

**NOW
FORTNIGHTLY!**

**THE WORLD'S OLDEST
GARDENING MAGAZINE
ESTD 1884**

Amateur GARDENING

2nd December, 2023

**TWO PACKETS
EVERY ISSUE
WORTH OVER
£4.75**

FREE SEEDS

GIVE YOUR BIRDS A HAPPY CHRISTMAS

New inspiration and ideas from
the National Gardens Scheme

STAR WRITERS

RUTH HAYES
BOB FLOWERDEW
LUCY CHAMBERLAIN
ANNE SWITHINBANK
VAL BOURNE
JOHN NEGUS
AND MORE

4 MORE IDEAS!



- 1 How to make a bug hotel out of spare wood
- 2 More cuttings from your garden for fabulous plants for free
- 3 Make your own skin care from the garden
- 4 Amazing apple recipes and adventures in cider making



PLUS

Get the inside story on the heritage of your favourite veggies

WINTER JOY!

Find happiness in hellebores, plus home-made decorations and presents for free

MORE FOOD

5 ways to grow easy indoor edibles with Kim Stoddart



£3.50



SAVE £20.00 NANDINA 'FIREPOWER'

WELL ESTABLISHED PLANTS IN 2L POTS

£9.99 EACH

WHEN YOU BUY 2 FOR £19.98

SAVE £20.00

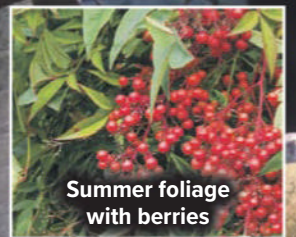
“Sacred Bamboo” THE Best Hardy Shrub For Year-Round Colour!

Nandina (Sacred Bamboo) 'Firepower' – The most colourful variety ever!

Nandina 'Firepower' is hardy, tough as old boots yet immensely pretty too; with its clumps of bamboo-like canes holding lush foliage that is present all year round, changing colour from yellow-green through bonfire-orange, to deep purple-red in autumn, in a glorious show of winter colour! What's more, you'll get pretty white summer blossom and lovely red berries in winter too! Perfect for a pot on a patio or balcony, it also makes a perfect addition to any shrub border, giving much-needed structure and colour even when many plants have long faded. *Supplied as an established plant in a 2 litre pot. Eventual height 50cm.*

SAVE £20

- Spectacularly vivid year-round foliage displays!
- Colour changes from lush green, to yellow, orange and then deep-red!
- Beautiful summer blossom AND winter berries too!
- Perfect for a large pot or in any garden border
- Totally winter hardy and very easy to grow



Summer foliage with berries

“This simply stunning shrub is one of the finest, most colourful you can grow and is a must for any winter garden!”

Nandina 'Firepower'
Well Established Plant in a 2 Litre Pot
JUST £14.99 SAVE £5.00!
DOUBLE UP! 2 x Plants in 2 Litre Pots
JUST £19.98 SAVE £20.00!

3 EASY WAYS TO ORDER NOW!

0844 502 0050
Calls cost 5p per min plus your network's access charge.

USE CODE **AG738**

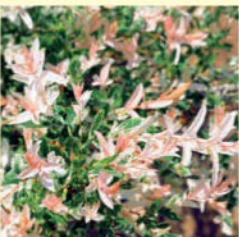
www.YouGarden.com/AG738

or by post using coupon below to: Offer AG738, YouGarden, PO Box 1468, Peterborough, PE1 9XL

EXTRA BONUS OFFER! SAVE £5.00

Salix Flamingo Willow Bush

Finding great specimen trees for smaller gardens or limited spaces can be a challenge, but we think we've cracked it! The striking foliage of the Flamingo Willow erupt into fountains of colour every year. Supplied as an established plant in a 3L pot ready for immediate planting.
ITEM CODE: 510919



£9.99 SAVE £5.00

Offer available while stocks last. © YouGarden Ltd 2023

PLEASE SEND TO: **Offer AG738, YouGarden, PO Box 1468, Peterborough, PE1 9XL**

Item	Description	Price	Qty	Subtotal
510823	Nandina Domestica 'Firepower' (Sacred Bamboo) Well-Established Plant in a 2L Pot SAVE £5!	£14.99		
	DOUBLE UP! 2 x Nandina 'Fire Power' Established plants in 2 Litre Pots SAVE £20	£19.98		
These special offers go perfectly with your Nandina 'Firepower'				
510919	Salix integra 'Hakuro-nishiki' Flamingo Willow Bush Established plant in 3 Litre Pot SAVE £5	£9.99		
100064	Premium Professional Compost 2 x 40 Litre Bags FREE P&P! SAVE £13!	£23.97		
You Must Use Offer Code AG738 To Get These Exclusive Prices!				Add P&P £6.99
				TOTAL ORDER VALUE

Offer subject to availability and in the event that this offer is oversubscribed, we reserve the right to send suitable substitutes. Despatched within 7-10 working days. Delivery to UK only and a £6.00 surcharge will apply to the following postcode areas: AB, DD8-11, GY, HS, IM, IV, JE, KA27-28, KW, PA20-30, PH19-50, TR21-25 & ZE. See website for full terms & conditions. Following Brexit there are a number of changes that prevent us from trading in N. Ireland. For further details please visit www.yougarden.com

YOUR PAYMENT DETAILS I enclose a cheque/Postal Order payable to YouGarden (name & address on back) for £

Or charge my Visa / Mastercard:

Card No.

Start Date Exp Date

Issue No.

DELIVERY DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss Initial Surname

Address

Postcode

Email

Tel

My DOUBLE GUARANTEE to you!

1 If you're not totally happy with your order, return it within 30 days and we'll replace or refund in full.

2 Should any hardy plants fail to thrive thereafter, we'll replace free of charge. You just pay the P&P.

Peter McDermott, Head Gardener

If you do not wish to receive catalogues & offers from us, please tick here []

We think you'd enjoy some of the latest products and selected offers by post from other trusted retailers, charities, finance, travel, FMCG and utility companies. If you do not wish to receive these, please tick here []

Full details at YouGarden.com/Privacy

© YouGarden 2023

AD CODE AG738

WELCOME BACK!

Looking forward to a more resilient future, together

The AG team have been absolutely thrilled with the deluge of supportive, excited messages we have received since the re-launch issue landed. We have worked at such great speed to get the magazine back out, buoyed by lots of coffee and a firm belief in the potential of this deservedly much-loved, world's oldest gardening magazine.

I wouldn't be surprised if some sort of record had been set in the process and I can't tell you how many times I've heard that the news has brought a smile to someone's face.

I like to think that the magazine's return is a little ray of sunshine amidst so much doom and gloom filling the news - not to mention the extreme rain we have been subject to these past weeks.

So that's what we are hoping to bring to you over the fortnightly issues and months ahead, some sunshine and hope for a brighter future among our many expert features, columns and diary pages packed full of gardening advice, ideas, personality and inspiration. There are pages from firm favourites and established experts including Ruth Hayes, Bob Flowerdew, Graham Clarke, Anne Swithinbank, Lucy Chamberlain, Val Bourne, Sue Bradley, Michael Perry, Beth Chatto Gardens and John Negus. We also have lots of exciting new expert pages to introduce you to as well which I can't wait to share.

Amateur Gardening has always been for the people, for gardeners everywhere, and I think we all need a little cheer right now, so looking forwards we hope to continue to bring a smile to your face and helpful new ideas

to your garden wherever we can. We will also offer the latest on-the-ground solutions to building greater resilience around the many challenges that we currently face.

We want to help you shore up defences against our changing weather patterns and help you save money while also getting better results. There is no quick-fix solution to the societal challenges, but there is greater hope and opportunity when people can come together, so *Amateur Gardening* is keen to open up and expand its horizons further. We are all in this together.

I have seen first hand the positive impact gardening can have on wellbeing, having run courses and workshops with all sorts of groups and projects over the years. I will be sharing some of my incredibly rewarding experiences of working in community gardening over the coming issues and I urge you to reach out where you can to others living near to you.

The simple act of swapping and sharing plants, passing on a jar of homemade garden preserve or even reaching out with a hearty hello can mean a lot. It helps people to know there is kindness in the world and they are not alone, especially as we head towards the festive season.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Please do write in. I'd love to receive your ideas, letters, questions, musings and poems. The spirit of AG continues rejuvenated, for a brighter green future for us all, together.

Kim

LEFT: Kim Stoddart AG's editor-in-chief



ISSN: 0954-8513

Amateur Gardening
Kelsey Publishing Ltd.
The Granary, Downs Court, Yalding Hill,
Yalding, Maidstone, Kent, ME18 6AL

Editorial

Editor Kim Stoddart
E-mail: Editor@amateurgardening.com
Website: www.amateurgardening.com

Management

CEO Steve Wright
Managing director Steve Kendall
Group publisher Fiona Mercer
Group web editor Rachel Harper
Subscriptions marketing manager
Claire Aspinall
Retail director Steve Brown

UK customer service team 01959 543 747
cs@kelsey.co.uk

UK Subscriptions 01959 543747
<https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/amateur-gardening-magazine>

Distribution in UK

Seymour Distribution Limited
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 | www.seymour.co.uk

Distribution in Northern Ireland & Republic of Ireland

Newsprint Tel: +353 23 886 3850

Advertisement sales

Head of Commercial Julia Barrass
Julia.Barrass@kelsey.co.uk
Talk Media Sales Ltd
Sales director Russell Bedford
01732 445328 | Russell@talk-media.uk
Sales Bonnie Howard
01732 447008 | bonnie@talk-media.uk
Sales Kim Butler
01732 445678 | kim@talk-media.uk

Design

Bazzie Larder

Production

Head of ad print and design Nick Bond
01732 447006
production@talkmediasales.co.uk

Kelsey Media 2023 © all rights reserved. Kelsey Media is a trading name of Kelsey Publishing Ltd. Reproduction in whole or in part is forbidden except with permission in writing from the publishers. Note to contributors: articles submitted for consideration by the editor must be the original work of the author and not previously published. Where photographs are included, which are not the property of the contributor, permission to reproduce them must have been obtained from the owner of the copyright. The editor cannot guarantee a personal response to all letters and emails received. The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Publisher. Kelsey Publishing Ltd accepts no liability for products and services offered by third parties.

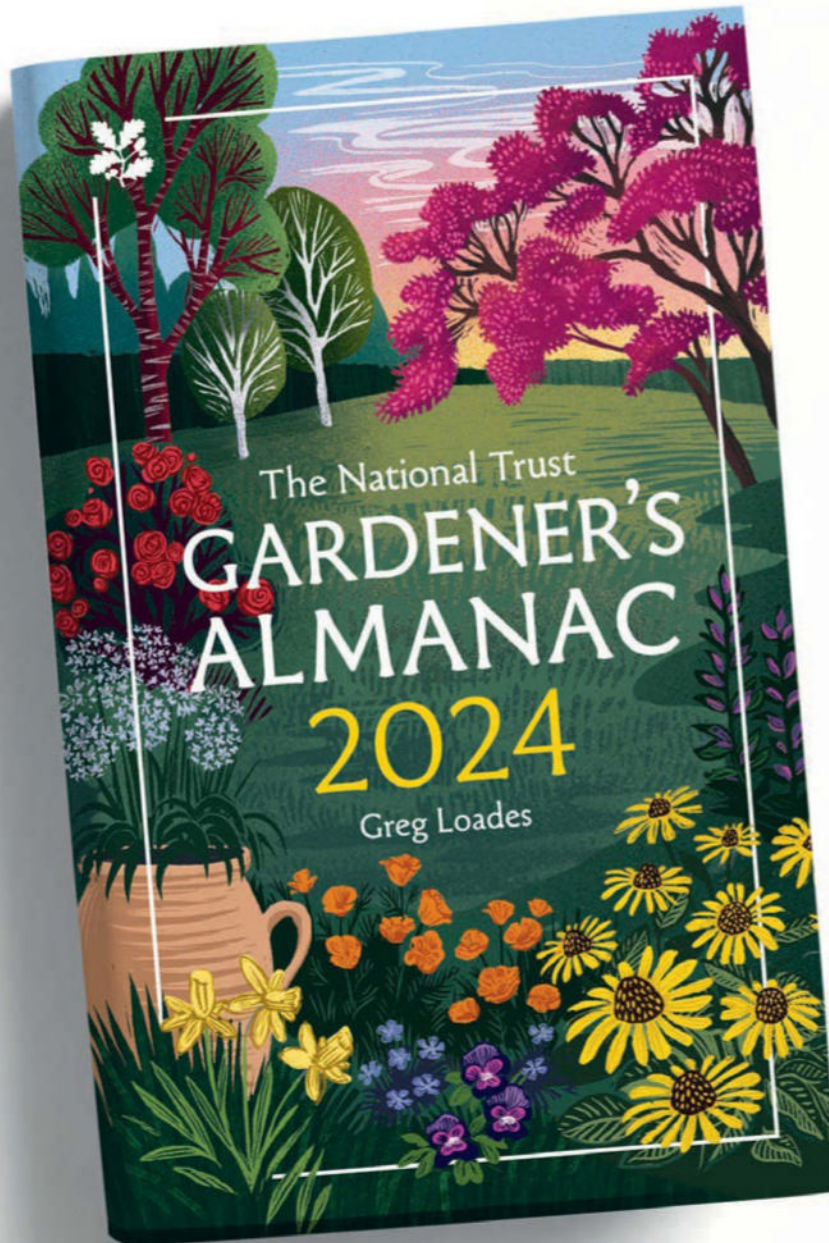
Kelsey Publishing Ltd uses a multi-layered privacy notice. For full details, visit www.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-notice/ If you have any queries regarding Kelsey's data policy you can contact our Data Protection Officer at dpo@kelsey.co.uk.

www.kelsey.co.uk



A GIFT THAT LASTS ALL YEAR

Make the most of the gardening year
with month-by-month inspiration, tips and
trivia from the National Trust.



Available wherever books are sold,
and online at collins.co.uk/NationalTrust



Your gardening fortnight

- 7 Ruth Hayes - jobs and ideas
- 10 Bob Flowerdew - organic growing
- 12 Val Bourne - wildlife
- 14 Lucy Chamberlain - fruit and veg

Great garden ideas

- 17 Grow more food with editor Kim Stoddart
- 21 Winter apple recipes
- 22 Winter gardens
- 26 National Garden Scheme
- 32 Peat bogs and why they matter
- 36 Adventures in cider making
- 38 Home made Christmas ideas
- 43 The Seed Detective

Gardening wisdom

- 46 Money saving with Ruth Hayes
- 49 How to make a bug hotel
- 50 How to make skincare
- 52 Trees to plant for wildlife
- 54 Ask John Negus - your questions
- 59 Letters to the editor
- 60 Your gardening tea break
- 63 Plant watch with Michael Perry - poinsettia perfect
- 64 Resilient gardens - Beth Chatto Garden Diary
- 66 Anne Swithinbank's Masterclass - Daphnes

Contact us:

- Email: Editor@amateurgardening.com
- Website: www.amateurgardening.com

**NEXT ISSUE
OUT 16TH
DECEMBER
2023**



7 Ruth shows you how to get more out of your perennials



14 Lucy explains how to further protect coldframe crops from the cold



49 New columnist, Adam Kirkland explains how to make a bug hotel for free



63 Michael Perry talks all things poinsettia

Your NEWS FORTNIGHT

Bringing you some of the gardening news highlights over the next couple of weeks



Teacher Hannah Orbell was quoted as saying, they were “learning a lot and really, really enjoying being part of something for the community”.

Peat free progress under question?

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has expressed disappointment in the omission of legislation relating to the banning of retail peat in horticulture, in the King’s speech given earlier in November. Alistair Griffiths, director of science and collections at the RHS said; “the lack of legislation adds uncertainty for growers. It’s a missed opportunity to provide clarity for the industry and protect our peatland habitats, which have an important role in carbon storage and flood mitigation and are a home to a unique assemblage of rare and threatened wildlife.”

That charity outlines that a recent survey of commercial growers and nurseries showed that 40% are waiting for official legislation before they commit to becoming peat free. The RHS also reaffirmed its commitment to becoming 100% peat-free across all its shows, gardens and retail by the end of 2025.

We include a feature on page 32 looking at the important services peatlands provide.

Come together now

Loneliness has been declared as a ‘pressing global health threat’ by the World Health Organisation with ‘mortality effects equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day’.

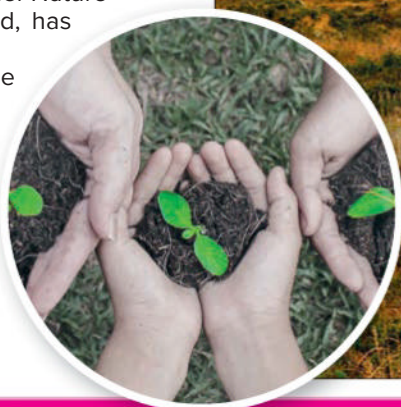
The organisation says the recent Covid-19 pandemic has a part to play in all this and it is running a commission on social connection building for the next three years.

Obviously we are biased here at AG, but community gardening can be an incredibly useful way of bringing people back together and boosting wellbeing and... it puts food on the table.

Speaking of which, a 93-year-old gardener has been in the news...

Don Bradshaw, a former farmer who has been ‘working with Mother Nature since he was six years old, has been highlighted for his work growing food for the local community fridge in Cambridgeshire. He’s been teaching the local school children from All Saints Interchurch Academy how to grow fruit and vegetables and has been ‘amazed at the interest.’

Don’s efforts are part of the Fenland Association of Community Transport which share food and help prevent waste in the area. Local pupils have been reportedly super enthused as a result including, Hannah, 10 who said she planned to “ask Santa for a hoe and a rake” so she could grow some vegetables of her own next year.



Glencoe peat bog in Scotland

ARE YOU INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY GROWING PROJECTS WHERE YOU LIVE?
Let us know by emailing editor@amateurgardening.com



Your GARDENING FORTNIGHT

with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes



Divisions should have healthy roots and top growth

Autumn is the perfect time to move and divide perennials

Cold and soggy

Work with the weather



Using a plank to stand on can help protect soil

1 If the soil is saturated, avoid walking on it as you will otherwise compact and damage it. Wait until conditions are drier and then cut back your perennials.



2 With the weather being all over the place, some perennials may put out shoots very early and then be scorched by frost. Don't despair, this dead growth can be safely removed and your plant will sprout healthily again.

Give perennials some love

It's time to split, life and propagate, says **Ruth**

Perennials, plants that come back year after year, are usually some of the most resilient and undemanding inhabitants of our gardens. We plant them, ideally in spring or autumn, and then watch delightedly as they fill our beds and containers with colour and fragrance year after year, hopefully growing larger and more impressive over time.

Anything that flowers or fruits more than once is a perennial, whether it's a border plant, tree, shrub, ornamental grass or something that grows from bulbs.

On these two pages I'm going to be looking at herbaceous perennials and showing you what care they will need before winter really bites hard. One of the main jobs has been dividing over-large, old plants that have started to stray outside their allotted space and are threatening to swamp some of their

smaller neighbours. It's a job I love doing because it gives me more plants for free, and creates more room in the borders.

Dividing is an easy job once you know how. Simply lift your plant from the soil with a spade or fork, digging widely around the roots to avoid damaging them and gently easing the plant out the ground as intact as possible. Place your plant on an old compost bag or a board and slice it into pieces using a spade blade, saw, garden knife or even an old bread knife. Make sure each division has healthy top growth and roots.

If the original plant has developed a barren, woody centre, compost this then replant the divisions at the same depth as the plant was growing before with some added fertiliser or bone meal in the hole. Water them well and mulch with compost or manure.

How to mulch

■ Mulching is the easiest way to protect the roots and crowns of perennials through winter. I like to use well-rotted compost or manure, bark chippings or straw. You can also buy mulch pads made from wool offcuts.

■ Pile your mulch around the perennial, covering the root area while trying to avoid covering its crown as this can cause damp and rotting that will kill the plant.

■ As well as protecting our precious plants, organic mulches also improve the soil as they are broken down through winter by the weather and the activities of earthworms and soil microbes.

■ This means that come the spring, your plants will have been given an extra boost for when they start to grow again.



Your GARDENING FORTNIGHT

with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes

Lifting and protecting plants

How to protect tender plants in winter

The wet weather in November made it almost impossible to do much in the garden, so I am using the tail end of autumn to prepare my perennials for winter. If you find yourself in the same boat, I would do this sooner rather than later, but leave it until spring if the soil is waterlogged or frozen as working now will damage the ground and your plants.

Our garden has a mix of hardy varieties such as globe thistles, echinaceas, delphiniums, sedums and shasta daisies as well as tender pelargoniums, chocolate cosmos, cannas and dahlias. I would normally have dealt with them earlier in the season but they flowered for longer than usual in the warm weather and then storms Babet and Ciaran made the ground so wet that I couldn't walk on the soil to reach them. Now, however, it's time to sort them out before the really cold weather arrives.

My priorities are mulching, dividing and lifting and moving tender plants into the greenhouse for winter. I will also be taking cuttings of my penstemons, and I'll show you how in this week's Money Saving guide.

Penstemons sit somewhere between hardy and tender plants, so while they don't need moving undercover in autumn, we don't cut them right back as with some others.



Cut back penstemon stems by a third



I am lifting my dahlia tubers to dry and store in the greenhouse

Instead, we reduce the stems by around the third so the remaining old growth helps to protect the plants' crowns through winter. They can be cut right back in late spring when the leaves are starting to appear.

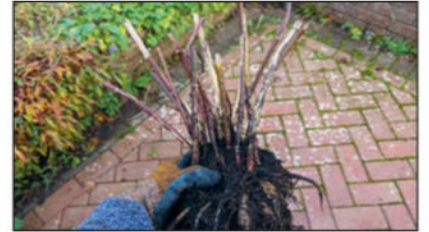
Your plants may initially droop for a day or two, but will soon spring back and hopefully grow well next spring and be full of flowers later in the year.

Moving plants that are unhappy in their current spot is another autumn task.

Prepare their new home before lifting and replanting them as soon as you can, again at the same depth as they were growing before. Firm the soil around them and water and mulch generously.

Dahlia care

To leave or store



1 If you garden on heavy clay soil that holds water your best bet is to lift dahlia tubers once their leaves have been blackened by frost. Reduce their stems to just 4in (10cm) long, then hang them upside down in the shed to dry before storing them in trays of dry sandy compost.



2 Dahlia corms in sheltered gardens with free-draining soil can be left in place. Cut back the stems to 4in (10cm) and mulch generously with compost, straw or well-rotted manure..

Nursing agapanthus through winter

Agapanthus are a popular and striking perennial, with their strap-like leaves and circular clusters of blue or white trumpet-shaped blooms set atop sturdy stems. They originate in South Africa, hence their common name of Cape lily, but are easy to grow in the UK, especially as climate change is starting to alter our weather patterns. However, not all varieties are reliably hardy - especially evergreen agapanthus - so they do need some extra care in winter.

We grow hardy deciduous agapanthus in pots and have a couple of evergreen plants in a border.

The ones in containers die back as autumn progresses and I move their pots against a sheltered wall and wrap it



Wrap potted agapanthus in fleece and mulch with straw. INSET: Protecting agapanthus in a bed

in fleece with a layer of straw topping the compost.

Another option is to lie fleece-wrapped pots on their side to prevent heavy winter rain from waterlogging the compost and bulbs. As we rarely get very hard winters here in the south, I mulch the evergreen agapanthus with straw and then bend their leaves and tie them so they form an insulating dome over the crown. In areas where the weather is harsher, I would also recommend wrapping the ties leaves in fleece and using a cloche as extra protection when very harsh weather is forecast.



Cut back fruited stems to two buds



Cut back vines in winter when they won't bleed sap

Pruning vines and figs

Cut them back while they are dormant, says **Ruth**

We are lucky enough to have a fig tree and a grapevine growing on the most sheltered, sunniest wall of the house. The tree gives us a generous harvest of delicious sun-warmed figs each year and the vine also produces lots of grapes, though the starlings and blackbirds generally beat us to them!

But now both need pruning to encourage good growth and crops next year and to keep them in shape. It is important to prune them in winter when they are dormant as both bleed a lot of sap if cut when they are still growing. This weakens the plant, leaves them open to pests and disease and may even kill them.

In the column, right, I show you how to prune a fig tree to keep it shapely and productive. Our vine is grown up a wall and trellis in the cordon style, with the branches coming off one central stem. This is the easiest way of growing grapes,

and all you need to do is cut back the year's growth that has already produced grapes (you will see where the bunches have grown) to two buds then tie in new, unfruited growth. You may also wish to thin other stems that are forming an unsightly tangle that is blocking light and air from the centre of the plant.

Free-standing vines that are trained along wires can be pruned according to the Guyot method which is used widely in vineyards. This involves creating a low-growing central trunk with a succession of new branches that form each year. These young stems are tied in when that year's mature branches have fruited and been cut back.

Each winter you remove the fruited stems and train new shoots emerging from the central stem along wires on one side (single Guyot) or both sides (double Guyot).

Then cut down the central trunk to two or three strong buds from the base of the plant.

Pruning figs

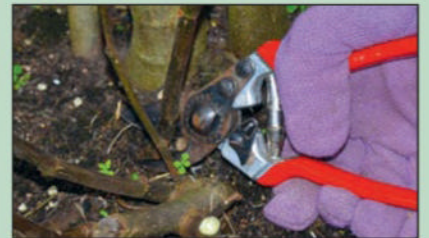
Work with the weather



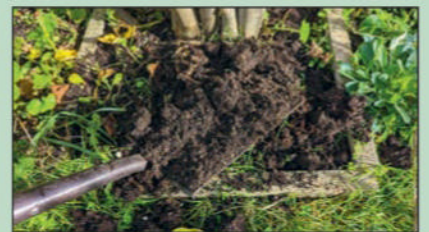
1 Remove mid-sized unripened fruits as they will only rot and won't get any bigger next summer.



2 Remove branches that are crossing and rubbing against each other as this damages the bark and provides an entry point for pests and disease. Aim to create an open structure for healthy growth and cropping.



3 Remove suckers emerging from the base of the tree as they will only look cluttered and untidy.



4 Finally, mulch your trees with well-rotted compost or manure to improve its soil and get it ready to grow again next spring. Keep the mulch off the bark as it can otherwise cause softening and rotting.

Still time to plant garlic

■ Gardening lore has it that garlic should be planted before Christmas Day, so you still have time to start yours before a big freeze.

■ This delicious member of the onion family likes fertile, sheltered, free-draining soil that has been fed and firmed down. You can also grow it in large containers.



■ Split the bulbs into cloves and plant them 6in (15cm) apart, 1in (2cm) below the soil in rows 12in (30cm) apart.

■ Keep the area weed-free and water when very dry. Birds sometimes like to pull up and eat newly-planted cloves, so if this is an issue cover them with horticultural fleece.



Your GARDENING FORTNIGHT

with Bob Flowerdew, AG's organic gardening expert



A berry good idea

Bob puts forward the case for growing more soft fruit

As winter approaches it's time to plan next year's crops. I'm suggesting we ought re-consider altering the proportions of what we cultivate. You see there's long been a tendency for vegetables to predominate, most are so much better home grown than purchased, we happily fill whatever-space-we-can with them.

Yet I reckon many of us may be better off if we, say, halved our vegetable area substituting soft fruit instead (red, white and black currants, strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, possibly blueberries, brambleberries, even grapes.)

Let me explain why

Firstly, soft fruit is lower maintenance than vegetable growing. There's no digging, sowing, watering, thinning and weeding regimes. Instead there's light mulching, light pruning and light tidying, and not necessarily much else.

Secondly, fruits are so reliable, they just 'work', it's what they want to do. Their care is not difficult and once established most still provide crops even when totally neglected.

Did I mention the money saving also?

And with only a little more care and attention good quality fruits can be harvested which are more valuable in monetary terms than most vegetables (which by comparison are also technically more demanding).

A second cash incentive is you buy most fruiting plants the once, for a few pounds to produce over the next five, ten, even fifteen years, whereas most vegetable seeds are bought every year for ever.

Fruits are also much 'greener' in so many ways.

They need less water! They're perennial meaning soil layers and microorganisms are only disturbed the once not annually. Most fruits are propagated by cuttings or grafts in the open ground thus consuming few resources compared to seed sown crops. They flower benefitting many insects, their petal and leaf falls feed worms and contribute to soil fertility. And if you do not harvest them the birds and insects soon do, whereas unused vegetables benefit little but slugs.



There's still more to say

Their harvesting is comfortable, picking clean dry fruits and not messing about in the mud. Then there's the storage, some vegetables can be simply kept but many require

processing which likely involves blanching, before then freezing which uses up even more energy.

Soft fruits can be picked and frozen with no blanching. And they easily convert to juices, jams and jellies which are even more valuable, and tasty. Even better, fruits are safer to 'bottle' (cook in sealable glass jars) than vegetables as if you fail to follow instructions and get this badly wrong the fruits may give you a headache but vegetables can give you botulism...

Now nutrition is a moot point, a diet of vegetables can have broader value than the same weight of fruits. However, and this is a key point, it's far easier in practice to increase fruits in your diet than veggies. A punnet of strawberries or raspberry is a tad less nutritious than a cabbage or bunch of carrots, BUT which would you happily consume an extra half pound of right now?

You can find out more about Bob via his website www.bobflowerdew.com and what's happening in his garden via Twitter (now X) @FlowerdewBob

BOOK ONLINE
AT VIKING.COM



Book a 2024
river journey by
31 December 2023
and
save £750pp*

Don't forget, you can
fly from up to
10 regional airports

**Viking Mississippi and Egypt river journeys
are excluded from this offer*



2024 RIVER JOURNEYS

We all travel to explore, to learn, to understand. At Viking, we believe travel should be more than just a trip – it should be a doorway to cultural insight and personal enrichment. That is why our itineraries are designed to help you explore and engage with your destination through its food, culture, countryside and customs. Meet with like-minded travellers on board ships, designed for comfort and an ease of discovery. By journey's end, our aim is to help you feel more connected – to new-found friends and the world.

ORDER YOUR FREE 2024 RIVER BROCHURE NOW
AT VIKING.COM OR CALL 020 8780 8705





Your GARDENING FORTNIGHT

with Val Bourne, AG's organic wildlife expert



Snowdrops, seed sorting and signs of nature

Val looks forward to the gardening year ahead and explains the important role of bees and hoverflies

The garden jobs are slacking off, thank goodness, and we're fast approaching the shortest day which is on December 22 this year. I always turn pagan for the day and light a candle, just one, when the light begins to fade into darkness. I will dwell on the gardening year that's gone, because my new gardening year starts straight after the solstice. The next day is lighter for longer even if it is by a minuscule amount. The other landmark date is January 19th: that's the day the Northern hemisphere begins to warm up again.

Nature still stirs

There are always things to admire in the garden, something to lift the spirits even on a dankest day. It might be the shimmer of



trembling grasses, or lichens clinging on to branches, or droplets of water caught on a spider's web. Thankfully the first winter flowers are already out at Spring Cottage. My 'Mrs Macnamara' snowdrops are flowering round the apricot tree and one or two honeybees have been brave enough to visit them. This snowdrop was named after Dylan Thomas's mother-in-law, who was born Yvonne Majolier. She wasn't very jolly to Dylan Thomas, by all accounts.

She ordered her maid to burn his notebooks!

Val's top five drops

'Mrs Macnamara' snowdrops are among my favourites. The drop is lovely with thick-petalled single flowers held on strong stems above well-



behaved glaucous foliage. I would also include 'Godfrey Owen', 'Augustus', 'Green Tear' and 'Trumps' in my top five.

Irish snowdrops beloved by small bees

The 'Mrs Macnamara' snowdrop almost certainly came from Ireland because Yvonne Macnamara, as she became after marriage, was descended from Anglo-Irish landowners in County Clare. There are lots of fine Irish snowdrops you could grow, including 'Kildare', 'Irish Green' and 'Green Lantern'. They obviously love the damp weather the soft, Irish climate provides, but I think there's another reason as well. For when I visited Ireland in snowdrop time, I noticed hordes of tiny little bees on the snowdrop flowers. They were busy drinking nectar and collecting pollen and, as they went about their task, they were transferring pollen from one flower to another. Seed pods would follow on and produce hybrid seedlings. These are larger in stature, compared to the common snowdrop, and more vigorous too.

I do see similar small bees at Spring Cottage, although never as many or as early in the year. They definitely visit the daisies on my lawn in April and that's a good reason to leave some growing. The early bulbs at Spring Cottage have to rely on early-flying queen bumblebees

instead. If I'm lucky, I'll get an occasional visit from my neighbour's honey bees but they only fly in warmer interludes.

Pollinators are really important for early-flowering miniature bulbs, because most don't produce any offsets around the bulb. They rely on self-seeding to spread around instead. The exception (and there's always one) is *Muscari armeniacum*, the grape hyacinth. It produces enough offsets to cover an entire garden, as you probably know from experience. However, if you're growing *Narcissus cyclamineus*, *Cyclamen coum*, winter aconite or *Scilla siberica*, they only spread by seeds and that only arrives if a pollinator visits. Whatever you do, don't deadhead short, early bulbs!

Seed sorting indoors

The bees give me plenty of bounty and the longer evenings are giving me a chance to tidy up the flower seeds I've collected and brought inside. This makes gardening more sustainable and it also saves money and means that I don't have to buy too many seeds. My tall single African marigolds, named form of *Tagetes patula*, have produced lots of seed this year and they're easy to separate from the calyx. The original seeds were named 'Red Edge', 'Burning Embers' and 'Cinnabar', but they've probably morphed into one.

Their orange and red-orange flowers, which begin in May and carry on until late,



attract many pollinators and that includes hoverflies. These beneficial flies, which do indeed hover, are a gardener's ally. They lay single eggs next to colonies of aphids which their hungry larvae then consume along with other small pests. That's why I always plant African marigolds close to tripods of beans, in the hopes that the blackfly will disappear.

The open flowers attract plenty of pollinators of all kinds and the foliage is aromatic. There is a well-perpetuated myth that their pungent foliage can deter whitefly and other pests. This isn't true and experiments at RHS Wisley and the now-defunct National Vegetable Research Station (NVRS) have proved that it doesn't work. Insects use sensors on their feet to identify foliage, they

don't have noses and they can't detect smells. They do get confused by mixed foliage though. Look up Collier and Finch's Companion Planting on the University of Warwick's website for more. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/lifesci/wcc/research/croppests/ipm/companionplanting>

My cleaned French marigold seeds will be sown in April, but only once spring makes an appearance because I grow them in an unheated greenhouse. The large seeds get sown straight into modular trays containing 28 spaces. I put 2 seeds per module and this saves back-breaking pricking out. All larger seeds, including calendulas, cornflowers and cosmos, get the modular treatment.

Sadly, the unsettled, wet weather didn't encourage my cosmos to produce viable seeds this year, so I will have to buy some. I do have plenty of seeds from an umbellifer, *Bupleurum rotundifolium* 'Griffithii'. It's commonly known as hare's ear, although I've no idea why. This neat annual has tiny clusters of lime-green

flowers encased within a ruff of lime-green bracts. It's delicate and

flower arrangers love it. More importantly, so do hoverflies, because the tiny flowers suit their small mouths. It mingles with the purple-red spires of *Teucrium hircanicum*, an easy perennial named Caucasian germander.

Top Tip:

Always grow some hardy annuals, because pollinators love them.





Your GARDENING FORTNIGHT

with Lucy Chamberlain, AG's fruit and veg expert

Protect edibles from the cold and damp

Lucy explains how to make the most of the next few weeks

More gardeners nowadays are growing an increasingly wide range of edible plants. Many are our hardy stalwarts, such as asparagus, rhubarb, rosemary, and raspberries, which will readily pass through a standard UK winter unscathed. But we can now add to that list of perennials; olive, banana, loquat, lime and lemongrass. While some (e.g. lime, banana and lemongrass) are truly tender and are therefore best overwintered somewhere frost-free such as a heated greenhouse (as we discussed last issue) others such as the olive, loquat and many others (e.g. Japanese persimmon, bay and kiwi fruit) are termed 'half hardy' or 'borderline hardy', meaning that they are better placed to survive outside, but they may struggle to get through our winters unharmed without some protection.

Greenhouse space is precious, and half- or borderline hardy plants can easily stay outside provided we step in now to offer them some insulation. So, I'm wrapping up the bay trees either side of my glasshouse with fleece (you can now buy biodegradable products) to keep the worst of the winter cold away. The trunk can split if severely frosted so I'll wrap the stem, as well as the leaf canopy. If you don't like the look of fleece (it can be quite 'eye-catching') then hessian offers a good alternative. Bamboo canes are excellent for holding the insulating materials away from the leaves – please do add cane toppers if these are at eye height to avoid injury.



Lucy protecting her bay tree this winter

Capping these insulating structures in twin-walled polycarbonate deters excess winter wet (rather than simply topping them in yet more fleece or hessian). This protects these less hardy plants from waterlogging, which would encourage

rots. Peg or tie the whole thing in place securely, and check it frequently to ensure it remains in place well into the spring, and to remove any rotten leaves. Take the protective covers off only once risk of frost has passed.

Reduce soil pests

The days of using soil insecticide drenches to control pests are well behind us (thankfully) but it does mean that gardeners now have to think of other ways to control such soil problems.

Crop rotations are one route to take: by not growing the same or related edibles in a particular bed year on year, we can deter any build up of their problems. Crop covers, too, work very well, physically preventing pests from

reaching the plants underneath. But what if your plot is too small to practice crop rotations, or if you didn't notice the vine weevil on your strawberries, or the carrot flies attacking your parsnips (or that the covers blew away in a storm – which once happened to me!)? My solution? Simply gently rake over the affected beds every few weeks so that garden birds can spot and eat any grubs. The birds get a tasty snack and I get free pest control



Lucy rakes over the soil to help reduce soil pests

Cold frame winter care

If you don't have room (or funds) for a polytunnel or glasshouse on your plot, a cold frame is an excellent alternative. Here's how to get the most from yours now:

Step
by step



1 Scatter some organic slug pellets over the frame base as these structures provide shelter for troublesome molluscs as well as our plants! Then, place any hardy seedlings (e.g. broad beans) and cuttings (e.g. gooseberries) in the frame.

2 To insulate the cold frame against chilly spells, line its sides using old polystyrene sheets (frequently a waste product of white goods packaging) or similar. Transparent material (e.g. twin-walled polycarbonate) could then also be used on the roof.

3 Keep the lid of the cold frame closed during freezing spells and check over the plants within regularly (remove any yellowing or brown leaves). On sunny days, open the lid to ventilate the frame and reduce humidity, but shut it again at night.

Use stored root crops

Top
tip



It's the weather for roasted potatoes, beetroot and celeriac so be sure to regularly visit your stored roots to raid them for the kitchen (I'm storing my squashes and onions in my shed, too).

The potatoes are in cardboard boxes (lidded, when not in use to keep light out, otherwise tubers turn green), and the squashes sit on my freezer so that I can check them over easily for rots.

My beets and celeriac have been de-leaved and are packed into boxes of damp sand. Shed holes are blocked with scrunched up chicken wire against rodents, so the Chamberlain family certainly won't starve this winter!





Your GARDENING FORTNIGHT

with Lucy Chamberlain, AG's fruit and veg expert



Bringing the outdoors in with lovely potted herbs to hand in the kitchen



5 Place new fruit tree, bush and cane orders now, before stocks from specialist suppliers are depleted. If you're not ready to plant on delivery, heel them in somewhere temporarily.

5 quick jobs

1 If you've moved herbs onto your kitchen windowsill for winter cropping, remember to turn them every few days, otherwise they grow leggy as they stretch towards the light.



2 If you're considering the best place to position new fruit trees, canes or bushes, try not to plant them where old fruit plants resided as this risks a flare up of replant disease.



Phacelia grown as a green manure to improve soil is left in place to break down over winter

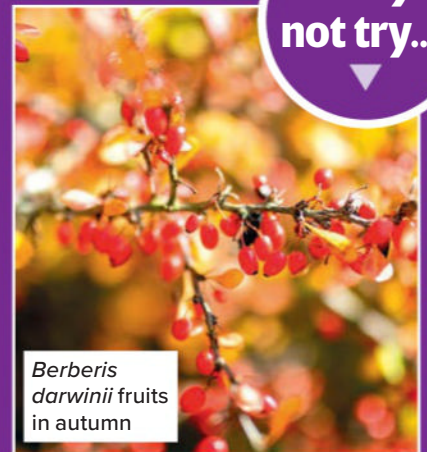
3 Non-hardy green manures such as phacelia and fenugreek will be knocked back by frosts. Phacelia in particular can be used in a no dig system and left to die back and cover the soil as a mulch.



Harvesting sweet as you like parsnips after a frost

4 Parsnip roots will be accumulating soluble sugars as temperatures fall, to act as a natural plant antifreeze. So, for the sweetest roots, delay harvesting until frosts really hit hard.

Why not try..?



Berberis darwinii fruits in autumn

Barberries

We all know of berberis as ornamental plants, but a few species (notably *Berberis darwinii*, *B. buxifolia*, *B. asiatica* and *B. aristata*) produce tasty berries. The autumn fruits are plump and dusky purple. The seeds can taste a little bitter, so the fruits are best made into jellies, although they can also be dried like raisins. These four berberis species are evergreen, with pale to rich yellow springtime flowers, loved by bees. Happy in sun or shade, and any soil type, these fuss-free fruits are well worth a spot on your plot.



Grow more food

5 ways to grow easy indoor edibles this month, Kim Stoddart shows you how

In the darkest depths of December as the daylight hours continue to tumble away, there is a lot to be said for finding excuses, any excuse to still garden. Yes it is mainly cold, wet and miserable outside and the ground is still sodden from the multifarious storms of these past few weeks, yet this is all the more reason to look instead a lot closer to home.

There are still opportunities for indoor edible cultivation and it's incredibly rewarding to do so. The simple pleasure of germinating some coriander seed for luscious, zesty pick-and-come-again leaves can bring some sunshine to your day no matter the weather. To have the excuse to watch as seeds dutifully burst into new life, is mesmerising and magical in equal measure. It can also bring lots of extra fresh edibles to the table, save money and bring some homegrown joy inside.

Where to grow

On or near a sunny windowsill would be ideal as light is always an important consideration once seed has been germinated and plants are growing away. A warmer spot will help boost growth, although all of the edibles I'm about to outline can stand firm over winter under cover.

1. Pea shoots

These delectable leaves are easy to grow and make a most welcome addition to any winter salad. They are also good as decoration on food and they taste delicious.

As well as any leftover pea seed you happen to have in your collection, dried store peas (those packets that are often found lurking in the back of the cupboard) can also be used and grown on for shoots.

After choosing your tray of choice (even an old supermarket mushroom tray can work well), then fill it with multipurpose

Pea shoots can be harvested again and again and are delicious in salad and as an edible food decoration for a meal to impress



compost and sow seed thickly (about an inch) apart to enable lots of lovely pick and come again opportunities.

These seedlings won't be suitable to plant out next year, as they will be exhausted after multiple pickings, but they do provide lovely winter harvests and as they grow they can be potted on into fresh compost for more pea shoots. ▶

WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



AVXLIVE **ICU**

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>

Kim potting on self-seeded parsley to bring inside in autumn

2. Pick of the parsley

I would say if you grow anything indoors over winter make it something herby. The sheer pleasure of the aroma and culinary opportunities they afford, make them a priority in my book.

Herbs are also incredibly good for you in a myriad of exciting ways, so having them so close to the kitchen means they are easily accessible for picking. I add the likes of parsley in particular to most dishes at this time of year because of its fantastic flavour but also because it is packed full of vitamin C to help see me through the winter months.

Your choices with parsley are to either bring some plants from outside in to grow under cover where they are then able to put on some slow growth, or to divide supermarket herb pots (battery herbs I call them) and plant them on. Whichever option you choose, cut the plants back and harvest some leaves after placing them in their new comfy home with more spacious quarters, as this will help them conserve energy for growth.



3. Mint and coriander

I bunch these two together, but not because they like each other (they don't!) but because I want to fit in some more edible growing ideas in my scheduled five!

Mint is a resilient rascal so if you know where you have some growing outside you could remove a section of white underground stem (and root if possible) to

plant on in compost indoors. You just know it will take full advantage.

You can also take a cutting from a supermarket sprig.

Remove the lower leaves and place in a shallow glass of water in a warm, sunny spot and it's fun to watch as the roots begin to emerge. The seedlings are ready for planting on when you have a good inch of root formation.

It's worth changing the water about once a week. It always amazes me how quickly they root. In the summer it can be just a matter of days before the cuttings start bursting into new life.

Coriander requires seed germination for healthy pickings at this time of year, and so it is best to dip into your packets of seed. Sow seed thickly, water lightly and cover with a cloche of some form to help them on their way. Smaller plants lend themselves well to pick-and-come-again opportunities and are better able to cope with the cold than their taller, leggier counterparts.

TIP: It's worth also trying to work with any coriander spice seed you might also have to save having to buy any new packets.

4. More leaf picking options

I favour the loose leaf lettuce for winter pickings such as 'salad bowl' because you are less likely to find something slimy lurking inside and it lends itself better to multiple pickings.

I also like flat leaf kale, rocket and chard for the same reasons and grow some plants inside as well as out. I have polytunnels and cold frames outdoors, but I enjoy having leaves closer to hand. You can get creative with what you grow them in making rather attractive indoor edible displays at this time of year.

I also grow some beetroot in the polytunnels for their lovely spinach-like leaves and you can do the same indoors. If you germinate seeds now for windowsill leaf pickings, the seedlings can be planted out come spring.

You might think they will have exhausted themselves over winter but you'll be surprised how much a fresh batch of compost-laden loam can put a spring in their step. I do try to grow on everything I can and these experiments over the years never cease to amaze how plants can bounce back, given the chance.

Germination tips for success

Warmth is key to help encourage seeds into growth so you can help matters by covering your planting trays with some form of cover to help boost the temperature.

A layer of plastic clingfilm, a makeshift cloche, a heated or unheated propagator, whatever you have to hand can be utilised to help them on their way.

If using a propagator do move seedlings out of the direct warmth as soon as they have developed their first two true leaves to avoid leggy-seedling-syndrome.



The joy of watching germination



Lettuce and coriander seedlings ready for indoor planting for winter edibles



Mixed oriental greens are also delicious and good for indoor growing



Windowsill lettuce

5. Marvellous oyster mushrooms

There are so many different types of growing kits now available to purchase it can be confusing to know where to start. Oyster mushrooms are arguably the easiest mushroom to work with indoors. They aren't that fussy about what they grow in and will happily fruit away on wood chip, compost, cardboard, books, denim, coffee grounds and probably other materials besides.

A starter kit which includes the mycelium (white spongy material from which your mushrooms fruit), growing medium and instructions is probably your best place to start if you want to enter the rather marvellous world of mushroom growing. You will get some hand holding through your first few flushes of mushroom as you get to know a little better how they work.

Then (and this is the exciting bit), you can take your mycelium (which will now have exhausted its food supply), divide it and plant it on. It is a living thing and only needs more food and space in which to spread and fruit. Your world of mushroom growing adventures truly starts here!



The enjoyment of indoor edibles



One of the many indoor mushroom growing kits you can buy to start with

20% OFF BEAUTIFUL DECOUPAGE BAUBLES

14 PIECE SET
£24.99 £19.99



Santa Design



Robin Design



Tartan Reindeer Design

"Absolutely beautiful traditional Christmas tree balls, excellent quality, going to order another scene". - Mrs Sally Hampton Trustpilot



Use the code:
AG20
at checkout

Celebrate the season with big savings! Get 20% off these beautiful 14-piece Decoupage Bauble sets, in decorative boxes. Also, take advantage of our special bonus offer and enjoy 20% discount on our festive wreaths. Choose from four enchanting designs and two sizes - 12" or 14". Brighten up your holiday season and embellish your door with our stunning decorations. Hurry, grab these amazing deals before they're gone!

SPECIAL BONUS OFFER - 20% OFF CHRISTMAS WREATHS

12" Wreaths £19.99 NOW £15.99 - 14" Wreaths £24.99 NOW £19.99



Gold Balls & Berries Design



Red Pinecone Design



Gold Pinecone Design



Red Flower, Red Apple and Star Design



Visit: www.homeandgardenextras.com/AG20
When ordering online please use the code "AG20"
To order by phone please call 01903 331221
Scan the QR Code to the left to find out more



Our Christmas Catalogue is out now!
Visit our website to request your copy today.
www.homeandgardenextras.com/AG-catalogue
Call our Catalogue Hotline on 01903 331222

home & garden
extras

Please complete and return this coupon to: Home & Garden Extras,
Chartwell House, 40 Chartwell Road, Lancing, West Sussex, BN15 8TY.

Manufacturing in Britain

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Home & Garden Extras for £ _____

USE CODE: AG20

Name _____
Address _____
Postcode _____ Telephone _____
Email _____

By providing us with your email address you'll be able to receive:
✓ Access your order information online ✓ Receive delivery updates
✓ Receive dispatch notifications ✓ View order tracking 24/7

If you do not wish to receive information on our offers or our newsletter please tick here

Offer code can not be used in conjunction with any other offer. Offer valid until 01/01/24.

QTY	PRODUCT	SIZE	PRICE	TOTAL

Please debit my account: Visa Mastercard

P&P **£3.99**

Card Number:

Grand Total

Valid From:

Expiry Date:

Security Code:

Last 3 digits on the back of the card

Your WINTER RECIPE

Apple inspiration

Author, **Helen Cross** shares a few of her recipes with apples



Spiced apple cake

Apples have many uses, but a spiced apple cake must be one of my favourite recipes. This is a simple yet delicious finisher to any supper and could be served warm with a dollop of custard on top.

INGREDIENTS

- 175g unsalted butter, softened
- 150g caster sugar
- 3 eggs
- 250g self-raising flour
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 50ml milk
- 2 large cooking apples, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
- A little brown sugar to sprinkle on top of the cake before baking

HOW TO PREPARE

1. Preheat the oven to 160C and grease and line a 30cm cake tin.
2. Cream together the butter and caster sugar in a food mixer until light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the eggs one at a time, followed by the flour and cinnamon. Slowly add the milk and gently combine.
4. Place half the batter into the prepared cake tin, followed by a layer of apple slices.

Gently spread the remaining batter on top and finish with another layer of apple slices and a sprinkling of brown sugar.

5. Bake in the oven for 40-45 minutes or until well-risen and golden brown in colour.
6. Medium sized apples, cored and chopped into chunks. I leave them unpeeled.



Apple crumble

It has been said that despite being full up after my main meal, I always had room for crumble. In fact, it has been thought I may have a separate tank reserved just for crumble. Once you've mastered the art of the crumble topping, another excellent skill set to harness early on in life, you can go wild with fruit combinations. However, a simple apple crumble will win me over, always.

INGREDIENTS

- 200g apples and maybe some blackberries
- 2 tbsp soft brown sugar and a little extra for the top
- 130g caster sugar
- 130g butter cut into cubes
- 175g plain flour
- 100g oats
- One handful of sunflower seeds



HOW TO PREPARE

1. Preheat the oven to 170C and core and chop your apples into medium chunks. Add them to your baking dish, sprinkle the brown sugar on top and add the blackberries.
2. For the crumble topping, get a large bowl and, using your hands rub the butter, the flour, and the caster sugar together until you get a fine crumb. Mix in the oats and the sunflower seeds, using your hands again.
4. Add the crumble mixture to the top of the fruit and add an extra sprinkle of brown sugar on top.
5. Bake in the oven for around 60 minutes.



Winter Gardens

*it's not
all about
the holly
and ivy*

Pyracantha coccinea 'Red Column'
INSET: 'Red Column' berries



Mike Palmer provides us with an uplifting look at some of the seasonal splendours to be found in December

It's cold, wet, grey and miserable December. Admittedly, there is the odd clear, frosty, blue sky day to lift the spirits, how we relish those, especially at the moment. As a garden writer, waxing lyrical about the abundant joys of spring, summer and autumn gardens with their burgeoning borders and kaleidoscopic, coloured flowers jostling for centre stage is more familiar territory. Paragraph after paragraph, page after page crammed with glorious descriptions of the seasonal bouquets Mother Nature has gifted us and then winter blows in on a biting, northerly wind and our gardens slip into a deep, hushed hibernation, all dull, grey and expressionless. Less appears to be written about our winter gardens but not on my watch!

"There is still beauty within the winter landscape; a subtle, understated beauty."

I invite you to take a closer look

There is still beauty within the winter landscape; a subtle, understated beauty. Fleeting moments that can disappear or change with a squall of wintery wind. A winter's walk around the neighbourhood wrapped in an oversized, warm coat, woolly hat and gloves, peering into empty gardens or a stroll through a local park, is the perfect way to explore these seasonal splendours.

Trees largely bereft of their summer leafage, stand exposed and naked, almost vulnerable with the last red, terracotta, butter-yellow and golden leaves of beech, oak, horse chestnut, and *liquidambar styraciflua* dotted forlornly within their empty boughs. The delicate tracery of wet silver birch branches and their soft twigs silhouetted against silver-grey skies; a particular favourite birch of mine is the ghostly and rather aptly named *Betula utilis jacquemontii* 'Snow Queen' which stands majestically in the winter garden and cuts quite a dashing



scene when underplanted with the contrasting, almost black stems of *Cornus alba* 'Kesselringii'.

The beauty of berries

In my own garden, clusters of the bright red berries of *Pyracantha coccinea* 'Red Column' wink seductively at me. Our famished, feathered friends picking off vitamin-filled vermillion berries first, followed by orange, then yellow until one day, usually in mid January, the beautiful bounty has all but gone.

Other berry bearing favourites (try saying that after a couple of egg noggs) have to include *Arbutus unedo*, the strawberry tree. Its red and orange strawberry-like fruit hanging like bonsai baubles on a Christmas tree. The berries contrast beautifully with dark, evergreen foliage, which in turn is set off by rust coloured, peeling bark stems. Whilst the fruits are edible, please don't go expecting to be reminded of strawberries at Wimbledon in June; they're distinctly bland so best left for your resident blackbirds, thrushes and robins.

When there's hellebores, there's hope

Moving to the somewhat barren borders of my own garden, the early blooms of hellebores, sparkling in shades of pale green, ruby, pink, purple, yellow and white, nod coquettishly in the December winds, adding a most welcome splash of colour. They whisper at passers-by to lift their downturned flowers skywards to reveal their hidden treasures. A boss of golden stamens nestled in a bowl of intricately patterned or stained glass coloured tepals. The classic, snow white flowers of the Christmas Rose, *Helleborus niger* sing out triumphantly from gloomy borders. For me, the darker flowered hellebores, whilst stunning in their own right, can sometimes be like the proverbial black cat in a coal mine during grey, winter days in the garden. But, if like me, you adore the almost black, brooding blooms of *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Harvington Black', as one great example, then why not pop them in a container, underplanted with snowdrops and dwarf narcissus, which can be viewed and enjoyed from the cosiness of an inside room.

Majestic, ornamental grasses

I love ornamental grasses in my garden, as you'll soon find out when you read more of my column next year. Providing almost year-round interest, they come into their own again in the winter months with their bleached, parchment coloured stems, providing great winter interest and structure. On the south coast, where I live, we're not often visited by Mr Frost (famous last words!), but pretty much anywhere north of here will be, and the frosted stems of ornamental grasses are a sight to behold and well worth dodging the freezing temperatures for a cheeky and completely Instagram worthy post. My favourite grasses for winter interest include *Miscanthus* 'Flamingo', and the towering *M. malepartus* or *Molinia* 'Skyracer'. We'll talk more about ornamental grasses next year, I promise!

Last, but by no means least, the colourful cornus

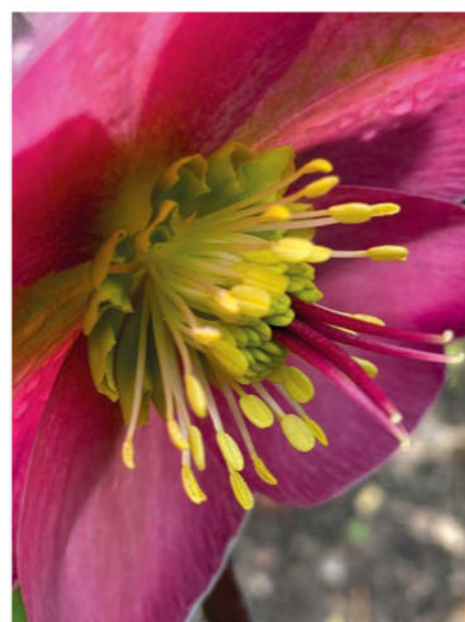
There are so many winter wonders to include in our gardens, and before I sign off, I feel duty-bound to holler about the colourful, seasonal stems of cornus. I mentioned *Cornus alba* 'Kesselringii' at the start of this article, but other dogwoods come in shades of red, orange, yellow and lime-green. A drift of *Cornus alba sibirica* 'Baton Rouge' adds a warming, bright crimson blazon of colour, searing across frost gilded borders. Or perhaps the slightly more restrained, but still vivaciously, vibrant



Hellebores on a wet day still shine



Hellebore - the Christmas Rose



Molinia 'Skyracer'

Cornus sericea 'Flaviramea' with its apple-green coloured stems. And finally, if I don't mention scented plants for the winter garden I will have committed horticultural heresy and my column will be consigned to the *Amateur Gardening* waste bin. So, for mid to late winter interest, I highly recommend the medium sized, evergreen shrub, *Skimmia japonica* 'Fragrant Cloud' with its large panicles of heavily scented, pale green inflorescent flowers or Winter box, *Sarcococca confusa* a smaller evergreen shrub which similarly laces the winter garden with its beautifully, intoxicating scent. Plant, either of these shrubs near a door or window for maximum aromatic impact.

So let's enjoy the holly and the ivy, but do venture out to explore some sensational, seasonal Christmas 'gifts' in our own winter wonderlands closer to home.

ST. EVAL



Magical Winter's Eve

Watch the spirit of the season come alive in jewel toned pots of mesmerising blue, charming purple, and enchanting green. Crafted with care and infused with festive joy, these beautiful candles add warmth and a touch of elegance to your winter nights.

Inspiritus

Orange & Cinnamon

Winter Thyme



Each candle is poured with our unique blends for a premium quality. Made using sustainable production on our farm in Cornwall.

01841 540850

info@st-eval.com

www.st-eval.com



The art of beautiful candles

Home made Christmas treats for garden birds



The National Gardens Scheme shares some gift ideas for feathered friends this December...

How to make **bird seed cakes**

This simple 'recipe' is a great crafting activity for the Christmas holidays and will have the whole family bird watching at the window once they're served to the wildlife in the garden.

PHOTOS: VICKY FLYNN



WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ Wild bird seed
- ✓ Lard
- ✓ Cookie cutters
- ✓ Paper straws
- ✓ Tray
- ✓ Twine
- ✓ Scissors

Step by step

METHOD:

STEP 1.

Chop up the lard and, using your hands, squidge it up with the birdseed until you get a sticky ball

STEP 2.

Press the mixture into your cookie cutter shapes

STEP 3.

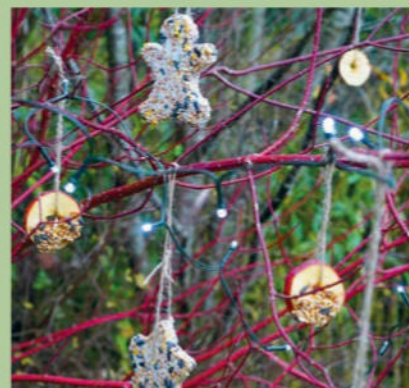
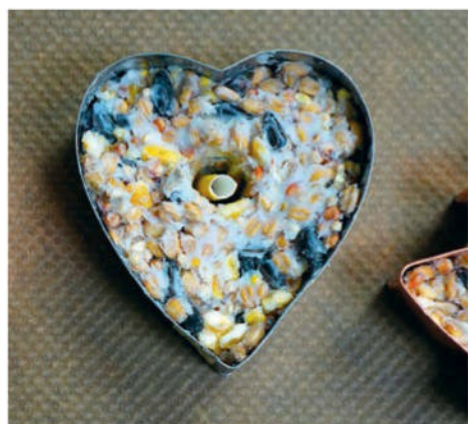
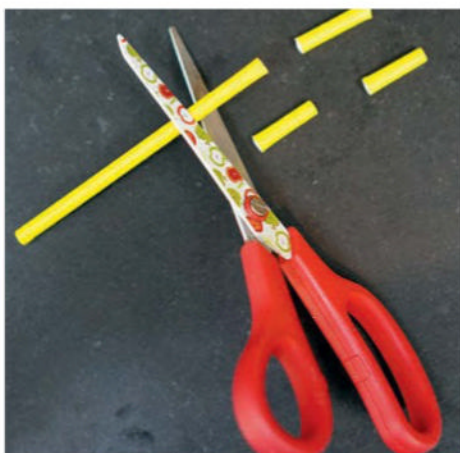
Cut up some lengths of paper straws, make a hole in the mixture and push the straw in – you'll thread the twine through this.

STEP 4.

Put the cakes in the fridge for 2 hours – push them out of the cutters and thread with twine.

STEP 5.

Hang them in your garden trees and watch the birds enjoy their winter treat!





Feed the birds with **nutty apple rings**

Treat the wildlife in your garden this winter with these nutty apple rings. This quick winter craft is a great way to encourage everyone to get outdoors this December, and to learn about the wildlife living in the garden.

PHOTOS: VICKY FLYNN



WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- ✓ Wild bird seed
- ✓ Peanut butter
- ✓ Apples
- ✓ Twine
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Knife

**Step
by step**

METHOD:

STEP 1.

Slice the apples into rings, remove the core and thread twine through the hole, tying to create a loop.

STEP 2.

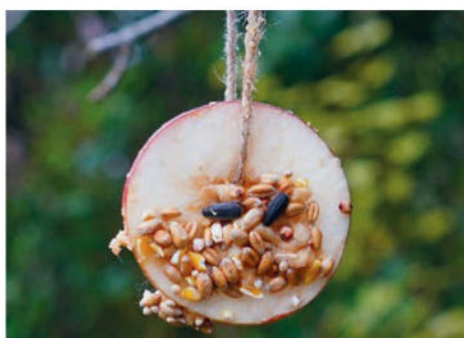
Spread the lower half of the apple slices with peanut butter.

STEP 3.

Dunk into birdseed so that it sticks to the peanut butter.

STEP 4.

Hang them in your garden trees and watch the birds enjoy their winter treat!



National Garden Scheme

■ The National Garden Scheme has been opening exceptional private gardens to the public since 1927.

Each year over 3,500 gardens open raising millions for some of the UK's best-loved nursing and health charities.

For more information see www.ngs.org.uk





With Age Co comes making the most of later life

That's because the products and services we offer help people over fifty to live life on their own terms – now and in the future.

Age Co is 100% owned by Age UK so our profits go to the charity to support older people most in need.

Things get better with Age Co.

www.ageco.co.uk



ORDER FORM

- UK – 6 MONTHS** (13 issues) for £36.99 – saving 54%* a year.
Receive 10 FREE packets of seeds
- UK – 6 MONTHS** (13 issues) by cheque or debit/credit card at
£37.99 – saving 53% a year. Receive 10 FREE packets of seeds

For international offers, visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/XMAS23AG

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms Forename _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode/Zip code _____

Country _____

Mobile _____

Email _____

IF DELIVERY ADDRESS IS DIFFERENT, COMPLETE BELOW

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms Forename _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode/Zip code _____

Country _____

Mobile _____

Email _____

We may wish to contact you regarding our special offers that we believe would be relevant to you. Please tick the boxes below to tell us all the ways you would prefer to hear from us. Email Post Phone Text message. We will not pass your details on to third party companies.

PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT

- I wish to subscribe by Direct Debit payments of **£36.99 every 6 months**. I understand that my subscription will continue at the same rate, with payments taken every 6 months – unless I write to you to tell you otherwise.



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Name of Bank _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Account Name _____

Sort Code Acc. No

Signature _____ Date _____

Originator's ID number

8 3 7 3 8 3

Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Kelsey Publishing Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

PAY BY CHEQUE / DEBIT / CREDIT CARD

- UK – 6 months (13 issues) at £37.99**

- Please debit my:** Visa Visa Debit Mastercard

Card no

Security no Valid from / / Expiry date / /

Signature _____ Date _____

- I enclose a cheque for £37.99 made payable to Kelsey Publishing Limited (must be from a UK bank account. Please write your name and address on the back of the cheque).

**(UK ONLY) PLEASE SEND COMPLETED FORM TO:
FREEPOST KELSEY MEDIA**

Terms & Conditions: UK Direct Debit offer only. You will pay £36.99 every 6 months. *Savings are based on the yearly cover price (£3.50 per issue) plus postage. Offer ends 24th December 2023. Your subscription will start with the next available issue, and you will receive 26 issues in a year. Prices correct at time of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/terms. Data protection: We take great care in handling your personal details and these will only ever be used as set out in our privacy policy which can be viewed at shop.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy. You may unsubscribe at any time. Gift will be delivered within 28 days and is subject to availability, cannot be delivered to Ireland, an alternative gift of similar value may be provided.

SAVE 54%

ON YOUR AMATEUR GARDENING SUBSCRIPTION

Great reasons to subscribe



The gardening 'Bible'
for serious gardeners



Two packets of seeds
FREE with every issue



Each issue delivered in 100%
plastic-free packaging



Save 54%* on an annual
subscription



Never miss an issue



Buy for someone special, or
why not treat yourself?

EXCLUSIVE CHRISTMAS SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

THE PERFECT GIFT FOR THE GARDENING ENTHUSIAST



13 ISSUES
JUST
£36.99



**PLUS
BONUS GIFT
10 FREE
PACKETS OF
SEEDS**

SUBSCRIBING IS EASY!

VISIT [SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/XMAS23AG](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/xmas23ag)

OR SCAN THE QR CODE AND GO DIRECTLY



CALL 01959 543 747 AND QUOTE 'XMAS23AG' OR COMPLETE THE 'FREEPOST' COUPON



In defence of peat

Clear waters
downstream of
peatlands protected
from flooding



Becky Searle gets up close and personal with the plight of the peat bog

We gardeners have had a long love affair with peat. Now that there is a likely ban on its use in horticulture on the horizon, there has been an urgent shift in the industry towards all things peat-free. For us, this means changing how we use compost and finding ways to make it work for us amid so much choice and variation. Moreover, it takes time to get a good recipe for peat-free compost. The surge in demand resulted in some poorer-quality products being brought to the market before they had time to be adequately tested and refined. This led to peat-free composts in general getting a bit of bad press. However, there are many high-quality shop-bought and home-made alternatives.

Why has peat been so popular?

As far as the horticultural industry has historically been concerned, peat is a very convenient resource. It can be dug up and bagged with very little processing. It holds water well and drains well. It's inert, devoid of life and almost pure carbon. So, peat has played such a big part in horticulture over the last century and so many of us have become so familiar with its use.

However, there are so many reasons why we should move away from using peat in our gardens, besides its looming ban. This is why I'd like to take you on a little journey into the world of peat and explain why its natural habits offer so much value to humankind, intact.

How peat is made slowly

Peat is produced so slowly that its regeneration cannot keep up with consumption. It is formed under very wet conditions, so peatlands are, by definition, also wetlands. They are home to many weird and wonderful plants, making them incredible resources for biodiversity. However, the primary species is sphagnum moss. Moss can't transport water and nutrients around its tissues. This means it doesn't grow stems, making it very slow-growing. It also needs lots of moisture to be able to grow. In drier ecosystems, organisms in the soil



break down leaves and plant matter quickly, clearing away our autumn leaves in time for spring. Peat moss, however, is broken down anaerobically by specialised bacteria, and the process takes a long time. All these factors mean that peat production is very slow; it takes ten years to make just one centimetre of peat.

How peat bogs help us

Peat is an impressive multitasker. It provides us with a multitude of ecosystem services, which have historically been undervalued in favour of the immediate price of resale. Ecosystem services are the numerous benefits that humans receive from healthy ecosystems or natural resources. They can be anything from providing areas for leisure and recreation to supplying us with fresh water and food. Peat is particularly generous with its ecosystem services, helping to store carbon, filter water, slow flood waters and contribute towards biodiversity.

To carry out their range of public services, peat bogs must be intact and fully functioning. In other words, they need to be wet and covered with vegetation. Unfortunately, to extract peat, we must

“Peat bogs help to store carbon, filter water, slow flood waters and contribute towards biodiversity.”

first drain and remove the top layer of vegetation, immediately halting the bog's ability to function in this planet-friendly way. It's estimated that less than 20% of the UK's peatlands are in natural or near-natural condition. And this is in no small part because of its use in horticulture.

Not forgetting the carbon storage

The humble peat bog covers less than 3% of the planet's surface. But despite being relatively rare, they hold more carbon than all the world's vegetation combined. Peat is, after all, only one step away from coal on the geological timeline. When carbon comes into contact with the atmosphere, it oxidises, becoming carbon dioxide. A fully functioning peat bog, saturated with water, prevents this from happening. It holds onto the carbon and other greenhouse gases, storing them safely and sequestering them year after year.

Unfortunately, a damaged peat bog will belch out vast amounts of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases, such as methane, contributing significantly to our global emissions.

Peat bogs can slow flood water and filter water as well

Peat bogs are like giant sponges. Sphagnum moss, their main component, can hold up to 20 times its weight in water. Because of this, these habitats act as huge reservoirs, buffering the surrounding areas from flooding by storing and slowing rainwater. This is particularly critical in the UK, where peatlands comprise around 10% of the land mass – far greater than the global average of 3%. Since most peat bogs in the UK are damaged, they can't perform this service effectively. This can have catastrophic results for those living nearby.

Peat is also responsible for a considerable amount of water filtration. Around 70% of the UK's drinking water comes from upland areas that are primarily peatland. As water moves slowly through peat bogs, it is purified. The IUCN Peatland Program estimates the value of this service to be around £1.5 billion

pounds to the economy. Unfortunately, a damaged peat bog can become a source of water pollution, a cost none of us want to bear. But instead of investing in more water-treatment plants and flood defences, we could focus on restoring these important habitats.

These are just a few of the services peatlands provide for our everyday welfare. So, as you can see, they are an extraordinarily valuable natural resource.

Most of us want to do something positive for our environment by gardening; whether by growing food, creating beautiful places, or boosting biodiversity. Working with the peatlands and understanding and embracing the shift towards the use of peat free compost goes an incredibly long way.



Sundew fly traps
Photo: Sue Searle

Quick peat bog Facts

- 1** It takes ten years to create just one centimetre of peat.
- 2** Over a quarter of the UK's drinking water is filtered through peat bogs.
- 3** The UK's peatlands are estimated to hold 3 billion tonnes of carbon.
- 4** The UK is home to around 13% of the world's peatlands.

Proudly sponsored by Dalefoot Composts

■ Dalefoot Composts makes peat-free growing products for every gardening need - seed sowing to potting on, vegetable and salad growing to tomatoes. Its organic Wool Compost range needs less watering, and high levels of natural nutrients means there's no need to feed!



Amateur Gardening
EXCLUSIVE OFFER:

Free delivery on all orders of Dalefoot Composts in November 2023.
Ring 01931 713281, quoting 'AG offer'.
Ts and Cs apply.

Cors caron bog, Wales





Adventures in cider making

Andrew Oldham shares his experiences of making the best use of apples and nasturtium remaining from the year's harvest



The last of the apples are in the kitchen and I have been barking on about buying a fruit press for too long. No more mountains of apple pies and crumbles. I now have mountains of bottles that I have been collecting over the last few months. I have been told by numerous people to be meticulously clean when juicing. I have been told: 'Beware of the bacteria' like some 1950s B movie, 'It kills!'

Bad cider smells of lemons or bananas, known as cider sickness and anyone mad enough to drink it won't come out smelling of lemons or bananas. The idea of poisoning us or the neighbours, has put me off making cider for years but as our orchard has grown and our apple yields have gone up, we have decided to have a go. The news travels fast in our hamlet and our Swedish neighbour has got wind of our plans to make cider. His

head pops over our orchard wall as my wife, Carol and I harvest apples; two large trugs brimming with the tart 'Keswick Codling', the sweet 'Fillingham', the blush 'Flower of the Town' and 'Hunt House'; the apple Captain Cook swore by. Our Swedish neighbour looks at the trugs full of apples and asks, 'Are you making cider?'

How long does cider take to make?

A little more talk and an offer to assist and we realise that his 'help' comes in the shape of drinking the finished product. I must tell him that

apples take a year to become cider. If I drank my juiced apples now, they would just be apple juice and by Christmas I will have something that will strip the non-stick off any pan. By Easter, next year, I will have a palatable drink with a tart kick but by summer, I will open a bottle, have a glass, think it's not bad, stand up and fall headfirst into the flowerbed. Real cider once ready isn't like cider in the pubs, it is a living drink that reminds you that the etiquette of any cider drinking takes place with you sat down.



Our Swedish neighbour looks disheartened, and he wanders off, he's never gotten over the homemade rhubarb schnapps we gave him one year. No one in the hamlet who received a bottle from us walked straight that Christmas.

Now we need to make the cider

We take the apple harvest into the kitchen thinking juicing is easy. We spend thirty minutes chopping up apples to make a 'mash' which we cram into the press. As Carol turns the handle we both realise that we may have misinterpreted what a 'mash' is. Our mash is like the raw mixture for apple pies. Muscles taut, faces sweating, Carol turns and I pin down the press. Surely it should be simpler than this? We look up what 'mash' should look like. Red faced, mainly from embarrassment, we ladle out the squashed apples and bash the hell out of it in a brewer's bucket with a large piece of wood. That's mash. We can press it now without fear of popping a blood vessel. The juice runs, sweet and cloudy.

We could stop here, bottle the juice after filtering it, add some citric acid to stop it from going off and pop it in the fridge but we have three demi-johns waiting. So, we start to decant and filter, watching the cloudy mixture settle inside and we add yeast, pop on an airlock and step back. Carol talks about making ginger beer at school, how no one wanted it, and a lad in her class took the lot home, hid it in his wardrobe, left it there until it exploded taking the wardrobe with it. We move the demi-johns into a large metal tray in the middle of the kitchen, if they explode, they have nowhere to go, nothing to destroy.

Home made brewing comes in many forms

I am not new to brewing. My dad was a brewer of fine country wines, those hedgerow wines, those wines that when you sip allows the next words that come out of your mouth to be several octaves lower than before.

With thanks

To our fabulous sister publication, **Country Smallholder** magazine where a version of this article first appeared.



Another idea – how to make Poor Man's capers



■ Everyone should have a go at something new and those of you who grow nasturtiums will have plenty of green seed now to turn into Poor Man's Capers:

INGREDIENTS

- Jar of nasturtium seeds
- 2/3 cup of water
- 2/3 cup of cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons of sea salt
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 1 Bay leaf

METHOD

Tip a full jar of green nasturtium seeds into a sieve, rinse with water. Place the

jar and lid into a pan of water, add any other equipment you may be using. Bring them to the boil for 10 minutes, this sterilises the jar, leave to cool. Add the washed nasturtium seeds and bayleaf into the cool jar. In another pan, add the cider vinegar, water, salt, and sugar, bring to the boil, and use immediately. Pour the hot pickling juice into the jar, leave a gap at the top of the jar but submerge all the nasturtium seeds. Screw the lid on the jar immediately and tighten. Come back when it cools and tighten if needed. Store in a cool, dark place for two weeks before eating. Once open store in a fridge and eat within three months.



Gooseberry wine, elderberry, orange, blackcurrant, wine made from his own grapes. Once we caught the dog underneath one of his kegs, on her back, catching the drips from a faulty tap, three sheets to the wind.

Next month we will decant our first cider into bottles, adding sugar to a few to create sparkling cider, leaving the

rest to be real cider, and agreeing that if worst comes to the worst we can mix with lemonade, which by the way, is my favourite way to drink cider with loads of ice. Sacrilege, I know.

About Andrew Oldham

■ Andrew is a disabled gardener who believes in down-to-earth growing and cooking. He lives high on the Saddleworth hills with his family at Pig Row.

You can visit him anytime at www.lifeonpigrow.co.uk





Let nature decorate your home for *free* this Christmas

Bring the outside indoors to enjoy the garden even when wintry weather keeps you inside, says Sue Bradley.

Our ancestors knew a thing or two about brightening the darkest days of winter. When the weather allowed they'd be out and about collecting colourful and sometimes fragrant foliage, vibrant berries and various other bits and pieces from hedgerows and gardens to bring indoors.

Decking the halls with boughs of holly was the way to mark the Yuletide season long before mass-produced fairy lights, glass baubles and tinsel were all the rage, and many of us are now seeing the money saving and wellbeing value in taking inspiration from these old ways.

More natural inspiration than ever

One advantage we have in the 21st Century over those who came before us, is that our choice of garden plants producing material suitable for winter displays is greater than ever, with a wide world of species now growing in many gardens. From the deep red hips of *Rosa rugosa* to the large and colourful crepe-like flowerheads of *Hydrangea macrophylla* and the fragrant foliage of eucalyptus, there's no end of choice and opportunity for creative indoor inspiration.

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages to be had from creating natural decorations for the home is that it encourages us to wrap up warm and spend time outside tuning into our gardens as we seek out and collect materials during the shortest days of the year. This helps us to switch off from the stresses of the world as we forage fruitfully for berries and branches and take a lingering look at the beauty of plants and the natural world. It's also a great way to get a head start on cutting back shrubs that have got a bit out of hand.

Once foliage, berries, seedheads and the like have been gathered

It's then time to get creative: from threading ivy around staircase spindles to filling ceramic bowls with contrasting stems and even making pretty decorations for doors, our imaginations are the only limits to what we can achieve.

Employ reusable or compostable alternatives where you can

Such as scrunched up chicken wire, potatoes or straw such as scrunched up chicken wire, potatoes or straw.

If you're stuck for inspiration, why not treat yourself to a day out at an historic house, in which natural materials are often used for festive decorations.

Gathering material from the garden to brighten our homes over the winter may be an old practice, but it's one that is free and which is guaranteed to bring joy and a meaningful inner warmth throughout the weeks to come.

“Gathering material from the garden to brighten our homes over the winter may be an old practice, but it's one that is free and which is guaranteed to bring joy and a meaningful inner warmth throughout the weeks to come.”

Four great ideas for making the most of winter foliage



Bring a staircase to life with long lengths of ivy, which look great draped around spindles. Add ivy flower buds or berries, produced on older plants, for variety. This time-honoured form of decoration has a softening effect and is fragrant and long-lasting.



Seek out foliage in a range of contrasting colours to create striking focal points in the home. The bronze leaves of mahonia, spotted Japanese laurel *Aucuba japonica*, berry-rich holly, variegated euonymus and trailing ivy all play their part in this ensemble.



Teasels have a structural and irresistibly tactile quality that make them perfect for winter arrangements. They contrast pleasingly with dried artichoke heads, which can be sprayed gold to provide a contrast. The seeds of stinking iris and flower buds of ivy provide added interest.



Door decorations don't have to be round: here the filigree-like foliage of *leylandii* provides the background for an ensemble of berries, cones and evergreen leaves, including euonymus, holly and *Garrya elliptica*.

ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE: PETER CHATTERTON

12 great plants to collect

3
Evergreens

PHOTOS: PETER CHATTERTON



Holly is the archetypal midwinter plant, with its thick, glossy leaves and red berries. There's a large choice of foliage types from which to choose, whether prickly or oval, green or

variegated. Remember that most named hollies are dioecious, with either fruiting female or pollen-generating male flowers, so, in general, at least one of each is required to ensure the presence of berries. Recommended cultivars include *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argentea Marginata' for a white and green combination, *Ilex x altaclerensis* 'Golden King' with yellow-margined green leaves and the self-fertile *Ilex aquifolium* 'J.C. van Tol'.



Beal's Mahonia, *M. Bealei*, produces beautiful bronze foliage in the autumn, with pairs of holly-like leaves. This upright evergreen shrub produces pale yellow flowers in short racemes from late autumn to early spring. Other mahonia species can also be used to add texture to winter flower displays.



The other half of the famous Christmas evergreen duo, ivy has many uses. It can be twisted together to make a garland or used as a trailing element within a display, extending the overall impact of the composition. Young leaves have the typical ivy leaf shape, while older ones are more rounded. Look to pick flower buds and berries too.

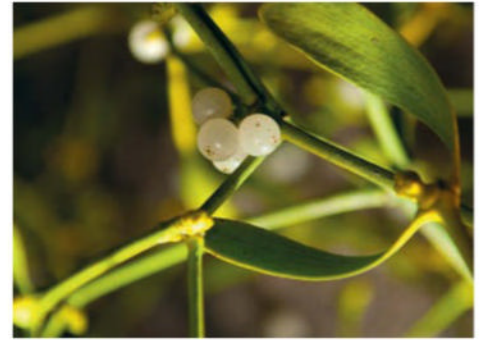
6
Fruit & berries



Clusters of tiny crab apples can be used to provide jewel-like pops of colour in flower arrangements and provide a cheery sight in the garden over winter months. Growers can also look forward to insect-friendly blossom in May. Recommended cultivars include *Malus x zumi* 'Golden Hornet' and *M.* 'Comtesse de Paris'



Rose hips are a great addition to the flower arranger's arsenal. Available in all shades from orange to deep red, they inject rich colour into displays. Try *Rosa rugosa* cultivars, such as 'Rubra', or 'Frau Dagmar Harstrup', for the plumpiest hips, and scour hedgerows for the vibrant orange hips of dog roses.



No Christmas decorations are complete without mistletoe. This semi-parasitic evergreen shrub has pairs of oval leaves and glossy white berries. Mistletoe forms balls of foliage in the tops of trees, especially apple, lime and poplar. Most mistletoe plants grow from seeds wiped onto bark by birds, but some gardeners have managed to replicate this process in their gardens.



The shiny red berries of *Cotoneaster salicifolius* provide a scarlet note and are a good substitute for holly berries. Lovely cultivars include 'Avonbank'. Also look for berries on the late cotoneaster, *C. lacteus*, which can be grown as a large evergreen shrub or small tree.



Holly is the traditional evergreen plant for decking homes during Yuletide. *Ilex aquifolium* produces lovely prickly leaves and can be grown as a shrub or a tree. Good choices include 'Alaska', which holds the Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society, but this female cultivar will need a male companion such as 'Golden Queen' or 'Silver Queen' for bountiful berries.



Not all hollies have prickly leaves. *Ilex x altaclerensis* 'Golden King', one of the large-berried 'Highclere' cultivars, has oval leaves with attractive yellow variegation. Don't be fooled by its name, however: this holly is a female cultivar and will fruit more prolifically if there's a pollen-producing male plant close by.

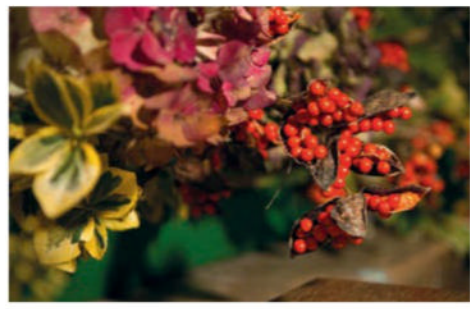
3
Flowers & seedheads



Conifer cones add texture to an arrangement and can be wired to provide more scope. Collect them from larch, pine, cypress, fir, cedar and redwood.



Teasel: The spiky seedheads of teasels, *Dipsacus fullonum*, are a great way to add structure to a winter arrangement, and they're irresistibly tactile too. Grow this tall wildlife-friendly plant on the edge of the garden, where it will be appreciated by goldfinches and other birds. It's a notorious self-seeder.



The unfortunately named 'stinking iris' or 'roast beef plant' *Iris foetidissima* produces small, yellow-tinged, dull purple flowers in the summer, but it's during the autumn months that its value to flower arrangers becomes apparent, with its large pods of bright orange-red seeds.

More inspiration



Make the most of vibrant berries to add colour to an arrangement of evergreen leaves. Clusters of orange pyracantha berries bring a fiery glow to a window display.



Crab apples, euonymus, holly and leylandii are just some of the treasures available to brighten the home over winter.



Fir-type foliage, such as leylandii or thuja, provides the perfect deep green base from which to build a lovely display.



A bare corner can be brought to life with foliage in a variety of colours, along with the mophead flowers of *Hydrangea macrophylla*, which retain a hint of colour even in winter. Add a sprig of berries for contrast.



Seek out foliage in a range of contrasting colours to create striking focal points in the home. The bronze leaves of mahonia, spotted Japanese laurel *Aucuba japonica*, berry-rich holly, variegated euonymus and trailing ivy all play their part in this ensemble.



A collection of mopheads from *Hydrangea macrophylla* create a stunning display. Here they're backed with fir and Christmas tree branches and interspersed with the seed heads of *Iris foetidissima*.



Holly is a useful plant for a stylish ensemble. Mix together variegated and plain leaves and include plenty of glistening berries. Sprigs of rosemary or Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) provide a contrast.



Fill a ceramic pot with a selection of evergreen stems, using contrasting colours so that each element stands out. Pieces of Bhutan pine *Pines wallichiana* create a firework-like effect among stems of holly, ivy and leylandii, while the flower buds of ivy provide a pleasing contrast with holly berries.



Use clusters of rose hips to echo the shape of holly berries but add a different shade of red-orange to provide a contrast. Both stand out wonderfully against evergreen foliage.

Roamwild PestOff Bird Feeder

Orders despatched 24-48 hrs

Not just 100% squirrel proof



ALSO PEST PROOF

- **INDIVIDUALLY** spring loaded feeding ports only let the songbirds feed, not pests as these are too heavy and will close the feeding port.
- **AUTOMATICALLY** pest proof straight out of the box - No setting or spring calibration to adjust - So simple to use.
- **VERY LARGE CAPACITY** and so easy to fill, simply open the lid.
- **WEATHER PROOF** - No more seed clogging. Woodpecker friendly and also baby squirrel proof!
- **FOUR VERSIONS** of PestOff bird feeders available to suit all different seed types.
- **EASY TO CLEAN** - simply 'clicks' apart, no bolts to remove and replace.



Secondary baffle feature protects birds and seed from elements and also prevents squirrels sliding down the feed tube to access the food ports

Anti rust stainless steel plates prevent squirrels from gnawing into the feeder.

The Metal seed tube lid also acts as a large baffle to prevent aerial attacks from squirrels.

Large capacity seed tube

Roamwild PestOff WARRANTY INCLUDED

Bird seed not included.

Keeps Seed Dry



roamwild
NEW!
SEED TORPEDOES
Contain Top Premium Sunflower Hearts. Fill up on site in seconds! Take the chore out of refilling feeders.
Available in 1 Litre packs of 3 or 6.

Roamwild Multi-Digger Mini Tool Bundle
Makes Digging Effortless
• Ergonomic forearm support for maximum digging strength.
• Perfect for weak wrists/aching hands.
• Best Quality Stainless Steel.
roamwild
NEW
Total Control Dual Grip Handle Technology
Super Lightweight

roamwild
UNIQUE PRODUCTS ALL IN ONE PLACE
Hurry! Order online now for superfast delivery
www.roamwildproducts.co.uk
CREDIT CARD ORDERLINE: 0208 327 0455
During office hours only Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm excluding bank holidays
ROAMWILD GUARANTEE If you are not completely satisfied with your purchase return within 7 days for a full refund of purchase price.
DESIGNED IN THE UK GUARANTEED PATENTED


Please send cheque in stamped envelope to: Oakthrift, Sevenacres, Sevenacres Lane, Maldon CM9 8HD.
Please send me the following:

Item	Price	Qty	Total
1 x Roamwild™ Pest Off Bird Feeder	£29.99		
1 pack of 3 Roamwild™ Seed Torpedoes	£9.99		
1 pack of 6 Roamwild™ Seed Torpedoes	£17.99		
1 x Roamwild™ Multi-Digger Mini Tool Bundle	£24.99		
Please add £4.99 postage to complete order			£4.99
Grand Total			£

I enclose a cheque (payable to Roamwild) for £ _____ or charge my _____
Mastercard/Visa/Maestro/Switch. Card No: _____
Security Code (last 3 digits): ____/____/____ Expiry Date: ____/____ Issue No (Switch/Maestro): _____

Name: _____
Signature: _____
Address: _____
Post Code: _____
Tel No: _____
Email: _____

Super Lightweight

A photograph of a man with grey hair, wearing a blue patterned shirt, looking up at a large, leafy green bean plant in a garden. The plant has several long, green beans hanging from it. The background shows other green foliage and a clear blue sky.

“This visceral relationship with growing food has been steadily eroded, particularly in the Western world. Fast forward to today and the British, in particular, have become completely detached from the land. Sure, we can wax lyrical about ‘Welsh’ lamb or ‘Cheddar’ cheese, bedrocks of British food culture, and, yes, we have our own apples, ‘Cox’s Orange Pippin’ and ‘the Bramley’ for a crumble, to name just two, but I have been constantly surprised at how little so many people know about where their vegetables come from and the stories behind their journey onto our plates. Apart from some potatoes, what vegetable varieties can we name?”

Adam's *remarkable* veg

In an extract from Adam Alexander's book, *The Seed Detective*, the author explains the rich origins of two of our favourite vegetables...

ALL PHOTOS: ADAM ALEXANDER

Local garlic variety Sayq Plateau Oman



Get to know the history of garlic

Of all the vegetables, garlic probably lays claim to more health benefits than any other. Research undertaken early this century points to the centre of origin for garlic being on the northwestern side of the Tien Shan Mountains of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.¹ Among the earliest cultivated crops, it would also have been foraged long before Neolithic farmers selected the best examples to plant at least 6,000 years ago.

It was widely grown throughout Central and Eastern Europe and North Africa 5,000 years ago.

Garlic was much valued by the Egyptians, particularly the workers, and given to slaves building the pyramids as a daily ration because of its alleged ability to fortify them. Garlic was found in the tomb of Tutankhamun (c.1342–1323 bce). Whether left there by design or accident is not known. There is a rather engaging story told about the Greek historian Herodotus (c.484–c.425 bce) who, on visiting the Great Pyramid at Giza, wrote of the exorbitant price the pharaohs had to pay for garlic and some other vegetables to feed the workers. He probably misunderstood, or something was lost in translation, because what was very expensive at the time was a type of arsenate stone used to build pyramids. When burned it smelled of garlic.²

The chemical compound that gives garlic its distinctive aroma is allicin. This sulphur-containing ingredient, which is found in all edible alliums, is at the heart of the many medicinal qualities of garlic. The internet is packed with sites extolling the health benefits and medicinal virtues of garlic, with any number of lists of things the bulb can cure.

Clinically proven attributes are as an anti-inflammatory, an antiseptic, and an antifungal. During World War I it was used on wounds as an antiseptic and to reduce dysentery in the trenches. Much research has been, and continues to be undertaken, to see if its consumption can reduce cholesterol, blood pressure and the likelihood of contracting certain types of cancer, including lung and brain cancer. It's also quite effective at removing warts apparently.

However, reading the small print of many health food and alternative medicine products, medicinal attributes are more often 'believed' or 'claimed' than clinically proven. Garlic 'may' have



Omani red garlic



Omani garlic drying

antibiotic properties, it 'may' help in weight reduction, it 'may' help fungal skin infections and, like so many other foods, it is claimed to be an aphrodisiac because it improves circulation. What is certain is that garlic is the focus of a wide range of ongoing clinical research and trials, and eating it regularly and in quantity may not make you popular, but it will almost certainly be good for your health. Garlic is nature's greatest superfood and one of the most important weapons in an herbalist's arsenal. It is an ingredient I really cannot imagine being without and it has been arousing passions of a culinary nature in food cultures around the world for millennia.

Where do broad beans come from?

The fava or broad bean, *Vicia faba*, is one of the oldest cultivated crops in the world and it was at the top of my wish list. My travels through Syria took me to Palmyra, a ruined Roman city in the centre of the country – a magnificent oasis surrounded by endless scrub, mountains and desert. When I visited, the city was devoid of

tourists, who had been advised either not to come to the country or to leave as soon as possible. So, we had this amazing location pretty much to ourselves. Next to the ruined city was an empty restaurant serving the ubiquitous tourist buffet, which included a salad of fava beans. They were pale green, enormous – larger than my thumb – and delicious. I asked the chef if he had any dried beans I could try and grow back home. He gladly gave me a good handful which, you've guessed it, now grow happily in my own garden. He had been cultivating this bean for years on his farm in the oasis, as had his father and his grandfather before him.

To date, the parent of the fava bean has yet to be found.³ The native wild bean is believed extinct; maybe this should not be a surprise.⁴ I imagine that countless generations of farmers selected the best beans for the following year's crop and would have removed less prolific wild varieties because they would have been prone to shattering, an event where the seed pod bursts open when the beans are dry and ripe – something

farmers wanted to breed out of the domesticated crop so they could harvest the pods intact. Perhaps one day an intrepid plant hunter will chance



Giant Palmyra fava bean

“Garlic is nature's greatest superfood and one of the most important weapons in an herbalist's arsenal.”

“The fava or broad bean, *Vicia faba*, is one of the oldest cultivated crops in the world and it was at the top of my wish list”

upon an isolated population of wild fava bean in the uninhabited badlands of northern Syria, Anatolia or Iraq.

Over the thousands of years that this amazing pulse has been cultivated, there will have been countless local adaptations through domestication. Palmyra was founded more than 2,300 years ago and I have no doubt that the bean I was given had been grown locally for countless generations.

The natural philosopher Pliny the Elder (23–79 ce) described the richness of the soil in the surrounding oasis and, with no evidence to back me up, I like to think that the large bean I brought home could be one of the oldest varieties under cultivation. Its short, fat pods, yielding a maximum of three seeds, show similar traits to other known ancient varieties.

Over centuries of breeding, farmers would have selected seed from larger pods with more seed in them for both yield and culinary worth. The short-podded fava bean is also known as the field bean. It is grown in the U.K. primarily as a fodder crop and for export to the Middle East for human consumption. The seeds are also much smaller than the one I was given in Palmyra. In the U.K., all types of fava beans eaten fresh are called broad beans. Exactly why is etymologically unclear.

I can only hope that the resilience of those Palmyra farmers who remained and survived the catastrophe of the civil war will have enabled them to continue to grow and harvest this remarkable bean. At least it is safe in my little corner of Wales and is also now being grown by a few Syrian refugees in Canada, parts of Western Europe and the U.K., for whom it has great cultural significance and is the basis of much fine Syrian cuisine.



Atacama broad bean at 14,000 feet



Giant fava



Noting down local varieties in a Damascus souk



Seed shopping in Damascus

About Adam Alexander

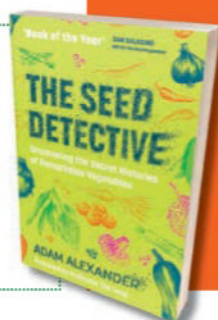
Adam has forty years under his belt as an award winning television and film producer. He is a consummate storyteller and passionate protector of rare and endangered garden crop seed from around the world. He is a board member of national gardening charity Garden Organic and a seed guardian and more for The Heritage Seed Library.



Adam's book, *The Seed Detective* shares his tales of seed hunting and the stories behind the origins of everyday vegetables. It is published by Chelsea Green Publishing.

REFERENCES

- ¹T. Etoh and P.W. Simon, 'Diversity, Fertility and Seed Production of Garlic Allium' in *Allium Crop Science: Recent Advances*, ed. H.D. Rabinowitch and L. Currah (New York: CABI, 2002): 101, <https://doi.org>
- ²K. Kris Hirst, 'Garlic Domestication – Where Did It Come from and When?', ThoughtCo., updated 28 July 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/garlic-domestication-where-and-when-169374>.
- ³Valentina Caracuta et al., '14,000-Year-Old Seeds Indicate the Levantine Origin of the Lost Progenitor of Faba Bean', *Scientific Reports* 6 (November 2016): 37399, <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep37399>.
- ⁴Oleg Kosterin, 'The "Lost Ancestor" of the Broad Bean (*Vicia faba* L.) and the Origin of Plant Cultivation in the Near East' [in Russian], *Vavilov Journal of Genetics and Breeding* 18, no. 4 (2014): 831–40, <https://doi.org/10.18699/VJ15.118>.





Your MONEY SAVING

with Ruth Hayes, AG's gardening expert



Fill your greenhouse with cuttings. INSET: Taking cuttings now will save you money on plants next year

Time to take cuttings

Easy propagation tips to save you pennies

Christmas is coming and the squeeze is on for many of us. Luckily, there are several ways you can save money in the garden this fortnight. The savings may not be immediate, but you will certainly feel them next spring when you start to get your garden ready for the growing season ahead.

One of the easiest ways of increasing stocks of your favourite plants for free is to take cuttings and this week that's what I have been doing with the off-cuts from my penstemons.

Only use healthy material and if potted up in gritty seed and cuttings compost, your cuttings should soon take and be ready to move into their own little pots next spring.

I use hormone rooting powder or gel to help my cuttings

develop strong root systems, but it isn't always necessary.

I also keep a stock of clear plastic freezer bags to hand to tie over the cuttings to keep their atmosphere humid to encourage growth.

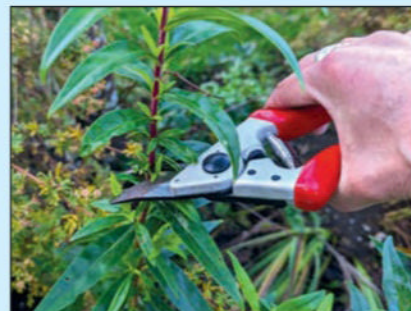
Remember to remove the bags when the cuttings start to grow as the developing stems and leaves can start to rot and grow mould if they touch damp plastic.

Don't cover pelargonium cuttings though, as the fleshy leaves are more prone to rotting and, in any case, they grow fast enough to not need the extra help. Overwinter your cuttings in a frost-free greenhouse or cool, light room. If in the greenhouse, cover them with fleece for added protection on the coldest nights.

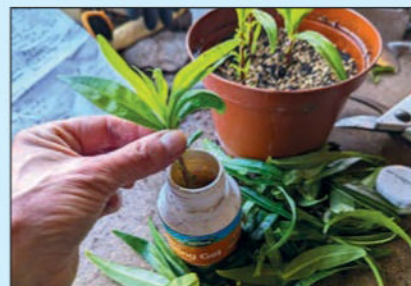
If any cuttings start to develop mould, remove them from the pot before they contaminate the others.

Take cuttings

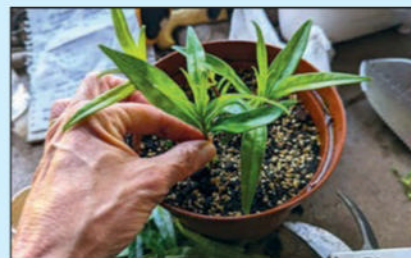
Pot them up for winter



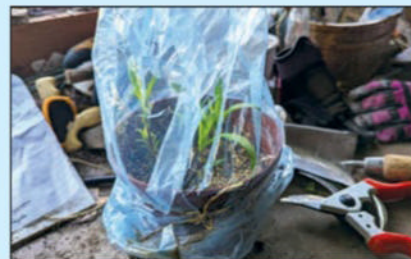
1 Use clean, sharp scissors, snips or secateurs to cut 4in (10cm) lengths of this year's healthy growth.



2 Strip off the lower leaves and dip the stems in rooting compound.



3 Insert the cuttings around the edge of a pot of damp, gritty seed compost and gently firm them in.

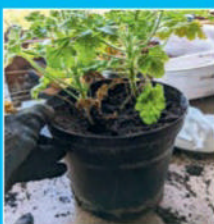


4 Seal in a plastic bag and set somewhere light and frost-free. Remove the bag when cuttings root and grow.

Pot on rooted cuttings



1 Water your cuttings then slide them from their container as a whole. Use your thumbs to separate the roots and check each plantlet is healthy top to bottom.



2 Pot up the cuttings in peat-free multipurpose compost, firm them in and water well. Overwinter them in the greenhouse.

Protect to save cash

Benefit your plants and wildlife this winter

Protecting plants from pests, disease, cold and adverse weather conditions is one of the easiest ways of saving money longer term in the garden.

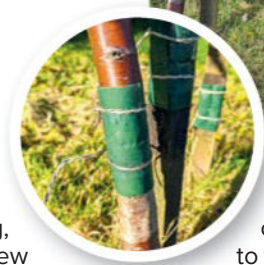
Last autumn I remembered to apply glue bands around the trunk of our little 'Victoria' plum tree and its supports, kept the grass short around the trunk and encouraged a wide variety of pest predators into the garden. The result? A bumper crop of plums and not one with a craftily-hidden winter moth maggot lurking inside!

These moths, which include mottled umber, March moths and winter moths, are a menace to fruit trees. In autumn, the wingless females emerge from their cocoons under the soil and climb the trees to lay their eggs. In spring, the caterpillars emerge and chew their way through foliage and blossom as well as the fruits, so bands or grease applied before the females hatch stops them in their tracks.

They start being active in late autumn, so this is your last chance to protect trees with the bands.

Remember though, these bands are indiscriminate and will also trap beneficial

I protect some trees with glue bands and also rely on nature's predators. INSET: Fix bands to trees and supports

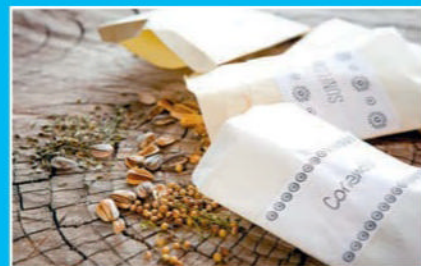


bugs that prey on moths and caterpillars, so you may prefer to feed garden birds and create welcoming winter habitats for hedgehogs, frogs, toads and invertebrates that will help keep caterpillar numbers down next spring.

Leave an area of garden to grow wild, put out bird feed and fresh water during the coldest months and create bug hotels where solitary bees, beetles, spiders and wasps can shelter through winter.

Storing seeds

Get ready for next year



1 Store your seeds somewhere dry and cool in clearly labelled envelopes. Most seeds remain viable for several years.



2 When you come to sow, try germinating a few on damp kitchen paper. If they sprout, they are sound, if not, discard them.

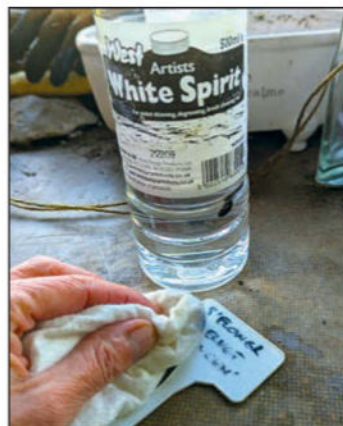
Four quick money saving ideas



1 Use fleece to protect plants overwintering in the greenhouse, but remove it when the temperatures rise to stop condensation forming.



2 When you've pruned your trees, save some of the longer prunings to use as pea sticks and attractive plant supports next year.



3 Wipe down plant labels with white spirit to remove this year's writing (or accidentally leave them in pockets in the wash - it works just as well!)



4 Do a stocktake of fertilisers and equipment so you don't double up in spring when you're restocking the shed.

CHRISTMAS CHEER THAT LASTS ALL YEAR!



GIFTS
FROM JUST
£15.99

OVER 60 TITLES TO CHOOSE FROM
VISIT [SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/XMAS23H](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/xmas23h)
OR CALL 01959 543 747 AND QUOTE 'XMAS23H'

Lines are open Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5.30pm. Calls are charged at your standard network rate. Offers available for UK customers only. Savings are based on the standard cover prices. Offer ends 24/12/2023. The subscription will start with the first available issue after Christmas 2023. Prices correct at time of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/terms. To see how we use your data view our privacy policy here shop.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy.



MAKE, MEND, DO

With Adam Kirkland, AG's garden DIY ideas expert

How to make a bug hotel



New columnist **Adam Kirkland** shows us how to make a cosy habitat for insects this winter

Those that knows me, will be all too aware of my passion for all things 'do it yourself'. Only outdoors though, ask me to put up a shelf in the house and I'll run a mile, but get me in the garden with a drill, saw and hammer and I'm raring to go. Ideas flow freely and if there is a pile of wood and some screws then I'll whip up a project in no time.

Wood can be expensive nowadays so pallet wood is a good thrifty alternative. Pallets are used to distribute all manner of products, all over the world but once they've served their purpose, they're often found languishing on driveways, in builders merchants, and at recycling centres up and down the country. That's where I swoop in, take them home and craft them into something unique.

This week I'm sharing one such project with you and it's something that I know you'll be inspired to create at home too, for your own garden. How to make a safe haven for bugs – a bug hotel! You can buy these ready-made in garden centres and home DIY stores but my motto is 'why buy, when you can make!'.

First source your pallets

Generally they are free, or if not, they are sold very cheaply so either way, it's a bargain. For this project you'll only need one pallet, so you could always use the remaining wood to make more bug hotels to give away as Christmas presents for other green-fingered friends.

How to get started

To break apart your pallet you can either use a crowbar (if you've got one) or just a hammer. Once you've broken it apart, you'll be left with slats of wood.

Putting the structure together

For this sized hotel you'll need four pieces that are about 30cm long (two for the roof and two for the upright supports), two 20cm pieces for the top and bottom, one 17cm piece for the middle and then two



14cm pieces for the vertical parts in the middle. Once you've cut those out with a saw then you'll be able to assemble the basic structure of the hotel and then begin to put it together with a hammer and nails.

Time to get creative

Once that's done, you can add chicken wire to one side and then add your fillings, I use bits of old wood, pinecones, and even old wool. The aim here is to create different sized spaces for different bugs to use and it's fun to forage around the garden to see what you can find. Then, add another piece of chicken wire to the front to stop it all falling out and there you have, your own home-made bug hotel.

You've likely got most of these materials lying around already, so grab yourself a pallet and see what you can create!

Happy make, mend and do, *Adam*





Christmas gift inspiration

Make your own bath treats and balm

With Christmas on the way, Rebecca and Quentin from award-winning company, Conscious Skincare share with us some easy ideas for beautifully hand-crafted gifts



1. Herbal bath bags

These gorgeous herb-filled little pouches make bath time extra special. The healing power of the herbs do wonders to help soothe aches and pains.

All you need is:

- ✓ Five 5" x 7" sized muslin bags or cheesecloth squares
- ✓ A big mixing bowl and a spoon for mixing
- ✓ Cooking twine or cotton string (if using cheesecloth)
- ✓ A selection of your favourite dried herbs and flowers



How to make

- Place dried herbs or flowers into a mixing bowl and blend them together.
- Fill each muslin bag with the dried mixture or make a small pouch with the cheese cloth and twine.
- Tie shut and decorate with ribbon and dried herb sprigs to finish. The bag can be tied to the water spout for the hot water to run through, or simply placed in the tub to float like a tea bag in an infusion.

2. Herb bath salts

This recipe will fill a pint-sized kilner jar.

- ✓ 250g epsom salts (or 325g if you only use epsom)
- ✓ 125g cup Himalayan or dead sea salt



- ✓ 125g cup baking soda
- ✓ 70g dried herbs
- ✓ 10-20 drops of essential oil(s), optional

These are quick and easy to make and look stunning in a kilner jar. You can mix different salts or simply use epsom.

- In a bowl, add your salts and baking soda. Mix them well.
- Once the salt and baking soda are combined add your dry herbs and mix again. You can add 10 -20 drops of essential oils too if preferred.
- When all the ingredients have been combined, transfer your home-made herbal bath salts to your kilner jar.

3. Eucalyptus Salve

If you have a eucalyptus tree then they're perfect for this recipe. If not, you could replace the eucalyptus leaves with bay leaves. Bay leaves have a similar aroma and properties to eucalyptus.

Ingredients:

- ✓ 100g mature eucalyptus leaves or bay leaves
- ✓ 10g ginger
- ✓ 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- ✓ 200g coconut oil, solid
- ✓ 20 drops peppermint oil

- Chop the eucalyptus and ginger, put in a glass bowl and add the pepper, coconut oil and mix together with your fingers (warning: it's messy!)



- Place the glass bowl, covered, over a pan with boiling water. Leave for 1 hour, making sure the water doesn't boil dry.
- Take off the heat and strain the mixture. Stir in the peppermint oil and jar into a wide mouth clean, lidded glass jar.
- Leave to cool completely and then screw on the lid.
- It's then ready for decoration
- Store in a cool dry dark place with the lid on and this salve should keep for up to 1 year.

Herbal benefits

Eucalyptus

Helps clear the sinuses and is also known to relieve joint pain and sore muscles.

Lavender

A very versatile herb that is used for many different healing remedies. It has antimicrobial and antiseptic properties. It can also help with relaxation, reduce stress, and calm headaches.

Rosemary

This culinary herb is also a superb herb for skin. It acts as an astringent, cleanser and, like lavender has antimicrobial and antiseptic properties. It can also help ease muscle pain.

Sage

Perfect for its cleansing and antiseptic properties.

Efamol[®]

NEW ZEALAND
Meet one of our
Rigel Evening
Primrose Farmers

Proven, Pure & Perfected

3 FOR 2

We've grown our unique Evening Primrose seeds at the same farms in New Zealand and the Netherlands for the last 40 years. Their unique climates and nutrient rich soil create the perfect growing conditions for our pure GLA rich golden oil.

Trusted by 1000's of women every month.



Find out how you can trace our Pure Evening Primrose Oil back to the farm it grew on

Only Efamol uses our unique Rigel seed containing **33% more GLA[†]**



3 for 2 at Boots

In store | [boots.com](https://www.boots.com) | App

Boots
With you. For life.

Cheapest Free. Subject to availability. Available at larger Boots stores. The oil used is carefully extracted from specially cultivated Rigel Evening Primrose, the seeds of which contain up to 33% more GLA than other Evening Primrose Oils (For more information visit [efamol.com](https://www.efamol.com)). Food supplements should not be used as a substitute for a balanced diet or healthy lifestyle.

Turtle dove *Streptopelia turtur*,
adult perched in hawthorn

Photos right: Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)



Bohemian waxwing
Bombycilla garrulus,
adult perched in ornamental



Best trees to plant for wildlife

The RSPB suggests what to grow for an allotment, hedge, garden and paddock

Trees are a fantastic ally if you're trying to encourage wildlife to your outdoor space. As well as providing safe nesting sites, song perches and spots to shelter in, many trees produce blossom for pollinators, as well as berries, fruits, seeds or nuts. There are also the wider benefits to the environment. Trees store carbon, protect the soil, and help to cool gardens in hot weather which is particularly useful if you live in a town or city which can experience even higher temperatures. And they can even be grown in pots, or in small gardens – but not all allotments allow tree growing, so be sure to check before stocking up.

Now is a great time of year to get planting. In December you can buy trees that are bare-rooted, meaning they have been lifted out of the ground during its non-growing season. They are simply lifted out, shaken off, and popped in a bag. This makes them much easier to handle, transport and plant, and they're also much cheaper.

Apart from occasionally watering during the first year they will largely take care of themselves, so the main work is done in the planting. Make sure to stake your tree so it doesn't fall over. About a third of the way up the tree will do it – this will mean the upper half of the tree still has a chance to sway and get some strength in its trunk. There are plenty of tree varieties that will grow in pots or small spaces, but be prepared to water them more regularly in the growing season.

Best trees for a wildlife-friendly mini-forest

Here are some of the easiest, wildlife-friendly trees to grow in your own outdoor space.

- **Fruit trees** – most allotments allow fruit trees, and they can be brilliant for wildlife. Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*), for example, produce beautiful pink or white blossoms in spring and colourful fruits in autumn. Robins, Starlings, Greenfinches and thrushes love the fruit, along with many dozens of insect species. *Malus sylvestris* is native to the UK but other hybrid species will do great as well. The joy of fruit trees is that you can of course reap the rewards as well – though in the case of the crab apple we'd recommend consuming in crab apple jelly as they are very tart straight from the tree.

- **Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)**. Good for bees, and it also provides food for the caterpillars of the Holly Blue butterfly. Its berries are eaten by a wide variety of birds including Blackbirds, Mistle Thrushes and Fieldfares. It is dioecious though, meaning it has separate male and female plants, so you'll need both a male and a female plant if you want berries. Grow in full sun or partial shade; they are hardy and tolerant of most soils.

The plants have been shown to provide food for more than 200 different insect herbivores, which in turn will attract lots of other insects. They're very tolerant of most soils but grow mainly on neutral and calcareous soils.



Bohemian waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, adult feeding on rowan

Photo: Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

- **Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)**. Also known as mountain ash, these can grow up to 20m tall! But there are also many varieties that are better for smaller gardens if needed, a popular choice being *Sorbus* 'Joseph Rock'. 160 species of insect have been recorded feeding on members of the Rowan family in the UK. It's very attractive to aphids and sawflies, which are important food for chicks of garden birds. A good choice if your garden faces north on neutral or acidic soils.

- **Birch (*Betula spp.*)**. These trees can be great for a tricky spot in your garden or allotment as they prefer dry, sandy or poor, well-drained soil. They have lovely catkin flowers which form in spring, gorgeous white bark, and over 500 species of invertebrates have been found feeding on it. They're even useful when dead or decaying – great for fungi.



Common blackbird adult male feeding on holly

- **Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)**. From white flowers to red berries, this common hedgerow shrub is a great resource for wildlife. Its sharp thorns also form a protective shelter for many birds. When buying, just make sure it comes from a nursery-grown British stock – otherwise it may be imported from eastern Europe where they are often taken from the wild.



Spider on silver birch tree trunk, Walthamstow, London, June

Photo: Eleanor Bentall (rspb-images.com)

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, adult perched on hawthorn tree ready to feast on berries.



Photo: Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

Photo: Ben Andrew (rspb-images.com)

This article is courtesy of sister publication, The Country Smallholder magazine and the RSPB. For more information see thecountrysmallholder.com and www.rspb.org.uk.

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE UP TO £46*

BECAUSE LIFE IS BETTER BY THE SEA!

WIN! LUXURY HOTEL STAYS, CLOTHING, DOGGIE GOODIES AND STAYCATION BREAKS

coast

MAY 2023

BECAUSE LIFE IS BETTER BY THE SEA

DISCOVER THE JURASSIC COAST

Where to stay...and how to go fossil-hunting

20 HIDDEN GEMS
ON NORFOLK & SUFFOLK'S
BEAUTIFUL COASTLINE

WEEKEND IN
CARDIGAN

Explore the
creative corner
of Wales

SINGING STAR LULU

'Why the west
coast
is

MOVE TO WATCHET
Best ways to buy a home
in Somerset's hidden resort

WALK THE COAST
4 fab ideas for a shoreline stroll

SUBSCRIBE
TODAY

Discover secret beaches and hidden coves, the best restaurants with a sea view, fresh ideas for fantastic staycations and learn more about the fascinating culture and history that surrounds us. From stunning seascapes to foodie trails and wildlife encounters – Coast provides an immersive travel experience.

GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE

- + Save up to £46*
- + Delivery directly to your door in 100% plastic-free packaging
- + Never miss an issue
- + Complete control – manage your account online
- + Free weekly e-newsletters
- + Receive the Coast calendar for FREE every year**

VISIT [SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/COAHA](https://shop.kelsey.co.uk/coaha)

OR CALL 01959 543747 and quote code COAHA

Scan our QR code – the easiest & quickest way!

SCAN HERE



HOTLINE OPEN: MONDAY-FRIDAY, 8.30AM-5.30PM. CALLS ARE CHARGED AT YOUR STANDARD NETWORK RATE

Terms & Conditions: UK Direct Debit offer only. You will pay £52.80 every 12 months. *Savings based on the standard basic annual rate of £99 which includes the cover price of £5.50 plus Kelsey Media's standard postage and packing price per single issue for one full year (12 issues). Offer ends 31st December 2023. Your subscription will start with the next available issue, and you will receive 12 issues in a year. Prices correct at time of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/terms. Data protection: We take great care in handling your personal details and these will only ever be used as set out in our privacy policy which can be viewed at shop.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy. You may unsubscribe at any time. If you decide to cancel your subscription we will put a stop to any further payments being taken and will send the remaining issues that you have already paid for. **The Coast calendar will usually arrive in the January issue.



Ask JOHN NEGUS

John is here to answer your gardening questions

Should I lift my dahlias?

Q I never know whether I should lift my dahlias or leave them in the ground. My soil usually drains well but we do get heavy frosts here. What is the best advice?

A If you can be sure that puddles don't linger long after heavy rain, which indicates that drainage is good and your dahlia roots won't be waterlogged, leave your plants in situ. Do though protect tubers from penetrating frost by mulching stem bases with straw or composted manure.

If, however, water is seen lying on the surface for a day or more after a drenching rain, lift your plants and store them in a cool but frost-free place, such as a garden shed or garage.

Ideally, before lifting them, shorten stems to around 9in/23cm and label them. If you can't guarantee frost-free storage conditions, nestle plants into pots or boxes of potting compost that comfortably accommodate the root system... and pack newspaper, wood wool or chipped bark between your charges to protect them from low temperatures.



Lift and store dahlia tubers if your soil is likely to get waterlogged

Cutting back a curry plant

Q My *Helichrysum italicum* curry plant has grown very large. It's fabulous, but should I cut it back?

A A wonderfully aromatic sub-shrub from southern Europe, it is not fully hardy. By all means prune it to rejuvenate it, but not now when we are liable to have sub-zero temperatures and hard frost.

The best time to tackle pruning – shortening shoots to within 2-3in/5-7cm of older wood – is from late spring to early summer when frosts have finished. If strong shoots have formed and you wish to enjoy more of this plant, you could use prunings as cuttings.

Simply shorten them to 4in/10cm, removing any leaves which might be buried. Encourage rapid rooting by

inserting shoots to half their length in proprietary cutting compost or an equal parts mix, by volume, of Perlite or grit and peat-free seed compost



Curry plants should be pruned in late spring

Using old compost

Q Can I reuse growbag compost on the garden?

A You certainly can. Packed with organic goodness which decomposes into material that worms and the soil's micro-fauna can 'eat' and convert into life-giving humus, it can be used to mulch border perennials and shrubs.

Alternatively, improve your lawn with it. After using a garden fork or proprietary aerator to make holes in the turf, shovel it over the lawn and work it in with wire or plastic-tined lawn rake.

We also recommend it for potting up overgrown perennials that have been divided and which need a temporary home before planting them where you wish them to flower.



Reuse uncontaminated compost on the garden

Planting a rose

Q I have been given a rose in a pot. Is now a good time to plant it?

A Though it could be transplanted at any time of year, now, when the soil is still warm and your rose is dormant, is the best time.

Choose a free-draining site in full sun. Initially, gently tease the root ball from its pot. If roots are coiled up at

the base, carefully disentangle them and shorten them by half their length. Then sprinkle them with Root Grow, a mycorrhizal fungus that encourages robust growth.

As for planting, take out a generous hole and cover the union, where the variety is budded on to the stock, with 1-2in/2.5-5cm of soil. Finish by firming soil around the roots



Late autumn and early winter works well for rose planting

Quick questions & answers

Q Can I move a self-seeded foxglove?



A By all means. Assuming it has grown from seed this year and formed a rosette of leaves, which will produce a flower next spring, use a spade to lift it carefully, keeping the root ball intact. If the soil is dry, water the root area copiously before transplanting.

Thereafter, water regularly in dry spells next spring to encourage strong new roots.

Q Can I sow sweet peas now?

A Yes, fill 5in/13cm pots or seed trays with John Innes seed compost and firm it gently. Do not soak seeds before sowing... or chip them.



Using a small dibber make 3/4in/1.5cm deep holes 2in/5cm apart and insert a seed in each. Top-up holes with sharp sand and water in seeds with a fine rose.

Place containers in a sunny, sheltered spot outdoors and cover them with glass or clear plastic for a few days until seedlings appear. Then shorten shoots to just above the second pair of leaves to encourage stronger growth from the base.

Q What are the little flies in my houseplant compost?

A Fungus gnats, greyish-brown flies around 3-4mm long. Their larvae are whitish maggots up to 5mm long which feed on decaying organic matter.



Most species are harmless but the bradysia brigade may feed on fine roots and tunnel into soft stems.

Control winged adults by enclosing plants with sticky yellow tape which traps them. If they persist, tackle the egg and larval stages with *Steinernema feltiae*, minute eelworms available from biological control suppliers.



Ask JOHN NEGUS

John is here to answer your gardening questions

What can I plant under a tree?

Q Please can you recommend some plants to grow under a deciduous weeping pear? I'd love a mix of flowers and foliage, something to brighten the shade all year.

A I'm happy to oblige. Also listed as the willow-leaved pear (*Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula') has great charm. We agree with you. Colourful shade-tolerant plants beneath its thick veil of branches would make it even more appealing.

Choice kinds are:

Ajuga: Also called bugle, the variety 'Catlin's Giant' treats you to large bronzy purple leaves – wonderful in winter – and tall spikes of bright blue flowers that dramatise spring.

Brunnera 'Jack Frost': Prized for its marbled silver-green foliage and April-June display of rich blue forget-me-not blooms, it evokes a double take.

Geranium macrorrhizum: Semi-evergreen aromatic leaves complement a May to July 'wash' of magenta blossom.

Liriope muscari 'Big Blue': Dense tufts of narrow, arching leaves embellish lilac-blue bells from August to October.

Hakonechloa macra: Commonly called Japanese Forest grass, its fresh green foliage, from spring to autumn, is a joy to witness.

Santolina virens: A cotton lavender enjoyed for its thread-like bright green foliage and yellow flowers in summer, it's a reliable drought resister.



Geranium macrorrhizum is good for underplanting

How do we look after moth orchids?

Q I am buying my aunt a moth orchid for Christmas. What care tips should I give her?

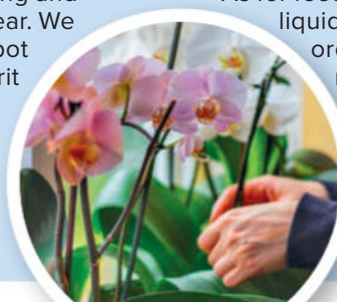
A Botanically *phalaenopsis*, a native of S. E. Asia and N. Australia, is happiest in a warm, light spot, free from chilly draughts, shaded from direct sunlight. In nature, it grows on trees, where its long aerial roots cling to the bark.

Happily, it's undemanding and blooms throughout the year. We suggest that you set the pot on a drip tray filled with grit or gravel which is kept damp but not soggy.

As for watering, do it with lime-free. If you live in a chalky area, use cold boiled water from which

calcium is removed. Mist leaves and stems regularly with warm water to simulate its native tropical habitat.

As for feeding, use a proprietary liquid fertiliser formulated for orchids. Use a high-nitrogen feed from spring to summer and change it for a high-potash formulation from late summer to early winter. Cease feeding in winter.



Moth orchids are attractive and pretty easy to care for

What does 'bare root' mean?

Q What does the term 'bare root' mean?

A Unlike most plants stocked by garden centres, which are containerised and can be transplanted throughout the year, bare-root leaf-shedding trees and shrubs, are lifted (dug up) when leaves have fallen and are fully dormant.

There's one proviso: when you buy a bare-root tree or shrub, plant it only if the soil is suitable, i.e. crumbly and not waterlogged. If the site is

heavy and clay-laden and inclined to waterlog, consign your charge to a shed or garage and tuck sacking around its roots so that they are not damaged by low temperatures. Then, when you feel that the ground is suitable for planting, work in several spadefuls of grit or gravel and the same of composted manure.

If you are planting a tall tree, support it with a robust stake angled at 45°, facing into the prevailing wind. Secure it to the tree with a padded tie that doesn't move and abrade the bark.



Bare root trees and shrubs are planted in autumn and winter and soon grow

When should I split my cyclamen?

Q How and when do I divide large clumps of cyclamen?

A The best time is when it has died down in midsummer and is dormant. After lifting it carefully, trying not to damage the roots, look for separate growing points. Then, using a strong, sharp knife, cut the tuber in a downwards direction until you have removed a chunk of it, complete with a cluster of buds. Ideally, sterilize the knife before removing another budded section.

When you have several divisions, use a candle to 'flame' the cut surface before sealing it with wax. It may seem drastic, but it reduces risk of infection. The next step is to transfer divisions to



Divide clumps of cyclamen in the summer

5in/13cm pots of gritty compost. A good mix consists of equal parts potting compost, augmented with a half part, by volume, of grit or sharp sand.

Water in your charges after planting and watch for new growth. When detected, move your plants to a sunny or lightly shade bed or border enriched with plenty of grit and composted manure. Water in divisions so that roots are in close contact with the soil.

Ladybird concerns

Q Ladybirds are hibernating in my bedroom - should I leave them alone?

A Yes. They have chosen the warmth of your room to 'sleep' through the winter. They are not harmful and are one of few insects in whose presence we feel happy. They will wake up in spring when lighter, warmer days are upon us and, if you leave a window open, fly away.

Incidentally, there are 53 species of this fast-declining insect, whose crocodile-shaped larvae and brightly coloured beetle adults feast upon aphids and many other pests. Encourage them by growing a wealth of single-flowered annuals and perennials which will attract the food they need.



Ladybirds often hibernate en masse

Olives in winter

Q Will a smallish potted olive survive winter outdoors or should I move it into the greenhouse?

A Don't risk leaving it outdoors. If we have a period of hard frosts and the root ball freezes, roots may die. Admittedly, you could wrap the pot in several layers of bubble plastic and create a tent of the same material to keep the foliage from being frosted, but if you have room in your greenhouse, which should be gently heated, we urge you to do so.

Then, in spring, when frosts have finished, move your plant to a warm, sunny free-draining border where it should establish well.



Ideally move your olive to a frost-free spot



Share your stories

A unique gift for you, your loved ones
and generations to come.

We capture your memories through face-to-face interviews and present
them in beautifully printed and traditionally hand-bound books.
It's surprisingly easy and enjoyable.

Let us create your private autobiography.

Call 0330 822 1551

www.lifebookmemoirs.com



Life
Book
memoirs



Your LETTERS TO KIM



As we wait for your lovely new letters to arrive, I wanted to share with you just a few of the many, many heartfelt comments we have received on social media to the news of *Amateur Gardening* magazine's return.

Till we get the social media accounts for the magazine fired up again (a long story...) you can also reach out to me on instagram [kim_stoddart](#) and via X (formerly twitter) [@badlybehavedone](#).

On X (formerly twitter)

"I have just read the first issue and was delighted with the changes. I see a greener and more sustainable future ahead for AG. Fantastic."

[@Dougthegardener](#)

"Yippee I was SO delighted and thrilled to see my magazine had arrived today. So reliant on AG as it's been part of my routine for years. Well done Kim."

[@AngelaSpanswick](#)

"Will the seeds be on magazines on sale in Ireland?"

[@gardenngather](#)

Kim says " Yes Margaret, I'm absolutely delighted to say that they will. The team at Kelsey has arranged it."

On Instagram

"Hooray!! An absolute triumph."

[Veronica, Sun newspaper gardening expert and editor *Biros_and_bloom*](#)

"Just managed to get one of the last few copies in Sudbury! Read cover to cover. Great to see the magazine continue with such a strong team and so glad Kelsey and you came to the rescue!"

[Barbara Segall @barbarasegall](#)

"Great to see *Amateur Gardening* return to the magazine shelves this week. This now fortnightly publication is always a good read, packed full of information, guidance and useful tips. Welcome back guys, we've missed you. Good Luck!"

[@bedforthseedswap](#)

"Great news.... love the glossy cover too!"

[@stephens.shed](#)



Please send us your letters, poems and musings

Your contribution is such an important part of this magazine for the future. AG is for you the people, for gardeners and proud custodians of gardens everywhere, so please do write in. We will send a gift for each letter, poem and musing published.

Address: Kim Stoddart | *Amateur Gardening* magazine | Kelsey Publishing Ltd. | The Granary | Downs Court | Yalding Hill | Yalding | Maidstone | Kent | ME18 6AL
Email: Editor@amateurgardening.com



Composting the thesaurus

It disappeared more quickly than we thought it would, after the incident with the blackcurrant cordial condemned it to the pile.

One morning in March, when digging the heap and spreading its chocolaty contents on the raised beds, bits of it started turning up.

In the humus, the word 'desire' surfaced on a scrap of paper, clearly legible in spite of rain. From this, a seed was sprouting and taking hold.

On Easter Sunday, stuck to the side of a peapod, the word, 'belief' was glued, prisable only with finger and thumb. 'Doubt' rolled from the soil, on the torn edge of page 152 as we earthed-up the potatoes.

Holding the shred, we shook our heads, searching for an explanation. Our courgette flowers opened in May and 'transubstantiation' fell from one.

We looked up the word on-line and taking its meaning as a sign, ate the flowers fried in butter, stuffed with breadcrumbs and ham. No more words appeared but in the August glut, we made chutney, poured the boiling mixture into jars, then labelled each pot; desire, belief, doubt, transubstantiation.

With thanks to Juliet Fossey, a poet and keen gardener. She is currently finishing an MA in Poetry at Newcastle University.



Your GARDENING TEA BREAK

Gardening's king of trivia and brain-teasers, **Graham Clarke**

WHY WINTER FLOWERS?

Here's a seasonal question often asked:

Q. Most plants bloom in spring and summer, when there are pollinating insects around, and conditions are warm for germination. So why do some plants flower in winter, when these benefits are not present?

A. Some plants are pollinated by wind. They take advantage of breezy winter weather, and the absence of leaves on trees and shrubs that would hinder pollen progress to other flowers. Winter flowers that *do* rely on insects for pollination have fewer plants to compete with, so their strike rate is higher. Also, winter flowers ripen their seeds in spring, meaning they can seize any good growing spots before the later-flowering plants.



Winter crocus

This fortnight in gardening history

■ **28 Nov 1666** Every builder of a patio or garden wall needs to use a spirit level, and the first such device was invented on this day by Robert Hooke, London's City Surveyor following the Great Fire.

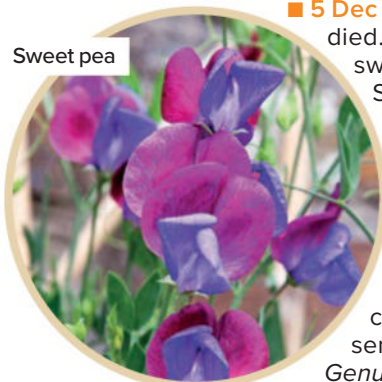
■ **2 Dec 1920** Anthony Huxley was born. Son of evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley, and nephew of writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley, Anthony was a plant-lover, botanist and author. He was also the editor of this magazine – from 1967-71. He died in 1992.

■ **5 Dec 1886** Constance Spry was born in Derby. She became the person credited with making flower arranging popular in the early 20th century – she also invented the dish we call coronation chicken!

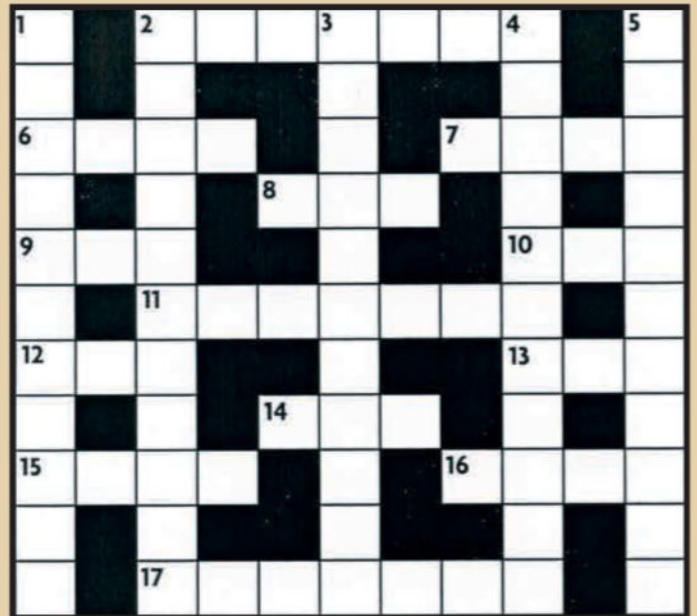
■ **5 Dec 1905** Scotsman Henry Eckford died. He is credited with making sweet peas popular. The Shropshire town of Wem (his adopted home) holds a competition each year for classes of sweet peas bred by him.

■ **10 Dec 1832** George Maw was born. A plant collector of note, he specialised in crocuses and produced his seminal book *A Monograph of the Genus Crocus*, in 1886.

Sweet pea



Crossword ...just for fun!



ACROSS

- 2** Lucky Scottish moorland plant (7)
6 Constance ____ (born in December 1886, and died in 1960) was, amongst many achievements, a famous British florist (4)
7 The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (1,1,1,1)
8 *Taxus baccata*! (3)
9 Beer found in kale! (3)
10 Conjunction used in negative phrases to introduce the second member in a series, as in the ____ folk Island pine! (3)
11 Genus of flowering perennials, with common names including wandflower and angel's fishing rod (7)
12 Cut off the top of anything, especially to prune a small limb off a shrub or tree (3)
13 Greek island lettuce, it could be said! (3)
14 *Asplenium bulbiferum* is also known as the ____ and chickens fern (3)
15 One does this when one pinches out and doing it in the bud (they say)! (4)
16 The seed-bearing structure of conifers, composed of hard bracts (4)
17 Common name for several achilleas! (7)

DOWN

- 1** Ban coca salt in this Spanish resort! (5,6) (anag)
2 The short-lived perennial *Glaucium flavum* is also known as this! (6,5)
7 Any of various small passerine birds of the family Certhidae, which live in woodlands throughout the Northern hemisphere (11)
4 Plants that produce resin are said to be this (11)
5 Like a tree in structure, growth or appearance (11)

ANSWERS TO ABOVE CROSSWORD
 ACROSS 2 Heather 6 Spry 7 RSPB 8 Yew 9 Ale 10 Nor 11 Dierama 12 Lop 13 Cos 14 Hen 15 Nips 16 Cone 17 Yarrow
 DOWN 1 Costa Blanca 2 Horned poppy 3 Tree creeper 4 Resiniferous 5 Arborecent



**MADE TO PERFORM
BUILT TO LAST**

Diemme Capriolo

Lightweight • Low Profile • Waterproof



sympatex®



Low profile and highly flexible with durability you can rely. Hand-crafted with a soft but strong Italian suede, and lined with breathable and fully waterproof Sympatex® H2Oout lining. A fully replaceable Vibram® Friction outsole brings high levels of grip for any summer trail. A delicate balance of comfort, strength and practicality. Reconnect with the ground you walk. Choose Capriolo.

Visit Website



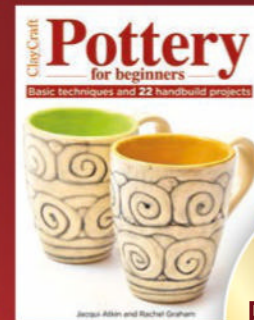
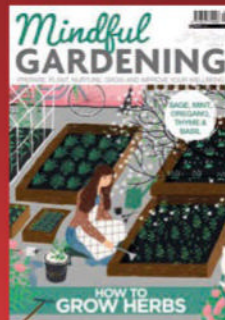
email: sales@brandecosse.com | web: www.brandecosse.com | tel: 01644 430151



THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS GIFT

This Christmas, give the gift of knowledge, entertainment and creativity with our range of branded merchandise, special editions, guides and more.

SPECIAL EDITIONS



GIFTS FROM JUST **£4.99**

BINDERS AND MERCHANDISE



THREE EASY WAYS TO ORDER

1. VISIT **SHOP.KELSEY.CO.UK/FHOBBIES-XMAS23**
2. SCAN THE **QR CODE**
3. CALL **01959 543 747**

Scan me



Lines are open Mon-Fri 8.30am to 5.30pm. Calls are charged at your standard network rate. Prices correct at time of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions visit shop.kelsey.co.uk/terms. To see how we use your data view our privacy policy here shop.kelsey.co.uk/privacy-policy.



PLANT WATCH

With **Michael Perry**

Your plant recommendations from expert plantsman, Michael.

A poinsettia is not just for Christmas..

Despite not being a festive season obsessive, I am quite partial to a poinsettia and as 86% of sales are of more traditional red varieties, I feel it's my plant geek duty to introduce you to the 'others'.

I was lucky to get behind the scenes with poinsettia selector and grower, Beekenkamp, in The Netherlands last year, where I picked up many tips and tricks! Breeding continues with the traditional red, as modern poinsettia varieties can now be grown without growth regulators, and with more efficient (i.e shorter and cooler) production schedules. As I walked the greenhouse, my friend Sirekit kept putting the plants below the benches in order to review their colours. I asked her why, and found that they like to assess poinsettias colours in lower light, thereby emulating the low light levels of a Christmas lounge!

First some tips on buying a poinsettia

As you head to the shops or garden centre, take a warm bag and/or blanket and never buy from the foyer of a shop as poinsettia are warm-loving. These sensitive plants can also take umbrage with a cold car boot or back seat so do afford them protection on the drive or walk to your home. You have been warned.

Once home, place your plants in bright indirect light. What does this mean? A light position, but away from the window. Water on the side of sparingly, only once the soil has dried out. If you fancy dipping your fingers in, only water when the top two inches of soil have become dry. Avoid sharp changes of temperature and draughts too. A hot, dry room might need a little humidity, which can be provided with the placement of a saucer of pebbles beneath your plants.



Michael enjoying a poinsettia moment



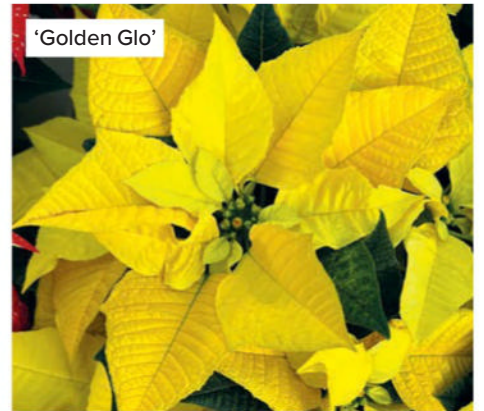
'Kayla Red'



'Christmas Mouse'



'Roccostar Red'



'Golden Glo'

Varieties to look out for:

'Kayla Red'- this oak bract variety (remember the red parts are merely modified, coloured leaves, not petals as such) is super unusual, with a long shelf and home life. Sumptuous deep red blooms, and a dark green sheen to the foliage. Quite new, but you may find it in some smaller garden centres.

'Christmas Mouse'- another red, but this time with a rounded bract. Breeding company Selecta offer the plant in a variety of sizes. The smaller ones would be brilliant for kids' bedrooms, sat alongside the advent calendar!

'Roccostar Red'- a poinsettia that looks like a rose, and wouldn't be out of place in a bouquet (in fact, some places are even trialling them as cut flowers these days too).

'Golden Glo'- available from a few independent growers online, it's well worth hunting down this unique beauty.

'Princettia'- a real game changer from Suntory in Japan, the Princettia has a more slender bract, and a tougher composition.



'Princettia'

So much so that it can be grown OUTDOORS from September to early November, before temperatures crop to 4C. Why not ignore the red entirely and skip straight to this unique pink and white palette? Maybe pair it with some heathers and you are truly good to grow this December.

"Never buy from the foyer of a shop as poinsettia are warm-loving plants."



RESILIENT GARDENS

With **Julia Boulton**, Beth Chatto's granddaughter and chief custodian of the world famous gardens



Photo: Eleanor Church

Plant health, happiness and hellebores

Julia introduces the fortnightly garden tasks and projects underway

As winter looms upon us, we've escaped the extremes of weather that some of you have encountered, although we have received quite enough rain thank you very much!

Even though I'm not very hands on in the garden, I do love to spend time observing the plants and what they are doing, marvelling at our amazing horticultural team working hard in all weathers. As they say, 'with the right clothing there's no such thing as bad weather'. Hmmm, perhaps my clothing is not up to scratch!

Anyway, I've redoubled my efforts on a project that we are starting in Colchester - only a couple of miles away from the garden. To celebrate what would have been Beth's 100th birthday, we agreed with the council to create a 'Meanwhile Garden' on an unused brownfield site-

named as such because the garden will be temporary whilst the local authorities decide what is to be built here - it has now been empty for 10 years.

Recently, a group of local volunteers and five of us from the gardens went to help get started. Here I am in my gardening gloves (with gardener Scott in the background) clearing the site of buddleja that had taken over. Whilst it is beautiful, this variety was self-seeding everywhere and would have quickly outcompeted any new planting so it had to go.

The garden is a challenge but also an opportunity to put our resilient gardening knowledge and skills to use elsewhere. We have no budget as such, so we are going to be using our energy and imagination to reuse local materials and create an area for the community that is also rich in biodiversity.

We'll let you know how it develops.

Julia

Early winter jobs in the garden

As we are now in December, the garden team have begun the task of cutting back the deciduous foliage of herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses. We start this mammoth task in the water garden as this is where the majority of our early spring bulbs emerge. Snowdrops, leucojum and early narcissus offer the first precious signs of spring, so to avoid damaging them with our big boots, we move in early to remove any debris to make way for their brilliant show early next year. Elsewhere in the garden, we try to leave as much material standing as possible to carry on providing shelter for overwintering insects and other wildlife.



Another important winter job that we have started tackling is the removal of old leaves from *Helleborus x hybridus* before new growth begins to emerge. We cut back as low to the ground as

possible, making sure to avoid any new growth. By tracing the old leaf stalk back to the crown, it is easy to see which is which. This is done to prevent hellebore leaf spot disease and to allow the magnificent blooms to be shown off to their full potential.

I feel that it's safe to mention the C word now that we are in December! To kick off the festive season, we have been making Christmas wreaths to take home and adorn our front doors. It's a welcome break from the day-to-day gardening jobs and an opportunity for everyone to explore the garden and collect plant material for their wreaths. As always, we then come together in the warmth of the pack house, to listen to Christmas songs, eat chocolates and work on our masterpieces!





Meet the team

Growing manager, Marc (overseeing the production of plants)

■ With the nights getting longer and the days getting colder, our thoughts turn naturally to warm afternoons tucked up indoors perusing seed catalogues and making plans for the coming spring. Yet here in the production department at Beth's, our focus remains on completing the winter clean and the continued propagation of plants.

Firstly we have the cleaning, weeding and redressing of the plants which are available for sale. This affords us the opportunity to do a plant health check, and to move any of the more tender plants under some form of protection for the winter, such as *Pelargonium* 'Queen of the Lemons' to guard against the frost, or *Sempervivum* 'Dr Fritz Kohlein' as a precaution against excessive rain fall.

Secondly on the dry, bright days it is a chance to get out onto the stock beds, the home of many of our mother plants and source plant material, cut back many of the herbaceous perennial plants, tidying up the dead foliage then weeding and re-mulching the area to help protect the plants over the winter.

At this time of year, we will also lift and divide some of our mother plants from the ground whilst dormant, such as *Uvularia perfoliata* shorter paler form, *Actaea simplex* 'Prichards Giant' or *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Evening World'.



Jobs to do now

GARDENS:

- Cut back spent herbaceous material to make way for spring bulbs.
- Remove the leaves of *Helleborus x hybridus* to prevent hellebore leaf spot disease.
- Bring natural materials in from the garden to make festive arrangements.
- Continue to clear leaf fall from paths and ponds.
- Make a note of plants to be moved and empty gaps to fill in spring.

PROPAGATION:

- Weed and redress plants in pots.
- Cut back stock plants, weed and mulch.
- When the ground is frozen, carry out splits using potted plants.
- Lift and divide mother plants from the stockbeds whilst dormant, such as *uvularia*, *paeonia* and *actaea*.
- Continue to clean and store collected seeds.

Meet the team

■ Cathy first joined the garden team as a trainee through the WRAG scheme (Work and Retrain as a Gardener).

She is now responsible for the ongoing maintenance and development of the garden.



Bergenia 'Wintermärchen'

■ Elephant's ears, bergenia, are one of the most indispensable and widely used evergreen plants here in Beth's garden. So often they are consigned to shady areas where they fail to reach their full potential. Exposure to sunlight encourages the leaves to colour well in winter, making them an essential feature in the colder months. Unusually for a large-leaved plant, bergenias thrive in the poor, free draining soil of our gravel garden, where groups are massed on the curves of the island beds- their bold leaves, contrasting with and offsetting, the fussiness of neighbouring small-leaved plants typical of drought tolerant plantings.

As the weather warms in spring, their winter hues gradually fade revealing green, glossy leaves offering the perfect backdrop when the flowers appear in April.

Bergenia 'Wintermärchen'-a smaller leaved variety good for

smaller gardens, was a favourite of Beth's, producing striking upright, polished leaves, flushed deep-red throughout winter. In spring, red stems carry narrow heads of deep-rose flowers; an early bounty for visiting pollinating insects.

Height and spread: 25cm x 25cm
Conditions: Sun or part shade
Flowering: April/May





Your MASTERCLASS

with Anne Swithinbank

Choose a daphne for winter flowers and scent

Anne explains why Daphnes have so much to offer

In the deep midwinter, I almost used to invent work in our front garden just to have the excuse to inhale the sweet scent that wafted from the pink flowers of a *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata' that once grew there. These small evergreen shrubs are often short-lived and I was happy to enjoy ours for ten years. A replacement is long overdue and this time it will be planted in a sheltered nook by my office door.

Daphne may seem an odd name for a plant but there is a story. In Greek mythology, Apollo was shot by Cupid's golden arrow and fell in love with the beautiful though disinterested mountain nymph Daphne. To hide her from Apollo, her father turned her into a laurel tree and Daphne became the Greek word for laurel, as well as a genus of small to medium shrubs. The 50 species originate from mountainous or woodland habitats and their dainty leaves, whether deciduous or evergreen are laurel-like in shape.

Originally from China and Japan, *Daphne odora* rarely exceeds 3ft (1m) in height. Taller and more upright, Himalayan *D. bholua* and its cultivars can be deciduous or evergreen and eventually reach 6-12ft (1.8-3.6m) high. They can be harder to please initially but once settled, plants are generally longer-lived and if anything, their clusters of white and pink flowers are even more deliciously fragrant. I have not yet inhaled the scent from Daphne



When the soil is cold and damp I like to wear gloves but usually take them off for planting, to feel what I'm doing. The soil is moist and rain due, so I am not watering in.

'Perfume Princess' or its white-flowered sport but as this 5ft (1.5m) high New Zealand-bred hybrid is a cross between the two, expectations are high.

These winter-fragrance daphnes are essentially woodland plants and success depends on careful siting. Good drainage (especially in winter) is paramount and although they are hardy, a sheltered site will help them settle. They enjoy a humus-rich soil and thrive in sun (avoid a harsh, scorching hot site) or partial shade.

Tip:

Most Daphnes prefer open soil to container growing. For pots or raised beds, try compact, white-flowered *D.* 'Eternal Fragrance' or *D.* 'Pink Fragrance'. Flushes of dainty flowers open from spring to autumn but their scent does not waft strongly.

Try these

Also early flowering, the modest spurge laurel (*Daphne laureola*) is a useful evergreen for adding 3ft (1m) high structure to winter borders of hellebores, winter aconites and

snowdrops. Yellow-green flowers are but lightly scented. For the rock garden, evergreen *Daphne cneorum* blooms in late spring on low, 6in (15cm) high, spreading plants.

Step by step

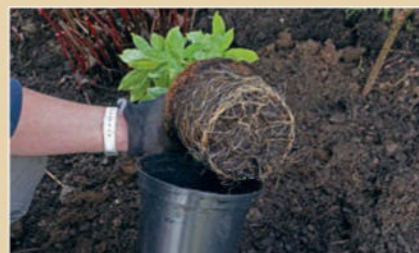
How to plant *Daphne odora*



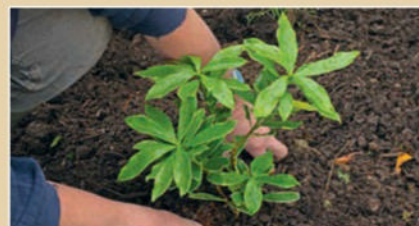
1 Daphnes enjoy their own space, so clear the area and move herbaceous perennials such as this *Persicaria* 'Red Dragon' that might overshadow the new plant.



2 A well-drained and humus-rich soil will give our daphne a good start. This bed is slightly raised and I'm adding well-rotted garden compost to improve texture.



3 Carefully remove the plant from its pot and check the roots. Daphnes don't like root disturbance and this rootball will not need any teasing out.



4 Plant the Daphne, taking care to make sure the surface of the compost remains at soil level so the plant is neither raised or buried too deeply. Firm in moderately.

The style of your life cottontraders.com

Cotton
TRADERS



RUSTY RED

INK

WILLOW

Concealed front zip

Stylish faux suede trims

HALF PRICE
now £28

BONDED FLEECE JACKET £56 £28 SAVE £28

A double-layered fleece with a soft sherpa inner and zip pockets

Sizes S to 5XL at an irresistible price

Length approx 30" (76cm) Machine Washable 100% Polyester Micro Fleece

Rusty Red Ink Willow

AD12055

Plus only £3.99 standard delivery

• FINAL OPPORTUNITY •

Fast and reliable UK delivery service with easy returns

order today at **cottontraders.com**

0844 844 1111

Enter product code, add to your basket and then add your promotional code to apply your savings online. 14 day money back guarantee if not completely satisfied.



Post to: Cotton Traders, Neptune House, Pacific Court, Pacific Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 5BJ

ORDER CODE	SIZE	1ST COLOUR CHOICE	2ND COLOUR CHOICE	QTY	TOTAL

Name UK STANDARD DELIVERY **£3.99**

Address TOTAL

Postcode

Telephone

Card Number

Expiry Date Security Code*

Cheque payable to: Cotton Traders Limited

PLEASE USE THIS PROMOTIONAL CODE TO CLAIM YOUR OFFER
P338

Payment taken at point of order. We aim to deliver within 3 working days from dispatch, stock subject to availability. We comply with Consumer Contract Regulations; you have the right to cancel your order no later than 14 days after the day on which you receive your goods. Inform us of your wish to cancel in writing, by letter or email. Returns are not free, full details are on your delivery note. Return goods within 28 days of cancellation. Calls to 0844 numbers will cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge. £3.99 UK standard delivery. International delivery, see website for prices. Offer applies to purchases in GBP only. Exception is Ireland orders which will be charged in EUR at the set conversion rate. Prices quoted are correct at time of production but can vary. One promotion per order. **Marketing and Promotions:** We want to make sure you don't miss out on our great products and offers, so we will keep you informed by post. If you do not want to hear from us, please let us know. I do not want to be contacted by: Post . We take your privacy seriously. For details of our privacy policy and full terms and conditions visit cottontraders.com.*Last 3 digits on back of card. This is mandatory to process your order. Offer ends 31.01.2024

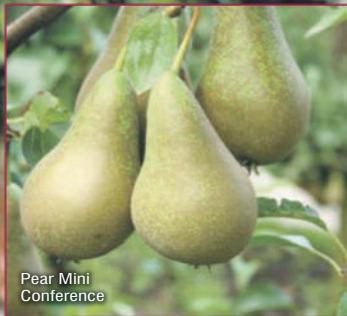
CREATE A MINI ORCHARD ON YOUR PATIO – SAVE 60%

Patio Fruit Tree Collection

**SAVE
£30.98**



Cherry Sylvia



Pear Mini Conference

Apple 'Golden Delicious'



"Healthy looking plants, can't wait to eat the fruit when it grows".

MAXICROP Plant Treatment

For ONLY £1 we will treat your whole order with MAXICROP to give your plants:

- Strong, healthy root system - More energy for growth
- Greener, healthier leaves - Great nutrient availability
- Reduced stress during transit • Better establishment and improved root growth

**ONLY
£1**

Patio Fruit Trees

1 x 9cm potted plant £16.99

ONLY £9.99

3 x 9cm potted plants £50.97 **£19.99**

- Fresh fruit at your fingertips
- Grow towards healthier eating

Patio Fruit Tree Collection

Full of flavour and nutrition but small enough to grow on your balcony or patio.

This collection of Dwarf Fruit Trees includes delicious eating apples, pears and cherries that you can pick fresh from the tree as nature intended. These trees produce large fruits on a dwarf stem making them easy to look after and absolutely perfect for smaller gardens! Height: 100cm (39"). Spread: 45cm (18"). Supplied 30-40cm tall in 9cm pots

Collection comprises:

Apple 'Golden Delicious' - This easy to grow variety produces good yields of attractive golden-green apples that store well over a long period after harvesting. Rootstock: M9

Pear 'Conference' - The best known of all pears, 'Conference' is excellent eaten as a dessert pear but also exceptional when cooked. The long bell shaped fruits with firm flesh can be eaten hard or fully ripe with a smooth juicy flavour. Rootstock: Quince A

Cherry 'Sylvia' - This dwarf cherry tree is perfect for the patio where it makes a great focal point in spring as pale pink cherry blossom cloaks the branches. Rootstock: Gisella 6

Items despatched from December onwards.

Hurry offer ends December 12th.

SPECIAL BONUS OFFER

ADD Plum and Apple Gala for £10 more
5 x 9cm pots ~~£84.95~~ **ONLY £29.99**



Plum Black Amber

Apple Gala

www.thompson-morgan.com/TM_TS4817

When ordering online please use order code TM_TS4817 to access our special offers.

Tel: 0844 573 7414

Phone lines open 7 days a week, 9am – 6pm.
Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge.



Thompson & Morgan
Experts in the garden since 1855

Please send to:
Thompson & Morgan,
Dept TM_TS4817, Poplar Lane,
Ipswich, Suffolk, IP8 3BU.



YOUR SATISFACTION GUARANTEED or your money back

We want you to be 100% satisfied with any product you buy from us. If you're not 100% happy then neither are we, so let us know and we'll replace your product or give you your money back.†

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to 'Thompson & Morgan' for £ _____

ORDER CODE
TM_TS4817

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Email

By providing us with your email address, you'll be able to:
✓ Access your order information online ✓ Receive delivery date updates
✓ Receive despatch notifications ✓ View order tracking 24/7

Code	Item Description	Price	Qty	Total
42025	Pear Mini Conference 1 x 9cm potted plant £16.99	£9.99		
10395	Apple Golden Delicious 1 x 9cm potted plant £16.99	£9.99		
10442	Cherry Sylvia 1 x 9cm potted plant £16.99	£9.99		
42023	Apple Gala 1 x 9cm potted plant £16.99	£9.99		
10632	Plum Black Amber 1 x 9cm potted plant £16.99	£9.99		
KB7556	Patio Fruit Tree Collection 3 x 9cm potted plants £50.97 SAVE 60%	£19.99		
KB6209	Patio Fruit Tree Collection 5 x 9cm potted plants £84.95	£29.99		
KA2524	Maxicrop Plant Treatment	£1.00		

Please debit my: Visa Mastercard Maestro

P&P £6.99

Grand Total

CSV Please turn your card over and write the last 3 numbers from the signature strip.

Cardholder's name _____ Expiry Date ____/____/____

Offer subject to availability. We reserve the right to substitute varieties if necessary. Please note that savings are based on the equivalent of multiples of the cheapest pack size. © 2023 Thompson & Morgan. For full T & C's, please visit www.thompson-morgan.com. Regrettably we are unable to ship live plants to the following postcode areas: HS, IV41-IV56, KW15-KW17, PA34, PA41-48, PA60-PA78, PA80, PH40-PH44, TR21-TR24, ZE1-ZE3. We are also unable to ship seeds or plants to EU countries and Northern Ireland. By placing an order with us, you become a T&M customer, so we would like to continue sending our catalogue to you, giving you first sight of our new varieties. Please tick the box if you do not want to receive them. As a T&M customer we would like to send you new variety previews, newsletters & exclusive special offers & discounts via email. Please tick the box if you do not want to receive them. We would like to send you gardening-related offers by SMS. Tick here if you do not want to receive them. If you do not want us to share your data with other carefully selected companies in the collectables, food & wine, gardening, gadgets & entertainment, health & beauty, household goods, travel, financial services, charities and home interiors categories who will contact you by post, please tick this box. By sharing your email address and mobile with us, you can track the progress of your order online and receive progress updates on your orders. Please note that we may print your telephone number on the despatch label which will ensure the carrier can contact you if they need to. We will not pass on email or phone numbers to any other 3rd parties. Thompson & Morgan take your privacy very seriously. You can change your communications preferences with us at any time by calling our customer service team on 0333 400 0033 or emailing us at cs@thompson-morgan.com. To find out exactly how we store and use the data you give us please visit www.thompson-morgan.com/privacy.