



# ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

## NEWSLETTER - JUL/AUG/SEP 2024

Our **Summer Horticultural Show** on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> August is our next big event. It will be held as usual in the United Reformed Church in Fisherton Street. Schedules and entry forms are still available from the Trading Hut or can be viewed online and downloaded from our website - [salisburyallotments.co.uk](http://salisburyallotments.co.uk). We hope to see our past exhibitors return and welcome any new ones to this fun event where you can expect a warm welcome and enjoy some nice refreshments in a relaxed setting.  
Harry Theobald editor.

### Salisbury River Park Project.

As I write this newsletter the track from Dennis Marsh House up to the gate at Fisherton Farm allotment site is being resurfaced which will remove the potholes.

I hope some of you had a chance to help local artist Fred Fieber paint the mural depicting some vegetables on the side and front of one of our containers. If you missed out The Art of Salisbury River Park exhibition is being held at The Young Gallery Salisbury from the 23 May until the 31 August Monday to Saturday with free admission. It is all part of the art projects that spring up all over the city.

### SNIPPETS

Alan Titchmarsh's jeans offended North Korean state television censors when a 2010 edition of his BBC show *Garden Secrets* was shown there. Jeans are seen as a sign of western imperialism and are banned, so censors decided to blur images of the offending trousers.

No-dig expert Charles Dowding received an Elizabeth Medal of Honour from the RHS in recognition of the impact his work has had on horticulture. The medals were created in 2023 to mark the duration of the late Queen Elizabeth II's reign. Only 70 of the medals will be held at any one time.

Two new National Plant Collections - one in a pub garden, one in a prison - have been accredited by conservation charity Plant Heritage, the first time that such venues have held prized plant collections of this status in the UK. The White Hart pub in Bitton, Gloucestershire Jemma Wiggins holds the national *Crococsmia* collection and at HMP Eastwood Park near Bristol, Horticultural Craftsman Gary Stone oversees a collection of 11 *Tulbaghia*, cared for by two women prisoners. For more information go to [www.plantheritage.org.uk](http://www.plantheritage.org.uk)

Nominations for the RHS People Awards for 2025 opened on 1 June, which is your chance to tell the RHS about people who have made outstanding contributions to horticulture. Completed forms must reach the RHS by 5pm on 31 August 2024. Email: [secretary@rhs.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rhs.org.uk) or call 02078213653 for further details.

A new book has just been published called *This Allotment: stories of growing, eating and nurturing* edited by Sarah Rigby. What does your allotment mean to you? There are as many answers to this question as there are plot holders. This compilation invites you to see life on the plot through a baker's dozen of writers. Each tells compelling stories of what it means to inhabit - but not own - a plot of land on which to grow. It is published by Elliott & Thompson, 224pp, RRP 14.99

*How Herbs Healed the World* is a debut book by Connor Smith and offers a captivating exploration of 75 herbs across five distinct chapters. Each herb is meticulously detailed with its indigenous origins, genus name and cultivation history. A good read for herb enthusiasts and history buffs alike, this book showcases the author's unique perspective on the enduring allure of these remarkable plants. Published by Greenfinch, July 2024, 224pp, RRP £22

Some of the biggest RHS shows will be on the move from next year. After this year, the RHS Flower Show Tatton Park will only return to its original site near Knutsford, Cheshire every three years. In 2025, it will be held at Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire, and at the Sandringham Estate in Norfolk in 2026. Meanwhile, the Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival will become a biennial event from next year. It will then be held at the Badminton Estate in Gloucestershire in 2026 before returning to Hampton Court Palace in 2027. The RHS hopes that this will allow many more people to enjoy the shows. For more details, visit [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

Lilies are beautiful flowers but their pollen, stems and leaves (and even the vase water they've stood in) is highly poisonous to cats. Ingesting just a small amount of pollen can prove fatal, so a cat that simply brushes past a lily can be affected. Double

lilies are often suggested as a safe alternative but even these blooms may have stamens. If you own a cat, it's worth excluding lilies from your house and garden entirely.

### **Products**

If you buy multi-purpose compost, you'd expect to be able to use it for all your propagation and potting needs, from sowing seeds to planting containers of summer bedding, but Which research has that almost a third of multi-purpose composts can't be used for sowing seeds. Out of 23 composts labelled as multi-purpose or all-purpose, six said they couldn't be used for sowing seeds. Another couldn't be used for fine seeds. From speaking to manufacturers, Which know that creating a good peat-free seed compost isn't easy. Many of the materials used in their production are quite coarse. While you can sieve some composts for fine seeds - a technique Which used in their trials - it's not possible to do this with some mixes. Before using a multi-purpose compost for sowing seeds, always check Which test results first. Failing that, read the instructions on the back of the bag.

### **Gardens**

A new exhibition in the Old Laboratory at RHS Garden Wisley (16 May-25 August) explores the impact on contemporary gardening of influential horticulturalist William Robinson, who was a leading proponent of a more naturalistic style in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Learn about his life through archives and artwork. Visit [www.rhs.ork.uk/wisley](http://www.rhs.ork.uk/wisley)

The historic Rope Rose Walk at RHS Garden Hyde Hall Essex, is to undergo a dramatic revamp for summer 2025. Planted in the early 1970s by the garden's former owners, Dick and Helen Robinson, the feature set the trend for growing climbing and rambling roses along rope swags. The new design offers an opportunity to update the rose collection too, providing a showcase for new, climate-resilient roses. However, the existing cultivars will be kept and propagated as part of the collection management. Climate change has brought wetter, milder springs and hotter, drier summers, exacerbating rose diseases such as powdery mildew and black spot. Curator Robert Brett and his team are working with a variety of rose experts and considering results of RHS rose trials to find suitable new cultivars for the site.

The Floral Fantasia Garden at RHS Garden Hyde Hall in Chelmsford in Essex is getting a new look. The late gardening broadcaster Peter Seabrook developed the garden in 2018, making it a 'centre of excellence' for seasonal plants. Designer James Alexander-Sinclair has tweaked the garden's design to make it easier for visitors to walk around, as well as providing more seats to stop and enjoy it. There will also be several arches for climbing plants, and space has been made for more pots. The work will happen when funds are available, so may not be completed for some time. The trials area of the garden will remain as it was. This year there is a trial of sunflowers. It's run in association with Fleuroselect, which tests pot and bedding plants for UK nurseries.

In recognition of the beneficial role green spaces can play in promoting good health, seven new wellbeing gardens have been created at clinics and hospitals across the UK via a new partnership between the RHS and the NHS. RHS experts worked with staff and patients to design each garden, which include features such as green gyms, relaxation and socialising spaces, wildlife habitats and low-maintenance, climate-resilient planting. The RHS is overseeing a 12-month programme of workshops and activities at each site. These include a weekly gardening club. The RHS is working with NHS Property Services which manages NHS sites and buildings, using funding that is separate from that earmarked for frontline care. To find out more visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/nhswellbeinggardens](http://www.rhs.org.uk/nhswellbeinggardens)

Charleston in Fittlehampton, East Sussex, is hosting a garden festival from 18-21 July. Speakers Fergus Garrett, Racel de Thame, Chris Packham, Arit Anderson, Andy Sturgeon and Zadie Smith. You'll need a ticket for the talks, but there are free events as well. For more details, go to [www.charleston.org.uk/whats-on](http://www.charleston.org.uk/whats-on)

### **Which Best Buys and Recommendations:**

**Sunflowers on test:** 'Claret' (red), 'Firebrand' (red and yellow), 'Magic Roundabout' (red and yellow), 'Soraya' (yellow), 'Valentine' (pale yellow), 'Velvet Queen' (copper), 'Buttercream' (cream), 'Coper Queen' (orange), 'Evening Sun' (red), 'Pastiche' (yellow and orange), 'Sonja' (yellow), 'Superted' (yellow).

**Scented Lilies on test:** 'Cameleon' (pink, cream, white), 'Firebolt' (deep red), 'Sunset Boulevard' (orange), 'Bacardi' (dark pink), 'Labrador' (deep pink).

**Phlox on test:** 'Grey Lady' (grey), 'Ka-Pow Pink' (pink), 'Monica Lyden-Bell' (white), 'Sweet Summer Dream' (dark pink), 'David' (white), 'Hesperis' x arendsii (pink), 'Ka-Pow Lavender' (lavender), 'Laura' (pink), 'Norah Leigh' (white)

**Spencer Sweet Peas on test:** 'Lady Nicholson' (flecked cream and pink), 'Lipstick' (bright pink), 'Restormel' (coral red), 'Valerie Harrod' (peach), 'Just Jenny' (dark purple), 'White Supreme' (white).

**Summer-Flowering Clematis on test:** 'Crystal Fountain' (blue), 'The President' (purple), 'The Vagabond' (purple), 'Tie Dye' (blue and white) 'Tsukiko' (white), 'Duchess of Cornwall' (purple), 'Meghan' (dark red), 'Multi Pink' (pink).

**Watering Systems on test:** Autopot (Easy2Go watering kit), Garland (Big Drippa watering system), Hozelock (Flower and vegetable watering kit), Mona (Plantsava watering system Tank 6)

**Decking Paints and Stains on test:** Decking Stains: Ronseal (Ultimate Protection Decking Stain). Decking Paints: Liberon (extreme Decking Paint), Ronseal (Ultimate Protection Decking Paint), Trade Paints (Garden Timber Decking Anti-slip), V33 (Colour guard Decking Paint).

**Fence Paint on test:** Cuprinol (5 year Ducksback Matt Shed & Fence Treatment), Ronseal (Fence Life Plus Matt Exterior Wood Paint), Wickes (Garden Colour Matt Wood Treatment)

**Best buy Lawnmowers:** Kress 60v 51cm cordless mower

### Science and Research

A team of scientists at Royal Botanic Gardens (RGB), Kew has used artificial intelligence to predict the extinction risk for every known flowering plant, totalling 328,565 species. Dr Steven Bachmann, research leader in RGB Kew's Conservation Assessment and Analysis team said the research, published in the *New Phytologist* journal, can be used 'to prioritise and accelerate extinction assessments for the plants we've identified as probably threatened'. The predictions for all plants are available at [www.powo.science.kew.org](http://www.powo.science.kew.org)

### Plant Pests and Diseases

An Asian hornet was seen in early March this year - the earliest ever sighting. It has prompted fears the insects have overwintered in the UK and become established. They can kill 30-50 bees a day and are identified by their orange faces, yellow-tipped legs and dark abdomens. Report sightings at [www.nonnativespecies.org](http://www.nonnativespecies.org)

Slugs may be perceived as the gardener's enemy, but they are very important players in garden ecosystems. We may struggle to love their slimy faces, but their vital role, particularly as detritivores, breaking down rotting material and recycling nutrients into the soil, is invaluable, they also provide a food source for other, more beloved garden wildlife. Here are five key slug munchers: **Beetles and other invertebrates.** Ground beetles are efficient predators, roaming grassland and woodland to hunt their prey with grasping jaws. Many other invertebrates also hunt slugs, including rove beetles, centipedes, sciomyzid flies and the nematode *Phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita*, a soil dwelling parasite. **Carnivore slugs.** The shelled slugs are devoted carnivores feeding on earthworms, slugs and other creatures smaller than themselves. The *Deroceras* and *Arion* slug groups contain some notable herbivores, but many will readily turn cannibal. **Amphibians and reptiles** Frogs and toads enjoy a slimy meal; slugs form about a quarter of the common frog's diet. Gardens with ponds or habitat for frogs and toads to overwinter are likely to have slug numbers kept in check. Slow-worms will also hunt slugs - another good reason to build a hibernation station. **Birds** Some birds may find the sticky slime off-putting, but many will devour slugs, including robins, starlings, crows, blackbirds and ducks. Blackbirds can often be seen wiping the excess slime off on grass before swallowing a slug. **Hedgehogs** Hedgehogs are often recommended as voracious slug eaters, but slugs usually form only ten per cent of their diet. They tend to prefer worms, beetles and caterpillars, but in the autumn, slugs become an important source of calories before hibernation.

Insect charity Buglife is asking people in Scotland to report any sightings of oil beetles as part of its species on the 'edge project'. Oil beetles are nest parasites of solitary bees. Populations of the beetle have declined due to the loss of flower-rich habitats leading to fewer wild bees. For details, see [www.buglife.org.uk](http://www.buglife.org.uk)

A tiny beetle that consumes fungus has been discovered in a commercial tomato greenhouse in the Czech Republic. The beetle lives in leaf litter and moves to the tomato plants to feast if they're attacked by fungus, such as leaf mould or powdery mildew. Scientists are now looking at whether the beetle can be developed into a biological control for fungal diseases on greenhouse crops.

Invasive box tree moth caterpillars have spread rapidly and have now become a problem in Wales. The RHS recorded the first adult moths in the UK in 2007 and by the end of 2014 they had become established in London and the home counties. They have spread rapidly, and gardeners in Wales are now reporting infestations of this pest.

### Environment

The law on the ban of non-native plants is addressed in two pieces of UK legislation:

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) lists species that it's an offence to plant or cause to grow in the wild. It includes still-common garden plants including *Rhododendron luteum*, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper) and *Robinia pseudoacacia* (false acacia), alongside more widely recognised ne'er-do-wells such as Japanese knotweed. In Scotland the rules take a different approach, and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (2011) makes it an offence to release any non-native plant into the wild without a permit.

The other major piece of legislation is the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation (2014), which following Brexit, was added into UK law. This regulation provides for a list of species of Special Concern, which currently has 36 'banned' plants that it is forbidden to import, keep, breed, transport, sell or cultivate.

The full list can be found in RHS Plant Finder or by searching "invasive non-native plant species" at [gov.uk](http://gov.uk).

Data from the office for National Statistics has revealed the local councils in Britain with the most parks and gardens within a 1km radius. London and Liverpool were top, with an average of 6.7 and 6.8 parks respectively. Londoners are just 292 metres from a public green space; those in the northwest are around 342 metres from one.

In April, Theresa Villiers former Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs minister, introduced a private member's bill to halt sales of peat in England. The Horticultural Peat Prohibition of Sale Bill calls for a ban on sales of peat through retail outlets from the end of this year. Exceptions would be made for science and research, and rare plants. The government announced in July 2021 that a ban would be introduced by the end of 2024. However, it wasn't in the King's speech in November 2023. MPs voted in favour of the backbench bill, and it received a second reading on 17 May. However, no time has been set aside to pass the legislation into law before the General Election on 4 July, so any ban would have to be enacted by the next government. Most manufacturers are already moving away from using peat, in anticipation of a ban.

### **Wildlife**

Waterton Park, created by 19<sup>th</sup>-century naturalist Charles Waterton at his family's estate near Wakefield, West Yorkshire has been added to Historic England's protected register of parks and gardens. Historic England said Waterton Park was the 'first known example of a landscape designed to protect wildlife'.

The troubling extent of insect declines in the UK has been highlighted once again by the Bugs Matter citizen-science survey. The report reveals that the abundance of flying insects sampled on vehicle number plates has fallen by 78% since 2004. Dr Lawrence Ball of Kent Wildlife Trust stated: 'This is a red flag for the state of nature in the UK that shouldn't be ignored'. If you're interested in taking part in this ongoing citizen-science project, find out more at [www.buglife.org.uk/get-involved/surveys/bugs-matter](http://www.buglife.org.uk/get-involved/surveys/bugs-matter)

The results of this year's RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch have been published with house sparrows retaining their position as the most seen bird in UK gardens. The rankings are 1. House sparrows. 2. Blue tit. 3. Starling. 4. Wood Pigeon. 5. Blackbird. 6. Robin. 7. Great tit. 8. Goldfinch. 9. Magpie. 10. Long-tailed tit.

A new citizen-science project is looking at which bee hotels work best. Organised by the University of Sussex, it's hoped the research will help find the best nesting options for solitary bees. Out of 270 species of bees in the UK, 250 are solitary and do not live in colonies. Anyone with a bee hotel, or who wants to make or buy one, can take part. Visit the website and fill out a form, then send a photo once a month to the researchers. You don't need to be a bee expert, as the scientists will identify which bees are visiting. There is a video on the website with ideas for designs you can make or buy. Put your hotel on a wall or fence in a sunny spot. See [www.thebuzzclub.uk/thebigbeehotelexperiment](http://www.thebuzzclub.uk/thebigbeehotelexperiment) for details.

### **Plants**

In summer 2023, Which ran a trial of 11 varieties of French lavender, including widely available favourites and new cultivars. In contrast to hardy English lavender, French lavender is half-hardy, and doesn't enjoy the frost and wet weather typical of a British winter. Which wanted to know if any of these fragrant varieties could make it through to the spring, so they left them in their pots once the trial had finished. Although most died or looked very sad when they assessed them in March 2024, three varieties - 'Sancho Panza', 'Regal Splendour' and 'Lilac Wings' - all made it through winter and were even starting to form buds.

Albert Bartlett, one of the UK's potato suppliers, has warned that one of the UK's favourite potato varieties - 'Maris Piper' - is becoming 'agronomically challenging'. The weather over the past few years, including hot, dry spells and flooding, has led to poor quality crops and in turn, supply problems for this popular spud. Hardier varieties, such as 'Rooster', are becoming more common in shops. So if you prefer 'Maris Piper', it might be prudent to grow your own.

A new National Plant Collection of 20 historic rosebud pelargonium cultivars has been accredited by Plant Heritage. The plants are on display in the newly renovated 18<sup>th</sup>-century Orchid House at Helmsley Walled Garden in Yorkshire, an RHS Partner Garden. These unusual double pelargoniums have been bred since 1850 and became popular in the Victorian era as buttonholes and posies. Helmsley Walled Garden offers free entry to RHS members on Wednesdays during its open season.

Kew Garden's newly completed Tree for Life will shed light on the evolution of flowering plants. The tree uses genetic data from more than 9,500 species. It's hoped it will help identify new species, uncover new medicinal compounds, and conserve plants in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss.

### **RHS Trial**

Results from a three-year *Hemerocallis* (daylilies) trial have been announced, with eight new Awards of Garden Merit (AGMS): H. 'Berlin Tallboy' mid-season with orange-yellow flowers dusted cinnamon orange, H1.4m. H. 'Dan Mahony' early to mid-season with pink flowers and a scarlet eye above a green throat, H80cm. H. 'El Desperado' late season flowers of mustard-yellow with burgundy eye above a green throat, H80cm. H. 'Corky' with yellow-green flowers flushed greyish-red on underside,

H75cm. H. **'Golden Prize'** Golden-yellow late season flowers, H 70cm. H **'Green Flutter'** late season, repeat flowering with yellow flowers and a green throat, H70cm. H. **'Sasseness'** mid to late-season with magenta-purple flowers, dark eye and green-yellow throat. H60cm. H. **'Marion Vaughn'** mid-season yellow green flowers and greyish-purple anthers, H1m.

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