



# ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

## NEWSLETTER OCTOBER – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2026

Just a reminder that the **Trading Hut** will remain open throughout October on both Saturdays and Sundays from 9.30am to 12.30pm to allow you to collect or return your order form for the **Kings Discounted Seed Scheme**. **We will not be open on a Wednesday evening.** We will also open on weekends in November (TBA) for the collection of the seeds ordered through Kings and the last chance to buy garden sundries as we will not re-open again until the January, 2027.

Lastly let me offer our best wishes for a **Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year in 2027** to all our members and supporters

from all the Committee.

**Harry Theobald**. Editor.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Summer Horticultural Show

The results from the show are as follows: **John Burden Cup** most points overall - Steve Day, **The Mayor's Challenge Cup** most points vegetables & fruit - Adrian King, **Bowen-Davis Cup** most points cookery and preserves - Tina West. **Bert Shergold Cup** most points flowers - Michael Bacon, **Galpin Challenge Cup** most points photography - Lindsey Bellringer, **Small Challenge Cup** most points in fun classes - Adrian King, **Jenny Humphries Memorial Cup** mixed coloured sweet peas class 44 - No Entries **A&GAS Wine Trophy** - Melanie Booth, **Darren Blick Cup** winner long carrots class 3 - Adrian King, **Derek Jay Dahlia Cup** winner class 34 - Harry Theobald, **Mole Valley Country Stores Cup** best in show - Eddie Watts, **RHS Banksian Medal** most points in Horticultural Sections Steve Day. **Novice Cup** Drew Still, **Top Tray** vegetables - Adrian King, **Top Vase** flowers - Zoe Capstick.

### A&GAS Best Allotment Competition 2026

**Coldharbour** 1<sup>st</sup> Francis Bray plot 7, 2<sup>nd</sup> Teresa Bugden plot 6

**Cow Lane**, 1<sup>st</sup> Carol Gunner plot 7, 2<sup>nd</sup> John Allnutt plots 26/27, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marion Cox Plot 35A. 4<sup>th</sup> Helen Carruthers 43A, 5<sup>th</sup> Neil Fox plot 5

**Fisherton Farm A** 1<sup>st</sup> Clive Williams plot 38A

**Fisherton Farm B** 1<sup>st</sup> Sue Lee plot 15B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Neil Harrison plot 42B, Joint 1<sup>st</sup> Sue Lee plot 15B

**Warres Acre** 1<sup>st</sup> Richard Shaw plot 4B

**Tunnel** 1<sup>st</sup> Mary Reardon plot 38, 2<sup>nd</sup> Diane Youngman plot 30A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Steve Day plot 28

**The Butts** 1<sup>st</sup> Tina West plot 41. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim Gibbs plot 12A 3<sup>rd</sup> Mike Bacon plot 13B

**Fisherton Farm C & D** No Entries

**London Road** No Entries

**Stratford Road** No Entries

**Westwood** No Entries

**Wiltshire Road** No Entries

**2026 Overall Winner** Tina West, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sue Lee, 3<sup>rd</sup> Mary Reardon,

**Best newcomer** Sue Lee Fisherton B plot 15B

**Best entries award** Cow Lane (5 entries)

### A&GAS Best Scarecrow Competition 2026

**ADULTS RESULTS** 1<sup>st</sup> Arturo Briska with 'Sack Boy' 2<sup>nd</sup> Sarah Ward 'Polly Esther' 3<sup>rd</sup> Carmen Godwin 'Suzie Evergreen Explores (group award) : 4<sup>th</sup> Paul Fricker 'Daisy'. 5<sup>th</sup> Fiona Barnet 'Lumber Jill, 6<sup>th</sup> Carol Day no name.

**CHILDRENS RESULTS** **Black Crow Meadow** 1<sup>st</sup> Noah with 'Tin Man', 2<sup>nd</sup> Isaac Rooney & children 'Jim', 3<sup>rd</sup> Tracey Bailey (grandchildren's wheelbarrow), 4<sup>th</sup> Grace 'Taylor Shovel'.

### A&GAS Annual General Meeting

The 20<sup>th</sup> AGM will be held on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 7.30pm at Dennis Marsh House, Westminster Road, Salisbury SP2 7DG.

The Committee look forward to seeing you there. We are always on the lookout for new Committee members or members to do the odd shift in the Trading HQ at weekends. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Harry Theobald on 01722 415880 or 07717337612

### Trading Hut

At present we are well stocked up with bags of manure (£3.50p a bag), Violet Farm reduced peat multi-purpose compost at (£6.80p a bag), also white onions, shallots, garlic and broad beans Aquadulce and Suttons to plant now and grow through the winter to get earlier crops.

The varieties of potatoes we hope to have when we re-open in January are: **First Early:** Casablanca, Foremost, Sharps Express, Red Duke of York, Rocket, Caledonian Pearl, International Kidney (Jersey Royal). **Second Early:** Charlotte, Kestrel, Marfona, Nadine, Wilja, Jazzy. **Main Crop:** Cara, Desiree, King Edwards, Maris Piper, Picasso, Valor, Sentanta, Rooster, Pink Fir Apple. All the potatoes come in 2kg nets. Prices to be announced in the January newsletter. The following potato varieties will not be available due to crop failures Arran Pilot, Carolus, Epicure, Home Guard, Sherine, Ulster Sceptre, British Queen, Golden Wonder, Winston.

Varieties of onions, shallots and garlic to be planted in the spring are **onions** Centurion, Red Baron, Sturon, and Stuttgart Giant, **shallots** Golden Gourmet and Red Sun, **garlic** Vigour (white) and Germidour (pink).

### What's on

The following talks by the Hants branch of the NVS over the next three months are: 14th October: Talk on Making the most of what you have by Barry Newman, lecturer at West Dean College and Chelsea Physic Garden. November 11th a talk on Designing and Creating the Sparsholt College Show Garden by Chris Bird. 9th December AGM followed by evening of entertainment. All talks are held at Sherfield English Village Hall, Salisbury Road, SO61 6FL starting at 7.30pm and are free to members and non-members.

### Books

Wild City by Jon Davies and Steve Williams Published by Watkins Publishing, 288p, RRP £19.99.

The horticultural instinct to tidy and dominate is challenged on almost every page. Many of the case studies focus on parks and community projects, but the message is aimed squarely at gardeners too: intervene lightly, leave habitat, reuse materials and value what nature is already trying to do. As much as rewilding the land the authors encourage rewilding of ourselves. Provocative, hopeful and gloriously anti-establishment, *Wild City* sets out to overhaul how we garden.

The Ethical Gardener by Thomas Rutter Published by Pavilion Books, 192p. RRP £16.00

Gardening in the modern world is full of dilemmas. To dig or not to Dig? Should I leave these pests be? Are those weeds wildflowers? Thomas Rutter seeks to answer but never preach. Instead, this part how-to guide, part manifesto on slow intentional gardening explores ways we can be more environmentally conscious with Rutter in the forefront of putting it into words.

Three new illustrated RHS Pocket Guides - Garden Birds, Wildflowers and trees are treasure troves of information to help you identify and enjoy nature. Buy from [www.rhs.org.uk/books](http://www.rhs.org.uk/books)

Eat Your Garden by Harry Holding. Published by Chelsea Green Publishing, 352p, RRP £26.95

In this new book Harry Holding provides a fascinating trip through the world of edimentals - edible, ornamental plants that are a low input way to grow your own food. He covers their key benefits (beginner-friendly, perennial, climate-resilient and supporting biodiversity), as well as their use in the kitchen. Some people divided gardening into edible and ornamental, but this book breaks down that distinction, showing that everyone can, and may already be, an edible gardener.

Modern Japanese Gardens by Shinobu Sawada and Tadafumi Aozawa Published by ACC Art Books. 240p, RRP £35

For anyone who thinks Japanese garden design is just a single style, albeit a distinctive one, prepare to be corrected by this beautiful coffee table tome. The minimalist gravel garden on the cover belies the rich variety within, from mossy woodlands to tiny yet stylish urban plots. In fact, quite a few of the gardens here grace hotels, so by the end of this book, you'll not only have take-home ideas, but probably also be planning a holiday to Japan.

### SNIPPETS

Bee bathing is the ultimate sound experience. Participants lie in a borage field and listen as thousands of bee's weave around them. Research shows their low frequency vibrations can improve heart rate, lower stress hormones, and support emotional regulation. Bathers wear full protective suits among the bees and within minutes the buzz begins to lower heart rate, reduce cortisol and calm the nervous system. People are sometimes so relaxed they don't want to leave - some even drift off to sleep. The sessions are run by Helen Bolter-Griffin and Gareth Flux, both beekeepers, in Bridport Dorset. For more info visit [www.naturebuzz.org.uk](http://www.naturebuzz.org.uk).

The winners of the inaugural Hinchman Topiary Awards have been announced. David Hawson from Aberdeenshire won the Home-gardener category for his yew hedge of animals; Harrie Carnochan, who maintains the clipped balls and columns at Pitshill House, West Sussex, won the professional category.

If you get stung at the allotment, reach for some lettuce leaves instead of dock leaves. The results published in *Emergency Medicine Journal*, indicated that lettuce leaves are just as effective as dock leaves at relieving nettle stings.

The orchards of Somerset that provide many of the apples that make Britain's cider have been decimated by the summer drought producers have said. Some trees dropped their fruit early due to their being stressed by the lack of water and the heat, resulting in rotting – and others have produced no fruit at all.

Researchers at the University of Surrey are developing a method of extracting phosphorous from urine by passing it through a membrane. Phosphorus is one of the major nutrients required for plants to grow, but in 50-100 years rock phosphorus will run out. Human urine has the capacity to provide 11% of the world's needs.

#### **Which: Best buys and top recommendations**

**Hot Chillies on test:** 'Armageddon' F1, 'Demon Red', 'Dorset Naga', 'Habahot' F1, 'Joe's Long Cayenne', 'Lemonella', 'Numex Twilight', 'slowburn', 'Apache' F1, 'Habanero Orange', 'Lemondrop'.

**Dahlias for pots on test:** 'Dahlegria Bicolore' orange, yellow, 'Excentrique' pink, 'Pride One', red, 'Priceless Pink' pink, white, 'Star Wars', orange, yellow, 'Topmix Salmon' peach.

**Wheelbarrows on test:** Q Garden QGPGC Poly Garden Dump Cart, Haemmerlin Trade Chillington Chasseur Galvanised, Crytec Commercial Grade Wheelbarrow, Haemmerlin Trade Green Wheelbarrow, B&Q Sovereign Orange Metal & Polypropylene, Costway 2 Tire Wheelbarrow, WWC Barrow In A Box, Webb Poly Body Wheelbarrow.

**Sedums on test:** 'Autumn Joy' syn, 'Herbsfreude', green, 'Joyce Henderson' green, 'Xenox' purple, 'Jose Aubergine'; purple, 'Mr Goodbud'; green.

**Hardy Fuchsias on test:** F. magellanica 'Arauco' white, red, Bernisser Hardy' red, pink, 'David'; red, purple. 'Sparkling Silver' red, purple, 'Mrs Popple', red, purple.

**New Compost for Seeds on test:** Fothergill's Enriched Seed Compost, Jiffy Botanical Grow Pellets, Humax Professional Original Peat Free Compost.

**New compost for young plants on test:** Humax Professional Original Peat Free Compost, Field No.23 Professional Peat Free Potting Blend, Jamieson Brothers Professional Peat Free with John Innes.

**Japanese Maples on test:** A. shirasawanum 'Aureum', A. palmatum 'Chitose-yama', A. palmatum 'Orangeola', A. palmatum, 'Garnet', A. palmatum 'Summer Gold', A. palmatum 'Osakazuki', A. palmatum 'Coonara Pygmy', A. palmatum 'Emerald Lace', A. palmatum 'Katsura', A. palmatum 'Skeeter's Broom'.

**Rhubarb on test:** 'Valentine', 'Reed's Early Superb', 'Cawood Delight', 'Thompson's Terrifically Tasty'.

**Garden Ladders on test:** Henschman Fully adjustable Tripod Ladder 2.4m. Niwaki EN Pro Adjustable Tripod Ladder 2.7m. Hendon GMF 240 8ft Aluminium Tripod Ladder

**Ground Cover Hardy Geraniums on test:** 'Bloom Me Away' blue, G. wallichianum 'Kelly Anne' pink, G. wallichianum 'Sylvia's Surprise' pink, G. x oxonianum f thurstonianum 'Southcombe Double' pink, 'Elworthy Eyecatcher' pink, 'Orkney Cherry' pink, 'Dilys' pink, G x oxonianum 'Rebecca Moss' pink.

**Lawnmowers on test:** Great value: Bosch Rotak 18V-32 Cordless Mower (£185). Bosch Rotak 18v2-38 cordless mower (£270)

**Pressure washers on test:** The corded Karcher K4 WCM Flex eco!Booster Car Plus (£219) was the best buy

#### **Plants**

The RHS first ever trial *Filipendula* (meadow sweet), held at Royal Botanical Garden, Edinburgh resulted in them receiving an RHS Recommended: Award of Garden Merit after enduring Scotland's driest spring on record. Out of 19 species and cultivars tested in the three-year trial. *Filipendula camtschatica*, F. 'Kahome' and F. *purpurea* stood out for being consistently excellent performers with good resistance to mildew, which can be caused by dry conditions. A fourth candidate, F. *palmata* 'Gotenborg' will receive an award when it is available to buy. For more information go to [www.rhs.org.uk/filipendulatrial](http://www.rhs.org.uk/filipendulatrial)

The Universities of Sheffield and Reading have teamed up with the RHS to see how climate change is affecting the plants in people's gardens. The project aims to find out which plants are thriving and which are struggling with the changing conditions. The results will help researchers make recommendations about how to protect plant diversity around the UK and to identify which plants might thrive here in the future. The survey closes on 15 October. For details visit: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk).

A team of evolutionary biologists and geneticists has found that the same gene is responsible for the production of prickles or thorns on a wide range of plants. It also found mutations in this gene can result in the loss of prickles. This knowledge could be used to develop prickly-free varieties such as aubergines where prickles damage the fruit. Plants currently too prickly to handle en masse, for example, desert raisins, may also become commercial crops.

A report from the Royal Botanical Gardens Kew has revealed that more than half its trees would be vulnerable by 2090. Spurred on by the drought of 2022, when the historic gardens lost 400 trees, *Planting for the Future: Kew's Landscape Succession Plan* used climate models to predict which species should be planted now to sustain the UK landscape in the future. Kew hopes that the report will act as a blueprint for green spaces around the country. It also calls on the

Horticultural Industry and urban planners to shift the focus away from native species that may be at risk from climate change such as oak, birch and holly, and look to resilient species such as Iberian alder, cherry hackberry and spoon oak.

The National Trust (NT) has recently opened its first in-house micropropagation lab. This will allow the charity to produce genetically identical clones from a single parent plant. Based at the Trust's Plant Conservation Centre in Devon, it will be vital in the conservation of rare and historically significant plants held by NT gardens.

Hemerocallis (Day Lillies) Five of the best: **'Morocco'** A low grower with huge 15cm bronze-tinged yellow blooms, **'Tet Set'** The deep pink petals and pale central stripe with picotee edges give this an exotic air. **'Muffet's Little Friend'** A quiet beauty, this spider daylily grows to 70cm with elegant yet eye-catching smaller flowers. **'Black Panther'** This unusual cascade form has a velvety sheen and huge bud-count. It reblooms in September. **'Wanda's Wand'** growing to 140cm with a subtle sweet scent, this can flower from May through to August. Mail order from New Hope Daylilies: [www.newhopedaylilies.co.uk](http://www.newhopedaylilies.co.uk) or Tel: 07850 423081

The RHS may move plants up north to survive the extreme heat. Gardeners plan to duplicate plants from RHS'S flagship garden in Wisley, Surrey to create an "insurance" collection of rare species in Northern England. Due to very high temperatures in Wisley, gardeners have taken cuttings from its prized hydrangea collections. They will establish new stocks at RHS Garden Bridgewater in Greater Manchester, where conditions are expected to stay cooler and wetter but staff are still reviewing whether there are shadier spots at Wisley.

### **Wildlife**

Britain's rare, great, crested newts lost an important part of their home during a recent wildfire in Cambridgeshire, a charity has said. Around 12 acres were damaged at the Hampton nature reserve, which is not open to the public because it is home to a large population of the protected species. Charity Froglife said there is concern that some may have been killed and those that managed to escape have lost the habitat they rely on.

Researchers from Imperial College London and the Natural History Museum are adding further weight to concerns over pollinator declines linked to climate change. They examined four UK bumblebee species using specimens collected during the past century and compared changes in wing symmetry. Bees have two pairs of symmetrical wings, and any variation between left and right sides can indicate development stress. The results revealed that bees collected during hotter, wetter years showed greater asymmetry and therefore higher levels of developmental stress.

A colony of one of the UK's rarest ants and its queen have been found living on the King's Balmoral estate in Aberdeenshire. The endangered narrow-headed ant is only known to survive in a handful of locations, including at nearby Mar Lodge Estate National Nature Reserve. The colony at Balmoral was found by a ranger who had worked on the Cairngorms Ant Project, which is taking place at the Mar Lodge Estate about 10 miles away and recognised the significance of the discovery.

Red billed choughs, which have not been seen in Kent for more than 200 years, may be set for a comeback, after a chick hatched at Dover Castle this spring. Unfortunately, the fledgling disappeared in high winds in June, but it offers hope that other choughs may successfully breed in the future.

Hummingbird Hawkmoths have been descending on gardens in their droves this summer. They have been spotted from the Channel Islands to Scotland as warm air sweeps in from Southern Europe. People have been confusing the distinctive creatures for a bird due to its large body, wingspan and bullet like speed before it hovers in front of flowers with its frenetic wing speed and long proboscis that uncurls and feeds on the flower. Figures from the iRecord wildlife recording app showed that so far this year there have been 9,268 sightings.

The corncrake, an endangered bird whose distinctive croaking call was once a sound in Britain's countryside, could soon be returning in numbers to England's biggest county, conservationists hope. Several corncrakes bred in captivity were released into the wild in North Yorkshire this summer. They are now starting to fly south to Africa for winter and a team that led the reintroduction of the species at Lower Derwent Valley Nature Reserve near York, will be listening for the cry of the male birds if they return safely next spring.

Blackbirds have the most beautiful songs, but barn owls' sounds are considered the least pleasant, a poll has found. Calls from birds that are varied, higher-pitched and not too loud are considered most pleasant - and those of blackbirds topped the charts, researchers found. The blackbird topped the pleasantness table, pipping the willow warbler with the blackcap completing the top three. The German research team explained that identifying what makes birdsong beautiful could improve our understanding of how soundscapes make the natural world relaxing for humans. They said their findings could help to improve parks, upgrade the design of stressful places such as hospital waiting rooms, and promote conservation through birds with lovely songs.

The UK could lose its first bird species to climate change, conservationists have warned, as mountain-breeding dotterel numbers tumbled almost 90 per cent. The small wading birds, identified through their rusty-orange chests, migrate from North Africa to mountainous regions in the UK each summer to breed but dotterels have suffered significant reductions in both their range and population sizes. In the latest survey numbers have fallen 89 per cent since monitoring began in 1988, while most of the remaining population is now restricted to the eastern and northern Highlands. The fact they need mountain tops to breed has made them particularly susceptible to habitat loss as climate change alters their environment.

A rare beetle has been spotted after a gap of 86 years. Last recorded in Cambridgeshire's Wicken Fen in 1938, the great silver water beetle was found in a trap at the County's Great Fen. The beetle can grow up to 4.8cm long and, like other freshwater invertebrates, is an important part of the wetland ecosystem.

The RHS has been named one of this year's Bee's Need champions by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. The award celebrates community groups, individuals and organisations in the UK who support and protect pollinators. The winning Plants for Pollinators Counts project, which started in 2023 and continues every summer between March and October, sees volunteers in all five RHS Gardens noting down the number and type of insects visiting specific flowers during ten-minute surveys. The RHS Science team has used this data to improve the RHS Plants for Pollinators lists. For more info visit [www.rhs.org.uk/plantsforpollinators](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plantsforpollinators)

Biodiversity at a rewilding site in Lincolnshire has increased by 108% since 2023. Some 152 species of bird, bats, bees, butterflies and plants have been identified at Boothby Wildland in Grantham, which was transformed from intensively cultivated farmland into grassland, wetland, woodland and scrub habitats. Among the species seen are grey partridge, skylarks and even beavers. It's estimated that the site will also absorb 138,000 tonnes of carbon by 2076.

Once considered extinct in England, a freshwater snail dubbed Europe's rarest is set to be bred across the country. The glutinous snail, known for its glass like shell, previously survived in a single lake in Wales and has been saved from extinction. It will now be bred in bio secure facilities at seven locations including Longleat and Chester Zoo, as part of a new wave of projects funded by the Government's Species Recovery Programme (SRP). The SRP has prevented the national extinction of at least 35 species, say Dera.

### **Environment**

A pioneering scheme to restore a river to a natural state and bring in beavers to create wetlands shows how landscapes can be more resilient to drought the National Trust said. Aerial shots of the Trust's Holnicote Estate in Somerset reveal how stretches of the river corridor and restored wetlands have remained green and lush despite the drought which has gripped the Southwest this summer. The NT said local farmers have benefitted from resilient wetland grazing habitats, with a range of forage, shade and water helping livestock cope with the weather. Wildlife including water voles, trout and grass snakes are thriving

Garden Organic is calling on the Government to ban the use of pesticides in urban areas. Most councils around the country have commitments to protecting the environment and boosting biodiversity. More than a hundred have already significantly reduced or phased out pesticides. However, many still use harmful chemicals for tackling weeds in urban areas, such as playgrounds, parks and streets. When these chemicals run off hard surfaces they can find their way into water courses damaging aquatic wildlife. The Pesticide Collaboration, of which Garden Organic is a founder member, brings together more than 90 health and environmental organisations, academics, trade unions and farming networks with a shared vision to reduce pesticide related damage in the UK. It points out that France, Denmark and Luxemburg have already banned pesticides in urban areas and hopes that its work will lead to the UK following suit. To find out more and to sign its petition, head to [www.pesticidecollaboration.org/go-pesticide-free](http://www.pesticidecollaboration.org/go-pesticide-free).

Bird diversity is taking a hit in areas with large scale use of solar panels, indicating the wider ecosystems could be suffering, a study in China has suggested. Data covering more than 2,000 Chinese counties from 2014 to 2023 showed a 2 per cent reduction in bird biodiversity in areas with solar expansion. Walter Beckwith, author of the research summary, said bird diversity is an early indicator for other environmental effects, as birds respond sensitively to changes in vegetation, breeding habitat and food availability

Salmon are making a comeback in rivers in Lancashire. The area includes the Rivers Ribble, Hodder, Calder, Darwin and Douglas. The Ribble catchment area has seen the first sign of fish in 10 years, while at another spot over 100 juvenile salmon were recorded in only a few minutes. The Ribble Rivers Trust has spent 25 years working to improve the water quality of the rivers.

A company is creating jobs and protecting the environment using an innovative approach to cultivating seaweed and shellfish in the North Sea. SeaGrown has launched its project to process seaweed from its 25-hectare underwater farm off Scarborough. Its SeaSwell scheme opens the potential for supporting food and agricultural industries in the area. It also

reduces carbon, cleans up the ocean and supports biodiversity, and has won the support of the Labour Mayor David Skaith. Four miles of the coast of Scarborough SeaGrown has its Kelpedo units, which enable both seaweed and shellfish to be grown, and which are also growing kelp. Skaith's carbon negative challenge fund of £6.8m supports local projects working to decarbonise the North Yorkshire region while boosting employment, stimulating growth and helping local business.

New RHS research has revealed for the first time the powerful emotional role colour plays in gardens, offering new insights into how outdoor spaces can influence moods. Between 2001 and 2003, 11,569 visitors to RHS Wisley in Surrey were asked to pick their favourite flower colour from 36 options. Participants then selected which of 20 emotions, from joy to disgust, they most associated with their choice. The findings, soon to be published in a scientific journal, showed purple to be the overall favourite, at 26.67 per cent. With red, yellow and purple the key to happy gardening. For more detail go to [www.rhs.org.uk/flowercolourresearch](http://www.rhs.org.uk/flowercolourresearch)

Melting Arctic glaciers are creating a climate "doom loop" by flushing out ancient methane from rocks beneath the ice, research has revealed. The more glaciers melt, the more of the greenhouse gas they are likely to release into the atmosphere scientists said. Meltwater rivers flowing from Svalbard glaciers inside the Arctic Circle are carrying ancient methane from rocks under the ice into the open air. Findings have revealed a natural "feedback" loop that scientists warn may worsen as the Arctic continues to get warmer. Methane was found in every river tested in the study from the IC3 Polar Research Hub in Norway. The amounts reported are small compared with human caused emissions from fossil fuels but they matter because they reveal a natural feedback loop that is not confined to Svalbard, and that may grow as the Arctic warms.

A panel of vets has told a parliamentary committee that over-the-counter flea and tick treatments used by UK pet owners should be removed from sale. It has also recommended stopping year-round preventative treatment for parasites. Most spot-on flea and tick treatments contain fipronil or imidacloprid. Both chemicals have been banned for use as horticultural and agricultural pesticides due to evidence they were killing butterflies, bees and other pollinators. When used to treat pets, the pesticides can wash off into waterways, either directly from the pets or from owners washing their hands and pet bedding.

A project to restore seagrass around the Cornish coast-the biggest such effort ever attempted in the UK-has begun. A total of 10 hectares of seagrass meadow in Falmouth Bay stretching between Swanpool and Pendennis Castle is the centre of the £1.8m project which also includes efforts to restore native oyster populations. The Government has a target to increase seagrass levels by 15 per cent by 2043 in comparison to 2024 levels. Seagrass meadows are among the most important habitats in the ocean, supporting biodiversity, improving water quality, storing carbon and protecting coastlines from erosion, while delivering cultural and wellbeing benefits for local communities.

### **Pests and Diseases**

Flies have been everywhere this summer: around the house, in the street, and apparently everywhere else too. The record May heatwave and repeated heatwaves since have created ideal breeding conditions - fly develops from an egg to an adult in about a week when it's hot compared to a fortnight when it's cooler. This means that each generation breeds again sooner and numbers explode. Meanwhile, the hot weather means food rots faster creating a stronger smell that attracts yet more flies. Anecdotal evidence from the experts suggests there has been an increase in house bluebottles, fruit, cluster and drain flies among others. Apart from the heat the other main reason why these flies are on the increase is a sharp decline this summer in the wasps that eat them. Spring is a key time in the year for the wasp calendar when the queen wasps emerge from hibernation to start their nests alone but they experienced a cool, damp, erratic spring in which many of them perished, followed by a heatwave that took another huge toll on them. Their decline is highly concerning because they are key pollinators of flowers and crops. When it comes to dealing with flies that are already here the top tips are to use fly screens as curtains on windows and doors. Fans are another good idea, as they cannot fly well in moving air. Flies are repelled by essential oils like eucalyptus, lavender or peppermint so people are advised to put them around windows.

Invasive Asian hornets are becoming established in the Southeast of England. While recorded numbers of the species, which first was noted to have nested in the country in 2016.

Gardeners are being asked to report sightings of oriental chestnut gall wasp and chestnut blight on sweet chestnut trees. The information will help scientists monitor the spread of these two devastating problems. You can report sightings via [www.treelalert.forestresearch.gov.uk](http://www.treelalert.forestresearch.gov.uk)

### **Gardens**

The Delos Garden has reopened at Sissinghurst - 90 years after it was first envisaged by renowned gardeners and former owners, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson. Reimagined by landscape designer Dan Pearson, it features dry and shade-tolerant Mediterranean plants that should be resilient to climate change. The garden marks the culmination of a 15-year

renewal project. It's already attracting a wide range of invertebrates, thanks to the greater variation in habitat that it has created.