



# ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

## NEWSLETTER - APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2024

The wet weather this winter and spring has been a disaster for several of the allotment sites near the river Avon with part, or all of, certain sites under water and plot holders unable to start planting and seeing vegetables they had planted in the autumn rotting in the ground. We are lucky on my site at London Road, but we still have problems with the ground being too heavy to dig and the cold wet ground not good for planting unless you have raised beds which you can protect and warm up with black plastic. Let's hope we will get some warm sun and winds to dry out the soil in the not too distant future. Good luck with your gardening and growing this year.

Harry Theobald editor.

### **18<sup>th</sup> Summer Horticultural Show**

The show will be held on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August. The schedule is now available in the Trading Hut and on the website.

### **Talks**

We will not be having any talks in 2024. We have put details of other talks being arranged by some local gardening clubs and the NVS on our website.

### **Outings**

We are hoping to go on three outings in 2024. The first trip is to Toby Bucklands Garden Festival on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May. The ticket prices are £30 per member and £30 for 1 quest and £35 each for non-members. The price includes coach travel, entrance to the festival and the driver's gratuity. The coach will leave from Harnham Cricket Ground at 8am and the Coach Station at 8.15am. Leaving Exeter at 4pm. We still have eight tickets left and they can be purchased from the Trading Hut on Saturdays or Sundays between 9.30am to 12.30pm or Wednesdays between 6pm to 8pm.

We have still to decide on where to go for the two outings later in the year.

### **Trading Hut**

Continuing to be a member of the Association makes a lot of sense especially when you compare the prices of our products with local stores in and around Salisbury. Our shop manager Keith is forever planning and looking at bargains to pass onto our members. Our membership figures are on the rise compared with this time last year and we need current members to help pass on to non-members on their plots the advantages and benefits of membership as with more revenue we can get better deals from our suppliers. Just to remind you all to bring your membership card which needs to be shown before you can purchase any of the products on display.

We are trialling opening on a Wednesday evening between 6pm and 8pm to give all members, especially the ones who work, the chance to visit the shop and purchase goods. This will start on Wednesday April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Allotment and Scarecrow Competition**

The Best Salisbury Allotment and Scarecrow Competitions are back for 2024. These popular competitions were run by Salisbury City Council until 2022 but following that break, they now return with the Allotments and Gardens Association (A&GAS) taking on the organisation of both competitions. The Association wants to make it a fun event while encouraging experienced gardeners, and those new to growing their own, to share their achievements. Both competitions are free to enter and open to anybody with an allotment on any Salisbury City Council (SCC) site. The scarecrow competition is open to children of all ages, adults and groups, but the scarecrow must be on a SCC allotment site to be eligible. Special arrangements have been made for School's entries. The judging of both competitions will take place from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, you can enter either or both competitions. The closing date for entries is 1pm on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Entry forms and the judging criteria are available on the A&GAS website at [www.salisburyallotments.co.uk](http://www.salisburyallotments.co.uk) with paper copies available during opening hours from the A&GAS Trading Hut. Winners will be notified in July and presentations will be made at the A&GAS Summer Horticultural Show on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024. If you require more information please ask in the Trading Hut or contact Lindsey by email at [bellringer77@btinternet.com](mailto:bellringer77@btinternet.com)

### **SNIPPETS**

A free event at RHS Garden Wisley on Saturday 27 April (10.30am-3.30pm) is a chance to meet local employers, training providers and scientists within environmental protection and horticulture. Hear from inspirational speakers about their entry into green careers and opportunities within these sectors. Tickets must be pre-booked at [www.rhs.org.uk/newshoots](http://www.rhs.org.uk/newshoots)

## RHS Flower Shows 2024

Urban Show Manchester 18/21 April. RHS Malvern Spring Festival 9 - 12 May, RHS Chelsea Flower Show 21 - 25 May, RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival 2 - 7 July, RHS Flower Show Tatton Park 17 - 21 July, Hyde Hall Garden Flower Show 31 July - 3 August.

The new RHS Grow With It project invites individuals, groups and schools to get growing, sharing and conducting scientific research from their gardens. Participants will receive drought-tolerant flower seeds and be asked to track their growing progress and submit data. For more info visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/growwithit](http://www.rhs.org.uk/growwithit)

The Science of Garden Biodiversity: The Living Garden by Dr Julian Doberski. Pimpernel Press Ltd, 2024, 128pp, RRP £9.99. Meticulously referenced with the latest research this book will appeal to all gardeners who want to please the local wildlife and better know the scientific basis of what they're doing.

A new report by the House of Lords Horticultural Sector Committee has called on the government to take steps to safeguard the future of the sector. The wide-ranging report said that more support must be given to both amateur and professional growers to help them transition to environmentally friendly practices such as using peat-free growing media. It also highlighted that both amateur and professionals can help provide the conditions for biodiversity to thrive, to capture carbon, and create green urban landscapes, but they must have the necessary support from the government. The report stressed that gardeners need help to overcome barriers transitioning to peat-free growing media. Peat alternatives behave and look different to peat, which can prove challenging for gardeners and growers, and may result in poor outcomes. It said the government must also provide more support for amateur gardeners to move away from reliance on pesticides, although some garden centres have already stopped selling synthetic pesticides. The government has committed to halting the decline in species abundance by 2030 and to protecting 30% of UK land and sea for nature by the same date. The report showed the value of gardens in meeting these targets is not widely recognised. At present, gardeners are ranked as low-value habitat types within the Natural England Biodiversity Metric tool. The report stated that amateur horticulturalists could play a significant role in delivering these targets in residential gardens. The RHS says that there is clear scientific evidence that domestic gardens and cultivated landscapes are of high value to UK biodiversity. The government has delayed the rollout of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme which will impact on gardeners who struggle to recycle plastic plant pots and other plastic waste. It says people must be better supported to tackle such waste.

Derek Hulme, a gardener from Stoke-on-Trent, has set a new world record for the heaviest runner bean, weighing 196g. Hulme who also holds the world record for the longest leek, thanked fellow giant vegetable grower Peter Glazebrook for sharing the runner bean seeds with him.

The Woodland Trust has established a 'genetic refuge' for Scotland's wildest crab apple trees at Glen Finglas Estate in the Trossachs. A seed stand of 59 trees was planted beside Loch Venachar following a five-year search to find the wildest crab apples. Twigs cut from pure wild crab apples around the country in Galloway, Argyll and Ross-shire were grafted to rootstocks to create a new orchard. Truly wild crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*) is one of the rarest trees in Scotland. Precise details are known for only around three hundred trees. Forestry consultant Rick Worrell said: 'Most apple trees people see in the countryside aren't truly native. They are often the result of cores from eating apples being discarded. Apples love to hybridise, so there is a wide spectrum of trees out there with varying proportions of wild and domestic genes.'

Sarah Raven's new book, *A Year Full of Pots: Container Flowers for All Seasons*. Will be published in March. Sarah writes about sowing seeds in the March issue of *Gardening Which*.

Researchers are calling for more diverse offerings of emojis to better represent biodiversity and encourage interest in lesser-known species. A study published in *iScience* found that while animals are well represented, with 92 related emojis, plants, fungi and microorganisms only have 17 combined.

## Products

Which Best Buys and recommended:

**Best buy Compost for sowing seeds on test:** 'For Peat's Sake! Eco Coir Compost', 'Fertile Fibre Original Seed', 'Coco & Coir All Purpose', 'Fertile Fibre Original Multipurpose', 'Humax Seed & Cutting Peat Free Compost', 'Coco & Coir Coco Coir'.

**Best buy and recommended Compost for young plants on test:** 'Miracle-Gro Peat Free Plant & Grow', 'Melcourt' SylvaGrow with added John Innes', 'Coco & Coir All Purpose', 'FertileFibre Original Multipurpose', 'Eazy Grow MP Peat Free Coco Compost Boxed'.

**Best buy and recommended Heated Propagator on test:** Garland 4 top Automatic Temperature Control Electric Propagator, Stewart Premium Thermostatic Control Electric Propagator, 38cm, EarlyGrow Heated Medium Propagator. Stewart Essentials Electric Propagator, 38cm

**Best buy and recommended Annual Climbers on test:** *Ipomoea purpurea* 'Venice Pink' pink and white, *Lophospermum (Asarina) scandens* 'Mystic Rose' pale pink, *Petunia* 'Tidal Wave Red Velour' dark red, *Thunbergia alata* 'SunEyes White Improved' white, *Thunbergia alata* 'SunEyes Rose Sensation' pink, *Ipomoea lobata* 'Exotic Love' *Thunbergia alata* 'Superstar Orange' orange. *Ipomoea batatas* SolarTower Black' black leaves. red and yellow. *Ipomoea* 'Party Dress' pink. *Rhodochiton atrosanguineus* (seeds) dark pink and purple.

**Best buy and recommended Snapdragons on test:** 'Chantilly Bronze' orange, 'Chantilly Pretty in Pink' pink, 'Liberty Lavender' dark pink, 'Madame Butterfly Dark Red' dark red, 'Canary Bird' yellow, 'Costa Silver' pale pink, 'Madame Butterfly Ivory' white, 'Potomac Ivory White' white.

**Best buy and recommended Potatoes for flavour.** Best for roasting 'Manitou', Best for baking 'Winston', Blight resistant 'Cara', Best for growing in pots 'Charlotte', 'Lady Cristal', Best salad potatoes 'Nicola', 'Ratte'. Best new potatoes 'Belle de Fontenay', Best Second Earlies 'Jazzy'.

**Best buy and recommended Salad Potatoes on test:** 'Charlotte', 'Nicola', 'Vivaldi', 'Rattee', 'Twiner'.

**Best buy Garden Machinery on test:** Hedge trimmers Stihl HLA 56 (£219), Grass trimmers RY18LT33A-O 18V ONE+ 33cm EasyEdge Line Trimmer (£150), Pressure washers Karcher K7 Compact (£385).

Garden shredders RY36SHX40-O (648)

**Best buy Flowering Cherries on test:** 'Shirotae' white, 'Tai-haku' white, 'The Bride' white. 'Daikoku' pink, 'Hanagasa' pink, 'Hokusa' pink.

**Best buy and recommended Controlled-Release Fertilisers on test:** Miracle-Gro Premium All Purpose Continuous Release Plant Food. Thompson & Morgan Incredibloom, Wilko Multi-purpose Controlled Release Fertiliser, Richard Jackson Double Action Premium Easy Feed.

**Best buy and recommended Reusable pots on test:** 'Elho Green Basics Growpot 11cm' Recycled plastic, 'Haxnicks Bamboo Pot 10cm (4")' Bamboo fibre, rice starch, natural resin, 'Plastic-free Gardening Six Cell XL Natural Rubber Seed Tray' Fair Trade Natural Rubber, Containerwise Huw Richards 20 Cell Tray UV-stabilised recyclable plastic, 'Ocean Plastic Pots Chelsea Pot & Saucer Set' 13cm' Recycled plastic rope and fishing nets, 'RhizoPot Breathable Plant Pot, 1L (8x8x15cm) Recycled materials.

**Best buy and recommended Biodegradable Pots on test:** 'Fertilpot Round 10cm Biodegradable Plant Pots' Wood fibre, 'Wool Pots' Wool, 'Coir Products Coir Pots 10cm' Coir fibre, natural rubber latex.

**Best buy and recommended Runner Beans on test:** 'Benchmaster'. 'Prizewinner', 'Stardust', 'White lady', 'Celebration', 'Moonlight'.

**Best buy and recommended Compost for Patio Pots on test:** 'Melcourt SylvaGrow Tub & Basket, Pete's Peat-Free Multipurpose Compost, Melcourt SilverGrow with added John Innes, Eazy Grow MP Peat Free Coco Compost Boxed, Morland Gold Multipurpose Compost Melcourt SylvaGrow Multi-purpose, Thompson & Morgan Incredipeatfree, YouGarden Peat Free Mult Purpose Compost, FertileFibre Original Multipurpose.

**Best buy and recommended Cherry Tomatoes on test:** 'Arielle' F1, 'Rubinka', 'Sweet Million' F1, 'Bitesize', 'Repunzel' F1, 'Rubylicious' F1

**Best buy and recommended French Lavender on test:** 'Lusi Pink' pink, 'Regal Splendor' dark purple, purple, 'Lusi Purple' light purple, 'Lilac Wings' purple, pink.

**Best Veg Plug Plant Collections by post on test:** Growers Organics.com (Health Well Packed Plugs), Pippa Greenwood (Comprehensive Advice).

**Best buy grow lights:** Since publishing the results of the grow lights trial in November, legislation has changed and the fluorescent tubes used in two of the Best Buys will no longer be on sale once current stock runs out. The models affected are the Lightwave T5 and Lumil EnviroGro T5 grow lights. The best buys will perform just as well with LED lights, but you will need new fittings, as fluorescent tubes have a different voltage to LEDs.

Evergreen Garden Care UK, manufacturer of Miracle-Gro and Levington composts, has called on the government to create standards regulations for compost. These would ensure that the sustainability rating of compost would appear on every bag sold, and that the compost in the bag is fit for use. Colin Stephens, managing director at Evergreen Garden Care UK, wrote an open letter to Defra, calling for action 'to protect gardeners and prevent greenwashing, to ensure shoppers can be confident in the quality of their compost. Inferior compost is masquerading as the best (and most eco-friendly) on the market.' Stephens said that the answer is to make all compost manufacturers conform to the standards laid down by the Responsible Sourcing Scheme (RSS). The scheme includes a scientific assessment of the sustainability of the compost, but also carries out tests like *Which? Gardening* trials, to ensure that plants grow in that compost. He added: 'The RSS must be a trusted stamp of both assured environment standards and product quality'. The RSS is supported by most leading compost manufacturers, and they broadly agree with Evergreen's call. For details on the scheme and to see how composts score, go to [www.responsible sourcing.org.uk](http://www.responsible sourcing.org.uk)

Coco & Coir is in the process of changing its packaging and the names of its products. Depending on where you buy, you may find different designs from the ones we included in our compost trials. The manufacturers assure us that the formulation hasn't changed, so the compost should be the same, whichever packaging you buy.

Nursery trade organisation, the British Protected Ornamentals Association, recently commissioned an extensive peat-free compost trial in response to grower concerns that the quality of peat-free composts is poor. The results were presented at its conference in January. On trial were 47 peat-free composts alongside nine containing some peat. All the compost were available from retail outlets and, where possible, up to four batches were bought to see if there was variability between the batches. In the worst case, two batches showed variable results. Where the peat-free composts had no feed, the testers added a professional based fertiliser mix. Tomatoes and petunia seeds were sown, and the seedlings then grown for six weeks, recording germination, size and health. After four weeks in the petunias trial, none of the reduced peat composts were poor, but 18% of the peat-free composts were classed as poor or very poor. However, 46% of the peat-free composts were excellent, 12% were very good and 24% were good.

### **Plant Pests and Diseases**

UK charity Buglife has launched a campaign called PotWatch, which is encouraging people to report any flatworms they find in plants they buy. The charity is particularly concerned with the potential invasion of non-native flatworms and needs help from the public to find out just how far they have spread. Find how to identify and report any flatworms you spot by visiting [www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns/potwatch](http://www.buglife.org.uk/campaigns/potwatch)

The government has approved the emergency use of a neonicotinoid pesticide for agricultural use for a fourth year. Farmers will be able to use thiamethoxam on sugar-beet seeds to tackle a crop virus spread by aphids. The EU banned all outdoor use of neonicotinoids in 2018 to protect pollinators. The systemic pesticide is carried throughout the plant and is found in the pollen and nectar. This has been shown to have a devastating effect on bees but also harms other pollinators, birds, soil-based invertebrates and aquatic life from run-off into waterways.

### **Environment**

Kate Flood, aka The Compost Coach, teaches people around the world about the power of compost via social media. She can be followed on Instagram @compostable.kate or you can purchase her book *The Compost Coach* from Murdoch Books, RRP £16.99.

The legislation needed to ban peat from sale wasn't included in the King's speech in November 2023. There is speculation the ban will no longer be introduced, but a spokesperson at the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) told Which it still intends to get the legislation through Parliament - even if this is via a private members bill. Defra also urged retailers not to wait for legislation, but to move forward to switching to peat free. Compost manufacturers have told Which they are still committed to switching to peat-free and many have invested heavily in new machinery to make this happen. With Westland investing over £70m so far.

The University of Portsmouth is asking gardeners to take part in a study of compostable plastics in home compost bins. It will also conduct trials on a range of compostable packaging to see how it breaks down in various home-composting systems. The aim is to give guidance to consumers, develop an optimal home-composting system and inform future policy. To take part, go to [forms.gle/V9eWahJWMigaLr6d6](https://forms.gle/V9eWahJWMigaLr6d6)

After five years of removing weeds by hand from pavements and footpaths, Brighton & Hove City Council has voted to return to using glyphosate. The council had struggled to recruit people to remove weeds manually while lower footfall during the pandemic allowed the weeds to establish. It intends to use a 'controlled droplet' application of the chemical to reduce impact on biodiversity. Parks will remain glyphosate free.

### **Plants**

Twelve of the best Scented Daffodils: 'Abba', 'Avalanche', 'Baby Boomer', 'Erlicheer', 'Grand Monarque', 'Lanarth', 'Lemon and Barley', 'Marguerite', 'Martinette', 'Praecox', 'Quail', 'Scilly White'.

Harkness Roses has released rose 'Little Sid'. It's a patio rose named after TV host Gregg Wallace's son, who has Autism: £6 from the sale of each rose will be given to the charity Ambitious about Autism. Also look out for the new Power to Pollinators range of single-flowered roses: £2.50 from the sale of each rose goes to the RSPB.

New best buys plants in 2024 Lonicera 'Garden Clouds Purple Storm', from Cowells Garden Centre. Rose 'Elizabeth' from David Austin. Anemone 'Regal Swan' from Tortworth Plants.

Scientists at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew and its global partner organisations found 74 new plants and 15 fungi last year. Highlights from the top 10 new discoveries include three species of Antarctic fungi, which are lichens clinging to small areas of exposed rock. The list also includes *Dendrobium lancilabium wuryae* - a spectacular orchid found on an extinct volcano on an Indonesian island; *Pinanga subterranean* - a palm found on Borneo with fruit and flowers that are mostly buried beneath the soil; and a plant in the mint family, which was found in Mozambique and has sticky leaves that attract insects. Scientists have speculated that this new species is carnivorous. The new finds need immediate protection and at least one may have already been lost to the world, say scientists. About three-quarters of undescribed plants are threatened with extinction.



Organic growing charity, Garden Organic, has been awarded national Plant Collection status for the 29 varieties of comfrey it holds at Ryton Gardens Warwickshire. Comfrey (*Symphytum*) is central to the charity which has worked to establish and preserve symphytum varieties since 1958. Their research into homemade peat feeds found that comfrey tea is easy to make. Simply let comfrey leaves steep in water for a few weeks then dilute for use. It's high in nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium - perfect for using on the veg patch.

The Orchard Network supported by the People's Trust for Endangered Species, is running its annual celebration of orchard blossom during the last week in April, when pear and apple trees should be in full bloom. Orchards across the country will host events with activities such as tours, product fairs, picnics and practical crafts. See which orchards near you are participating at: [www.orchardnetwork.org.uk/orchard-blossom-day](http://www.orchardnetwork.org.uk/orchard-blossom-day).

A study of field pansies (*Viola arvensis*) growing around Paris has revealed that the flowers are evolving towards self-pollination. Scientists at the French National Centre for Scientific Research found that pansy flowers are 10% smaller and produce 20% less nectar than 20 to 30 years ago. They were also visited less often by pollinating insects. Seeds collected in the 1990s and 2000s were grown, and the adult plants were compared with current populations. Scientists found no differences between the pansies, other than changes to the flowers. The report concluded that the pansies and pollinators could be stuck in a vicious cycle, undoing their beneficial relationship evolved over millions of years. Declining insect numbers have caused the flowers to produce less nectar, which in turn means there is less food for insects, accelerating their decline.

### **Wildlife**

A natural beehive dubbed 'The Rocket' has been such a success at RHS Garden Wisley in Surrey that there are plans to install two more. The wood and straw hive represents the latest thinking in natural beekeeping to help promote bee health, genetics, and biodiversity. Made from a hollowed-out log, the hive resembles a natural tree cavity, with the log's thick walls providing insulation and regulating moisture, while the straw roof sheds rain. The legs are made from coppiced sweet chestnut and take the nest to about 9-10ft high. Wisley is monitoring its bee species and hoping to encourage more by making them homes from garden waste to create natural spaces in an ornamental way for bees to nest in, just as they do in the wild. Some bee facts: There are 270+ bee species in the UK - only one of which is the honey bee, *Apis mellifera*. The rest are bumblebees and solitary bees. 5,000 flowers can be visited each day by a honeybee and 60,000 bees might be found in a single colony.

A new report by conservation charity Buglife has found that half of the UK's most special invertebrate species are at risk of extinction. Twenty insects under threat include the Celtic woodlouse, which is only found in Wales and the west of England; the Lundy cabbage flea beetle, which is particular to Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel; and the Manx shearwater flea, which lives in the burrows of Manx shearwater - a seabird - on the island of Rum in Scotland. For the full list of endangered invertebrates. Go to [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk)

National Nest Box Week took place on 14-21 February and is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology. To help out why not add one of the following Which best buy nest boxes to your garden. Schwegler **Woodcrete Nest Box 1B**. Price £40. Where to buy Ark Wildlife, **Living With Birds. Brecon 28mm**. Price £17. Where to buy The Wildbird Store. **Predator Resist Nest Box**. Price £30. Where to buy The Wildlife Community.

New research by the Rivers Trust and Wildlife and Country Link has added to the growing body of evidence that neonicotinoid pesticides are threatening the UK's wildlife, including butterflies and moths. The study revealed that the pesticide, generally used in arable farming was found at 1 in 10 English river sites that were tested. This is of concern not only to aquatic wildlife but also butterflies and moths that feed on contaminated nectar from the wildflowers that have taken up the pesticide.

New research by scientists at the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) published in *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* journal has shown that 'green walls' support a wide range of invertebrates. The study looked at three plant species often used to create green facades - climbing hydrangea, common ivy and virginia creeper. The research showed that common ivy was the best plant for supporting insect life and generally the more vegetation there is and the more varied it is, the more invertebrates are supported. Dr Andrew Salisbury, head of plant health at the RHS, said: 'Greening walls with climbers and other plants create places for a wide range of invertebrates, including beetles and a variety of predatory invertebrates, to live and to feed. In urban areas, where many people have little space to garden, they can bring huge benefit, not only supporting invertebrates, but providing shelter and food for birds and other wildlife too'.

A bird that emits a smell of rotting meat used to deter predators may be on its way to Britain thanks to climate change. Native to Africa and southern Europe, the bird has dramatic pink feathers on its head and has striking black and white wings. Due to global warming, scientists believe the Hoopoe may set up home on British shores, with scores of sightings being reported every year. Until then its sour scent, can be found at the Natural History Museum, *Show Birds: Brilliant & Bizarre*. Curator Joanne Cooper said her team had worked with a company to create a synthetic oil resembling the odour 'very closely'. The exhibition opens on May 24.

The People's Trust for Endangered Species is calling on volunteers to monitor waterways near them in April and May to help conservation efforts for watervoles. In the past 10 years, watervole numbers have declined by 90% across the UK. See [www.ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside/national-water-vole-monitoring-programme](http://www.ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/countryside/national-water-vole-monitoring-programme)

The People's Trust for Endangered Species in partnership with other organisations has launched a new National Hedgehog Monitoring Programme. The project aims to produce robust estimates of the hedgehog population so that practical conservation measures can be taken to help this much-loved garden visitor. The study will also look at regional and habitat differences in hedgehog populations, to see what factors impact them. The survey will be recruiting volunteers to monitor the hedgehogs in their area. For details, go to [www.ptes.org/campaigns/hedgehogs](http://www.ptes.org/campaigns/hedgehogs)

New research from the Centre for Ecology and Conservation has warned that butterflies risk losing their spots due to climate change. Scientists found that female meadow brown butterflies, which usually have six spots on their wings, emerge from their cocoons with just three spots if they pupate at a temperature just 4°C warmer than usual. This is an unexpected consequence of climate change. We tend to think about species moving north, rather than changing appearance

The RHS supported by the Bumblebee Conservation trust, is inviting people to take part in a nationwide project called Bumbles on Blooms. The aim is to identify which plants are most visited by bumblebees in spring, in order to help these vital pollinators thrive. Running until 31 May, people are being asked to spot and photograph the insects on flowers in gardens and parks across the UK and record their findings online or via an app. The availability of flowers in spring is critically important for helping them establish successful colonies at the start of the season. Data from the project will help ensure gardeners receive the best advice for what to plant to support bumblebees in spring. RHS wildlife specialists will monitor results, which could also provide valuable insight into other factors that influence bumblebees plant choice such as flower colour. Get involved by photographing the bumblebee checking the identity by visiting [www.rhs.org.uk/bumblesonblooms](http://www.rhs.org.uk/bumblesonblooms) and add your record to the Bumbles on Blooms project on the iNaturalist app

### **Gardens**

Dr John Grimshaw, director of the Yorkshire Arboretum, has been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List for services to tree health and plant conversation. The arboretum is located in Castle Howard near York and is open to visitors from February. For more details, visit [www.yorkshirearboretum.org](http://www.yorkshirearboretum.org).

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew has submitted plans to create a new garden explaining the role of carbon in nature and climate change. It also hopes to extend The Orangery restaurant and terrace. The new carbon cycle garden will be built on the site of the existing Secluded Garden. The planting for the new garden is planned to show biodiversity in the wild, a range of climate-resilient trees and features explaining the importance of soil in carbon capture and storage, and how fossil fuels are formed.

RHS Chelsea award-winner, Joe Perkins, has designed a garden for the future at Sheffield Park and Garden in East Sussex. The garden will experiment with climate-resilient species to address the impact of climate change on plant and tree health. The new space is due to open in 2025 and is being funded through gifting and the Royal Oak Foundation.

The National Garden Scheme raised a record £3,403,960 for some of the UK's best loved nursing and healthcare charities in 2023. Some 3,389 garden owners hosted open days around the country and throughout the year. See which gardens are hosting open days in 2024 by visiting [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)