drops to below 10°C.

I was recently nearly caught out by mice. The cold weather entices the little beggars to the warmth of my glasshouse, and if it wasn't for a few traps I'd laid out with peanut butter bait, many of my seedling onions would have been ruined. How they get in is beyond me - I've searched around the base for any holes, but can't see any.

My leeks and onions are doing well, but my concentration right now is on parsnips for the



'Viking' is my parsnip of choice, with lovely white roots



Medwyn Williams

Medwyn is a 13-times Gold Medal winner at the Chelsea Flower Show, president of the National Vegetable Society, regular GN contributor and expert, and passionate grower of a vast range of vegetables.

Welsh championship. I've been very happy with the results over the past few years, and the newer breeding lines are certainly producing roots that are more uniform and much whiter.

My parsnip barrels are sitting on a shallow, raised bed of concrete blocks, with a third of a barrel sitting on top. In line with the edge of every barrel, I have a concrete block going across the bed to take the weight off the edges of the drums. This will make sure they stay upright and erect.

Emptying the barrels out every year used to be good exercise for me, but nowadays it can be torture, as it's seriously hard work! I've persuaded a friend to help with it, and we were able to start emptying them at the end of last year, but only after I pulled the last one for my Christmas dinner!

The barrels were emptied one by one, so the bottom of the raised bed could also be thoroughly turned over. The extra sand left over was shovelled on top of the barrel to form a mound to allow for any settlement within. The sand has now sunk and the top of the barrels levelled off, and over the past few weeks, they've been regularly soaked to make sure the sand is moist throughout. If the sand was too dry, when coring the holes, it would simply fall out of the pipe, which totally defeats the objective.

Then, a week ago, the holes were cored out using a stainless pipe with a 7.5cm bore and 1.67m in length. Believe me, this pipe is very heavy, so my friend again kindly helps. The



A max/min thermometer is crucial at this time of the year, when the weather is so changeable

mixture I use in the bore holes is 1 x 75L bag F2S, 10L fine grade Vermiculite, 10L finely sieved soil, 200g Nutrimate, 300g ground calcified seaweed, and the parsnip variety will be 'Viking', as it did so well for me last year.

Follow me on X (Twitter) throughout the season as I grow a range of different vegetables for exhibition - @medwynsofangles.



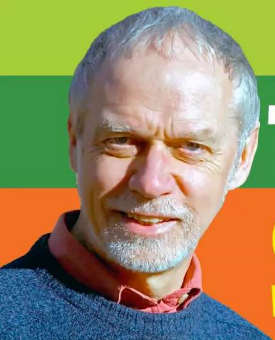
Peanut butter baited traps are irresistible to the mice that somehow get into the glasshouse



The barrels levelled off and ready for boring

I let the sand settle, so there's no air pockets in the barrels

NEXT WEEK Time to plant hardy exotics



THE PROBLEM SOLVER

Stefan Buczacki

Professor Buczacki is a horticultural expert, writer and former chair of *Gardeners' Question Time*

Got a problem? Our Problem Solver can help! See our contact details on page 3 [#GNASKTHEEXPERTS](#)



PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK/ALAMY

What is wrong with my 'Victoria' plum?

Gareth Pratt, by email

Stefan says: Last year your 'Victoria' plum tree started splendidly, with masses of foliage, flowers and then small green plums. However, by the time you came to pick the fruit, the tree looked awful. The majority of the foliage had gone; you describe what was left as 'brown and decrepit' and most of the fruit had also vanished.

You discovered it was aphids causing the degeneration you've seen. Although you're understandably reluctant to use chemical sprays on your plants, you did spray the tree last year with what you call a bee-friendly, presumably organic, anti-aphid spray, which clearly didn't work. You wonder if I can

recommend any that will protect your plum against aphids.

Judging by your picture, the tree is affected by two extremely common pests: the mealy plum aphid and also the leaf-curling plum aphid, which causes the leaves to curl as a result of its feeding activities. The aphids are protected inside the curled leaves and that means even with a reliable spray, the little creatures would be largely screened from its effects.

That said, spraying with an approved insecticide will generally give good results if done thoroughly in March, just before flowering, with a second treatment in May or June if mealy plum aphid is troublesome.



However, by the end of June most aphid colonies on plums will contain ladybird beetles and their larvae, hoverfly larvae, anthorcid bugs and other natural enemies. Although they reduce aphid populations only after the main damage, they may restrict aphid populations in late summer and



autumn and reduce the numbers of overwintering eggs laid. If you spray while the predators are active, you'll do more harm than good by killing them.

FOUR MORE PLUM PROBLEMS



Pocket plum

A fungal infection of young fruit, causing them to develop abnormally with no stone and eventually fall off.



Brown rot

This fungal disease causes spreading brown rot in fruit. It normally starts from a wound from birds or pests.



Plum moth

The caterpillars of plum moth cause problems, feeding inside the ripening fruit, but not all fruits will be affected.



Bacterial canker

A stem and leaf disease causing sunken patches of dead bark and small holes in leaves, called shot hole.

How do I create a thyme hedge?

Steve Hansler, by email

Stefan says: You're growing thyme from seed on your windowsill with the intention to plant them out as a step-over hedge for a 4.5m-long border. You ask how tall they will grow and how far apart you should plant them. This all sounds terrific, but I think you've set yourself a significant task.

First, let's answer your specific questions. The plants will grow between 15-20cm tall and should be planted about 15cm apart. They will, however, need to be transplanted in to individual pots and hardened off thoroughly for the best part of a season, during which time they should be lightly clipped to encourage them to develop a bushy appearance. With care it can be done, but bear in mind that unlike, say, lavender, thymes are difficult to keep neat and attractive for more than about three years.



Thyme is an unusual choice to grow as a low hedge

Buddleja likes to be cut back hard



Can I cut back buddleja now or do I wait until the risk of frost is over?

Wesley Turner, by email

Stefan says: You should wait, but there's no need to hold off until the risk of frost is over, which could take you well into May in many areas. Mid to late March is the best time to prune buddlejas.

I'm assuming, of course, you're referring to *Buddleja davidii*, the familiar butterfly bush which is magnetically attractive to butterflies of all kinds. They

should be pruned hard; I cut mine back to about 60cm above soil level. If it's already large you may need to prune back to a fairly large framework. But don't forget there are other good garden buddlejas. I always look forward to the honey-scented *B. alternifolia* in June. Mine is trained as a weeping standard and needs only a little tidying up after flowering.

I'd like to get crocus, fritillaries and aconites to naturalise

Richard McCarthy, by email

Stefan says: You may need to plant more. Aconites can take some time to establish properly but then self-seed like fury. With crocuses, it largely depends on the species. The large-flowered, so-called Dutch crocus will naturalise - by which we mean spread - fairly well, but slowly, and if you want a mass of plants quickly then planting more corms is the

answer. Practically all other types of crocus naturalise much more slowly, if at all.

With the fritillaries, you will certainly need more because they naturalise very slowly. Also bear in mind that while aconites and Dutch crocus will spread well in lawns, all the others must be planted in bare soil where there is no competition from other plants.



Over time crocus and aconites have naturalised under this park tree

Continues over the page

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a common weed in the wild, but now rarely found, it is becoming increasingly sought after for use in the garden, with its ornamental flowers which bloom pink with white eyes. 50 seeds per pack.

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Can you grow hardy geraniums in both sun and shade?

Olive Patterson, Leicester

Stefan says: In short, yes!

There are many varieties ranging in height, spread and colour, from tiny alpines to big and vigorous species for the herbaceous border, and you'll find some for almost every situation. For shade I find the most useful are *Geranium phaeum* and *G. monacense* and their varieties; 'Muldoon' is a particularly terrific plant. In the sun, go for *G. sanguineum* and *G. pratense* and their varieties.

Most hardy geraniums are easy to grow and don't need much maintenance. Water well during the first year whenever the weather is dry. After that, you may just need to water in prolonged dry periods. You'll get a longer flowering period if you trim off straggly blooms after the first flush of flowers. And once plants have finished flowering in autumn, trim back stems and leaves in readiness for new growth in spring.



Geranium sanguineum thrives in sun



Winter tares is a nitrogen-fixing green manure crop

Which green manure is best to use on my small allotment?

Queenie Dearlove, by email

Stefan says: Green manures are extremely useful, especially in a vegetable plot or allotment. They are sown in early autumn and grow during the winter, absorbing any fertiliser nutrients still in the soil which might otherwise be washed out by rain. The plants are then dug in during spring to return the nutrients to the soil and help improve the structure. Incidentally, they also suppress weed growth during winter.

The choice of plants to use for green manure can be confusing, however, because some are better for light soils while others are better for heavy ones. My personal preference is with members of the pea and bean family, because these will add extra nitrogen to the soil through the medium of their root nodules. My choices are trefoil (*Medicago lupulina*) for a light soil and winter tares (*Vicia sativa*) for heavy.

What should I do with old fertiliser?

Frances Mulvey, Gloucester

Stefan says: You ask about the disposal of the contents of old fertiliser bottles and wonder how long they may be kept before they go out of date. You then wonder if you can just empty them down the sink or if you should dilute them and put them on the garden.

The length of time fertiliser may be kept in a useful state depends on the nature of the product and the manner in which it has been stored. Some liquid fertilisers may be effective for several years, but I always follow the maxim of not using any, whether liquid or granular, for more than three years. But do not empty any down the sink, lavatory or drains. They can be sealed, labelled and taken to a local waste facility but I prefer to dilute them and pour them on to the compost bin, where they'll act as an accelerator.



It's a good idea to replace fertilisers every three years

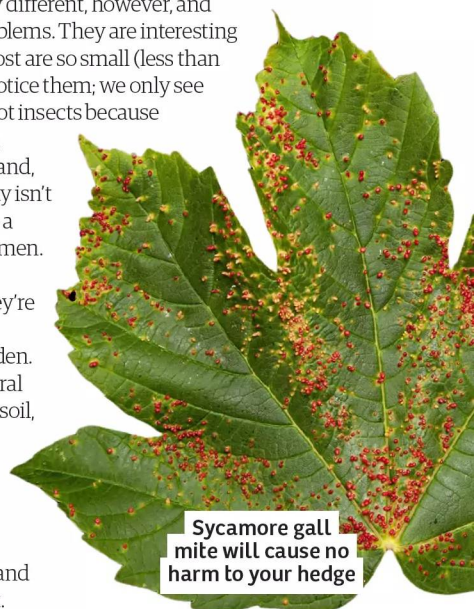
There are lots of little disease pimples on the sycamores in my hedge...

Bill Franks, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

Stefan says: I know what you're talking about, but it isn't a disease. The effect is caused by a common species of mite called sycamore gall mite but although it's unsightly, it would be unfair to call the creature a pest as no harm is caused to the plant.

Other mites are very different, however, and may cause serious problems. They are interesting creatures, although most are so small (less than 1mm long) we never notice them; we only see their effects. They're not insects because they usually have four, not three, pairs of legs and, unlike insects, the body isn't obviously divided into a head, thorax and abdomen.

There are dozens of different kinds and they're extremely abundant everywhere in the garden. Many species are general scavengers, feeding in soil, in decaying organic matter and in similar situations. Others prey on small invertebrates, including other mites and many species of insect.



Sycamore gall mite will cause no harm to your hedge

Continues over the page

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THE PROBLEM SOLVER

Is it best to raise clematis from cuttings or seeds?

Angie Fellows, by email

Stefan says: I wouldn't bother with seeds as you'll only ever succeed with the true species and while some are undeniably attractive, almost all the types of clematis popular in gardens are hybrids or selections that are unlikely to come true.

Taking cuttings is different; all the varieties derived from or closely related to true species should root well. Nonetheless, you'll struggle with most of the large-flowered, summer-blooming hybrids.

The most important feature to

remember is that unlike most other plants, clematis have the highest concentration of rooting hormones between, and not at, the stem nodes. So you'll need to take something called inter-nodal cuttings.

To do this, take shoots about 15-20cm in length. Cut them midway between the nodes. Dip the cut end in rooting powder and then push them into compost in a propagator in the usual way. This should get you successful cuttings.



Clematis is easy to grow from cuttings



Wait until the weather warms up before feeding your lawn

Do I feed my lawn now?

Rod Pelle, Canterbury, Kent

Stefan says: You're right to be hesitant as it's too early. Wait until April, just as new growth is getting started. But be sure to choose the most appropriate fertiliser. Ideally you need a spring and summer rather than an autumn blend. The latter is balanced in order to produce tougher growth to survive the winter.

It's also worth deciding if you want a fertiliser mixture containing weedkiller and/or moss killer. Don't use a mixture containing weedkiller if there are no serious weed problems in your lawn or if you're happy to see some wild flowers among your turf. I never worry about daisies, clovers or creeping speedwell and similar wild plants, but the invasive kinds such as creeping buttercup or those that produce big, smothering rosettes of leaves do need to be dealt with.

Continues over the page

THE PROBLEM SOLVER



Eucalyptus can grow into a large tree if not pruned to size

When should I plant out my new eucalyptus?

Anne Needham, Heckmondwike, West Yorkshire

Stefan says: Keep it in its container in a sheltered position until spring. You ask about pruning/training; all kinds of eucalyptus are fast growing and if left to their own devices will become enormous. Wait until it's about three quarters of the

height you ultimately want, then take out the top to encourage it to bush out. Also bear in mind that the really attractive foliage on eucalyptus is formed by the young leaves lower down, which are distinctly different from the mature ones higher up. It is this juvenile foliage that is much loved by flower arrangers.

Quick QUESTIONS

Last year, I failed at my first attempt at garlic growing. How should it be done?

Grace Moores, Bristol

Garlic needs a long growing season and a spell of cold weather. It's best planted in autumn, but you might just get away with planting now if you're quick. Plant the individual bulbs in humus-rich soil, ideally under cloches. Plant about 5cm deep and don't lift them until late in the summer when the leaves have yellowed and died back.

There's still time to plant garlic now



I have a small area of garden overshadowed by an oak tree. What is the best ground cover plant for this?

Robin Mooney, by email

Growing anything under large trees is challenging and I suspect more money and plants are wasted by the wrong choice there than anywhere else in the garden. Over the years, I've become convinced that vinca (periwinkle) takes some beating. The large variety, *Vinca major*, is the most vigorous but the variegated forms of *Vinca minor* are prettier.

gardens where they look their best in great drifts of colour. This means they need cool, moist and slightly shaded situations to grow well. I'm almost certain your patio is too hot and dry.

Every year I put thick mulch on my borders, but my bulbs seem to be getting weaker. Am I making it harder for them to come through?

Fran Whyte, by email

No, bulbs should have plenty of energy within them to force their way through mulch. It might be that they're suffering from some other problem. Are you feeding them with liquid fertiliser after the flowers fade? Or is it as simple as the fact you may be growing varieties that are inherently just not good at naturalising, like many kinds of tulip?

Why can't I grow astilbes on my patio?

Natalie Hills, by email

It pays to check where any kind of plant grows naturally, and astilbes are essentially plants of watersides and bog

For two years my strawberries have had flowers but no fruit

Deborah Hartwell, Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria

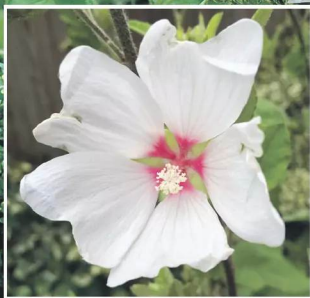
Stefan says: It may be time to start again. You don't say which strawberry variety you have. Some are much shorter lived than others; some varieties, especially in the US where it's a massive commercial crop, are grown as annuals. You say your plants are protected from birds and slugs, so the problem you've encountered could be due to dryness (especially during the hot period last summer), fungal disease affecting the unopened buds or possibly a virus. If the latter, the infection may well be in the soil, so I would certainly set up your new bed in a different spot.



Plant new strawberries if your original plants are not fruiting

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TEA BREAK

weekly prize crossword

NUMBER
09

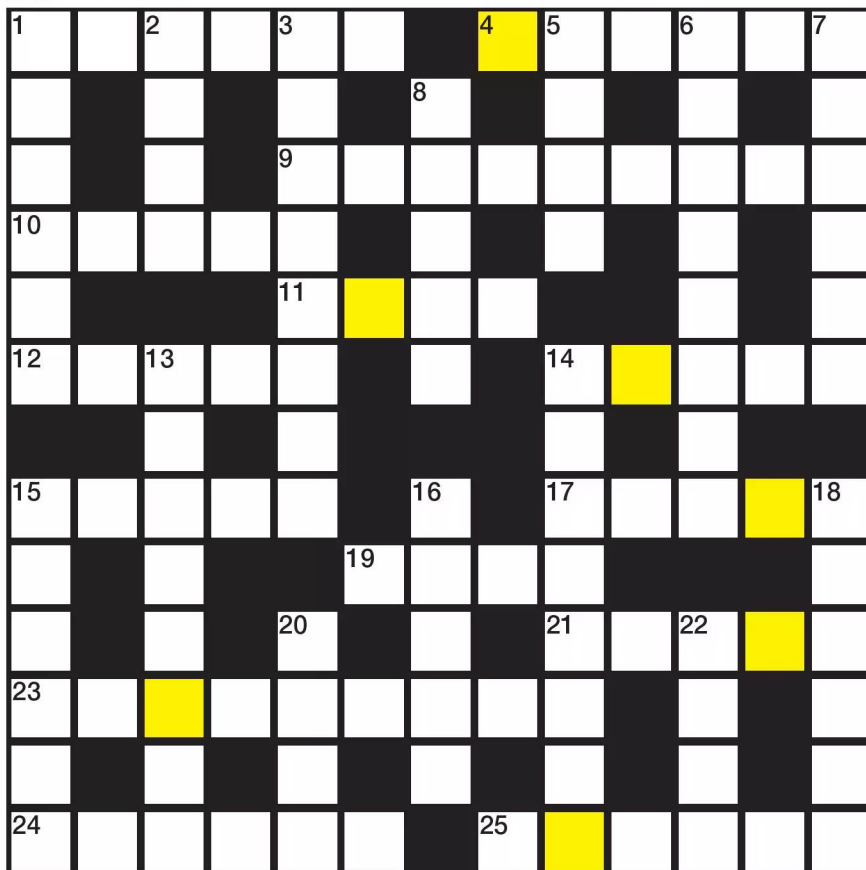
Once you have completed the crossword, take the letters in the shaded squares and rearrange them to spell out the name of a vegetable. This is your prize answer.

ACROSS

- 1** Spreading outward from a central point (6)
4 London Underground line represented by the colour yellow (6)
9 --- squash, marrow-like plant easily grown from seed (9)
10 Large rodent of South America that is also known as the nutria (5)
11 Inclined path for wheelchairs (4)
12 Sticky substance obtained from trees (5)
14 Onion garden herb with purple flowers (5)
15 Dairy product (5)
17 Jungle vine (5)
19 Grain store (4)
21 Croatian seaport (5)
23 Vegetable that likes a sheltered sunny position in fertile well-drained soil (9)
24 Tooth-surface material (6)
25 Hindu spiritual hermitage (6)

DOWN

- 1** Seaside town near Middlesbrough known for its racecourse (6)
2 Squirrel's nest (4)
3 Another term for sapwood (8)
5 Article (4)
6 Genus of flowering plants in the family campanulaceae (8)



- 7** Type of car with a long body and ample room (6)
8 Remains of a felled tree (5)
13 *Lathyrus odoratus* annual climbing plant (5,3)
14 Giant statue once at Rhodes (8)

- 15** Glass container for water or wine (6)
16 Small biting insect (5)
18 National song (6)
20 French soft cheese similar to Camembert (4)
22 Lascivious look (4)

WIN! Win Lily 'Pretty Woman' worth £12.99

Lily 'Pretty Woman' brings a pure white bloom and a soft sweet fragrance to our collection of towering giant lilies. The stems get taller each year as these hardy bulbs return in spring to put on an elegant display of summer flowers. Thick, sturdy stems require little staking - and will take some cutting! Best left to enjoy in the garden rather than cutting for indoor use, though we doubt you'll have a vase big enough for them!

Set out in sunny borders or place in large containers on the patio to enjoy the

scent. No matter where you place them, their fragrant perfume will fill the garden through summer. H: 1.8m, S: 45cm.

Despatching from February onwards.

For your chance to win, email the hidden clue to gn.comps@bauermedia.co.uk, writing Crossword No 09 in the subject box. The winner will be drawn on March 11. Your contract for supply of goods is with Thompson & Morgan, Poplar Lane, Ipswich IP8 3BU. You can also buy this lily for £12.99! Visit thompson-morgan.com/TM_GNC31 to order.



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SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD No 06 - February 10

Across: 1 Damask, 4 Aspic, 9 Aconite, 10 Neigh, 11 Gladiolus, 12 Neat, 13 Angel, 16 Graf, 19 Adherence, 21 Aztec, 22 Uranium, 23 Amino, 24 Floral.

Down: 1 Dragon, 2 Myopia, 3 Sting, 5 Sundial, 6 Icicle, 7 Pelargonium, 8 Chess, 13 African, 14 Carat, 15 Rhythm, 17 Rapier, 18 Formal, 20 Email. **Prize answer:** Marigold

Winner of Crossword No 06 is Maurice Weaver from Bromsgrove, Worcestershire.

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Pick of the POST

With Simon Caney, GN Editor

A gift that keeps giving

This is my dendrobium orchid in full flower. It was given to me by my husband for last year's Mothering Sunday, so it's very special.

Margaret Green, Nottingham



Squirrel takes a seat

I know some people find them a nuisance, but I love seeing squirrels in my garden. Now I'm of an age where I can't always get outside, it brings me such pleasure to while away an hour in the conservatory watching them come and go – and even take a rest, like this one!

Mabel Thompson, by email

Goji goodness

I bought goji berry plants from an Aldi store. Seeds can be sown indoors, and the seedlings stay inside for a year to harden off before planting outside. They grow and fruit better in dry, poor soil. Bare stems planted straight into the garden will root readily; however, this big-leaved variety has few berries.

Peter Wong, Birmingham



STAR PRIZE

Some real mossy marvels!

I finally put my lawn moss to good use and made these kokedama. It's a little bit like making grown-up mud pies!

Holly Lockley, Leicestershire

Simon says: They're stunning! Transforming lawn moss into kokedama is a brilliant twist on garden crafting, and of course, we gardeners let nothing go to waste.



Holly wins a £25 voucher from Mr Fothergill's for use in its mail-order catalogue. It's packed with a huge choice of quality seeds and exciting flower, fruit and veg plants.



Rat's not on!

This naughty rat fearlessly climbed up the wall, eager to get to peanut butter. He knocked the jar onto the patio and disappeared!

Gillian Davis, by email



Best of this week's short & sweets!



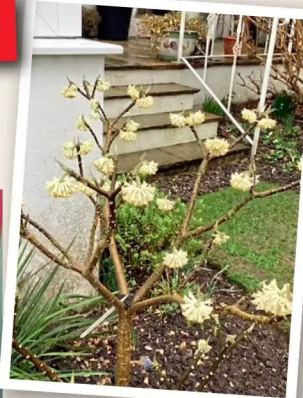
Our friend's amaryllis has got some real altitude!

Gill Shepherd, Aberaeron



Always a welcome sight!

June Green, Bedfordshire



A sure sign spring isn't far away, even on a dull, rainy morning.

Rosemary Lewin, Dorset

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