



ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

NEWSLETTER JULY- AUGUST- SEPTEMBER 2026

I have been slaving over this newsletter for the last two days to keep out of the sun and the stifling humidity. What is happening to our weather? I remember as a young boy in the 1950's that this month was always referred to as 'Flaming June' and I hope this is a one-off occurrence as the last time was back in 1976 when the family and I were at Butlins in Bognor fighting of the invasion of the ladybirds (good film title).

Managing to get down to the allotment to water in the morning and late evening so no plants fried yet.

Enjoy your time in your garden or down on the allotment as it gets cooler next week and don't forget we still have the final part of the World Cup to watch and Wimbledon to come.

Harry Theobald- Editor

A&GAS OUTINGS 2026

We have had our first outing of the year which was on April 12th when we visited Arundel Castle in Sussex to see their amazing annual Tulip Festival. The good thing about this outing is that your ticket also allows you to visit the castle and you can exit the castle and have a walk round the town of Arundel. The weather was good on the day, and all the members enjoyed the spectacular display of tulips.

Our second outing will be on Sunday 12th July to the RHS Badminton Flower Show which has been moved from Hampton Court for 2026. There are still tickets which include entry plus coach travel available in the Trading Hut which is open Saturday & Sunday 9.30 to 12.30 or Wednesdays 6pm to 8pm. It should be a great day out as the only other shows in this area are at Malvern.

RHS Badminton Show preview: Radio 4 will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of *The Archers* with a show garden designed by Jo Thompson inspired by fictional Bridge Farm. Taking you to the front garden of the farm, it will feature flower and veg beds, an orchard within a wildflower meadow and a wildlife pond.

As well as the work of established designers, there will be three gardens created by young designers at the start of their careers. Local crafts will be reflected in the artisan gardens including basketry and beekeeping. There will also be plenty of plants to buy from specialist nurseries

There are still tickets available from the Trading Hut

A&GAS SUMMER SHOW

This year's Summer Show is on Saturday 22nd August at the United Reformed Church in Fisherton Street and there is still plenty of time to pick up a show schedule at the Trading Hut or download a copy from our website. It is open to anybody not just members of A&GAS. We are hoping to attract more exhibitors this year and have expanded our Novice Class to include flowers. The other classes are Vegetables, Flowers, a Fun class, Photography, Cookery and Preserves and a Wines, Spirits Beer and Cider class. It's a fun day with lots of support from Committee members to help you display your entries and have the best chance of gaining a place card. Don't think you have got no chance as the times I have been at the show and heard visitors say "**mine are as good as that**" as they walk round the show. So please come and support us by exhibiting as there are so many flower shows falling by the wayside due to the lack of support and we want to continue with this fun Community Event in the future.

SNIPPETS

Charles Dowding's latest book, *Grow Together* features 50 ideas for veg planting combinations, so you get the maximum amount of produce from your space. It includes advice about succession planting, catch-cropping, cover-cropping, companion planting, planting to aid pollination and multisowing. You'll also find tips about the best timings, spacings and varieties. It costs £15. For further info visit www.charlesdowding.co.uk.

Sales of rose 'Dame Deborah James' raised £47,000 for the Bowelbabe Fund for Cancer Research UK. Breeders Harkness Roses donated £2.50 from the sale of every rose between 2022 to 2025, when the partnership ended. 'Which' awarded it a Best Buy when they last tested scented rose bushes.

Campaigners are raising funds to buy the home of the original Bramley apple tree in Nottinghamshire. Every Bramley ever eaten can be traced back to the 220-year-old tree. The Mother Bramley legacy fund wants to turn the property into a heritage centre. To donate go to crowdfunder.co.uk/p/save-the-bramley-apple-tree-for-the-nation

A team from the University of Nottingham will study centuries old horticultural books from RHS library to see if they can find peat free ways of caring for plants, especially those that are hard to grow and propagate. Plant hunters shared plants long before the introduction of peat, and the team hopes to find what materials were used to do this. Specialists in AI will also create glossaries of terms and plant names that have changed significantly over time.

The National Allotment Society has sent a survey to more than 9,000 local authorities across the UK to find out more information on the supply and demand for allotments, along with plans for future provision. The last national survey in 1996 revealed that there were around 15 plots per 1,000 households. The picture is likely to be different now, given the population growth and urban development over the past 30 years, along with increased interest in allotment gardening.

Held at London's Garden Museum, *Benton End: A Paradise of Pollen and Paint* is a new immersive exhibition exploring the 1950s Suffolk art school and home of artist-plantsman Cedric Morris. It features works by famous artists, such as Lucien Freud, who stayed there. It runs from 2 June to 20 September. For more info see www.gardenmuseum.org.uk

A Year of Cut Flowers by Sarah Raven published by Bloomsbury Publishing 448pp RRP £30. The authors 30 years of experimenting with cut flowers at her Perch Hill garden have been generously poured into this swoon-induced book. Structured by month, she shows how to create and care for cutting patches that provide year-round bouquets, including up to four a week between July and October. Written in a clear, confident tone, Raven focuses primarily on cut-and-come-again flowers that in Perch Hill trials, have been found to offer high yields and excellent vase life. More than 300 plants are recommended including many dahlias. A section on dried flowers and how they can decorate homes in winter, and a sowing and planting chart round off an endlessly useful book.

The Allotment Book- How to make the most of your allotment by Walter Brett was first published in 1917 which is before most of the various chemicals became widely available and used so the use of soot and similar materials was recommended. If you are interested in gardening in the early part of the last century the book is well worth a read and may persuade you to try some of the techniques. The book is published by Bodleian

Products

The best new product at this year's Garden Press Event – an annual launchpad for new gardening products, was Fothergill's Oh Sow Simple Self-Watering Grow Kits – an-all-in-one herb grower based on the mason jar design. A couple of new apps were on display and the Horti AI Chris offers expert advice, plant identification and gardening tips, while Fryd is a veg-growing community app that allows you to keep track of your veg plot and get planting companion suggestions. There were several products offering natural solutions to soil health. Solivita is a soil improver in pellet form. It's made from composted bark and packed with beneficial fungi and trace elements. In a similar vein is woollitiser, produced by Traditional Garden Growers. It's made from low-grade sheep wool repurposed into pellets for use as a fertiliser.

An innovative new peat-free compost has been developed from green-tea leaves that were used to manufacture drinks. Japanese company Suntory Beverages and Food came up with Teamoss, in association with its sister company, Suntory Flowers, which is behind the breeding of Surifinia petunias among other varieties. Tests show it's as good as, or better than peat at growing a range of flowers and veg plants. It will be sold in Japan from next year.

There are some new composts. Fothergills has added to its range with coir-based Enriched Plant Compost, formulated for young plants and containers. Westland launched Organic Gold – a mulch and a compost, both with added Carbon Gold Biochar – and the MultiPlanter, a growing bag that can be placed on its back or sides to give three planting depths of 20, 30, and 40cm. It's said to be suitable for a variety of crops.

Gardens

Chester Zoo has become only the second zoo in Europe to receive accreditation from Botanical Gardens conservation International, the global organisation dedicated to plant conservation. The zoo gardens are open to the public, but behind the scenes, it also keeps thousands of plants for research and conservation purposes. It looks after five national collections including nepenthes (pitcher plants), three cacti genres and pleurothallis orchids and helps to propagate and reintroduce threatened UK species. This includes the black poplar, said to be the most endangered native timber tree in Britain.

Wollerton Old Hall in Shropshire and The Laskett in Hertfordshire are both for sale. Wollerton Old Hall is an acclaimed three-acre garden in the English-garden style with 14 linked garden rooms housing collections of clematis, salvias and old roses. Meanwhile, The Laskett was gifted to gardening charity 'Perennial' by owner Sir Roy Strong who developed the four-

acre garden from 1973. 'Perennial' says that low garden visitor numbers, limited by a small car park, makes it uneconomical to maintain.

The National Garden Scheme (NGS) has announced £294,241 of funding to 118 community garden projects across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. This latest round of funding brings the total given to community projects since the programme began to £1.6m. Several previously funded projects will be opening this year.

WHICH Best Buys and Recommendation.

Courgettes on test: All Green Bush, Ambassador F1, Romanesco, Midnight F1, Goldrush F1, Shooting Star F1, Astia F1, Lemona F1.

Spring-Weight Gloves on test: Burgon & Ball 'FloraBrite Yellow', Kent & Stowe 'Sure & fit Multi Job', Showa 'Floreo370 Lightweight', Gardena 'Polyester Turquoise', ClipGlove 'Bamboo Fibre Grip Gloves'

Plant Supports on test: Harrod Horticulture 'Trumpet Peony Plant Support', Agriframes 'Tower Plant Support - Rustic', Plant Supports 'Twist Easy', Harrod Horticulture 'Plant Girdle'.

Hostas on test: Guacamole 'light green', Blue Mouse Ears, 'blue', So Sweet 'green/white', H.fortunei var. albopicta, 'green/yellow', Francee, 'green/white', Gold Standard, 'gold', Royal Standard 'Green', Minuteman, green/white, Blue Angel 'blue', Empress Wu, 'green'.

Automatic Watering Systems on test: Gardena Start Set for Raised Beds/Beds (35 plants), Hozelock, 25 Pot Watering Kit. Easy Garden Irrigation, Drip Irrigation System Medium Kit, HydroSure Complete 25m drip line irrigation system, Easy Garden Irrigation Drip Irrigation System 25 pc Dripper Kit. Easy Garden Irrigation Drip Irrigation System 50 Adjustable Dripper Kit.

Lettuce on test: Chatsworth cos, Lobjoits Green cos, Xanadu little gem, Little Gem little gem, Maximo iceberg, Miniko iceberg, Tantan little gem.

Sweetest Carrots on test: Marion F1, Volcano F1. Early Nantes 5, Extremo F1, Nairobi F1, Resistafly F1, Romance F1, Carruba F1.

Buddleia on test: Gulliver pinkish/lilac, Autumn Beauty pink/purple, Dartmoor lavender/Mauve, Nanho Alba white, White Profusion white, Berries & Cream bicoloured purple and white, Blue Horizon Dark Blue, Ellen's Blue blue, Longstock Pride purple, Nanho Blue Lavender blue, B x weyeriana Sungold yellow.

Climbing French Beans on test: Cobra, Fasold, Pantheon, Smeraldo, Python.

Lawnmowers on test: Stihl RMA 448 PV (£900), Stihl RMA 448 V (£790)

Lawn Edging Shears on test: Burgon & Ball Lawn Edging Shears-RHS endorsed, Darlac DP812 Telescopic Edging Shear. Spear & Jackson Razorsharp Advantage Edging Shears, Fiskars LifeStyle 113310 Long-Handled Edging Shear with 11cm Handle, Darlac DP813 Edging Shear

Fragrant Pots on test: Dianthus 'Pinky McPink Face' pink, Heliotrope 'Midnight Sky' blue, Nemesia 'Nuvo Pink Bicolour' pink, Nemesia 'Wisley Vanilla' white, Dianthus Scully' dark pink, Lobularia maritima 'Snowdrift' white, Nemesia 'Aroma Rhubarb and Custard' purple/yellow, Viola 'Sorbet Pink Wing' pink/white.

Scented Roses on test: Dannahue cream/yellow, Dame Deborah James white, Elizabeth pink, Prosperity white, Belle de Jour yellow, Penelope Lively pink, Absolutely Fabulous yellow, Chandos Beauty pink, Comte de Chambord pink, Eyes for You white/purple, Oak Gabriel pink, Precious Amber orange.

Succulents on test: PLANTS FOR OUTSIDE IN WINTER: Sedum takesimense 'Atlantis', Sempervivum 'Green Ice', Sempervivum 'Tristesse', Sedum rupestre 'Agelina's Teacup', Sempervivum 'Fuego'.

PLANTS FOR A SHELTERED SPOT IN WINTER: Aloe aristata, Echeveria agavoides 'Ebony', Mangave 'Praying Hands', x Semponium Sienna', x Semponium 'Vortex', PLANTS FOR INDOORS IN WINTER: Aeonium 'Zwartkop'. Aeonium 'Blushing Beauty'

Perennials for Summer Pots on Test: Achillea 'Moonshine' yellow, Alstromeria 'Inticancha Bryce orange, Geranium 'Rozanne' blue, Helenium 'Short and Sassy' orange, Salvia 'Royal Bumble' red, Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm' yellow, Achillea 'Walther Funcke' orange-red, Monarda 'Cambridge Scarlet' red, Phlox 'Ka-POW Pink' pink.

Patio cleaners on test: Monty Miracle Outdoor Cleaner 5L, Jennychem Sodium Hypochlorite 5L Neither product requires a pressure washer; they only need a brush or low-pressure spray. Scrubb Driveway & Patio Cleaner 5L can be used in a pressure washer and for those conscious about using chemicals, the best bleach-free solution is Patio Magic! Concentrate 5L

Decking Treatments on test: Ronseal Ultimate Protection Anti-slip, Sadolin Beautiflex, Fortress Anti-Slip best buy stains. However, the Fortress stain is tough as nails and less than half the price of the other two best buys at £13.50 from Screwfix

Grass trimmers on test: Out of the five tested there were no best buys but two decent models that can help keep your garden looking neat are the Stihl FSA 50 (£240) and the Ryobi RY36LT38A-0 (£150)

Science and Research

The deepest vertical farm in the world will start producing food this spring. Located more than half a mile (1.1km) underground Boulby Underground Laboratory - a former salt mine in north-east England - the project will test whether growing crops is feasible at this depth and if it can be replicated in other disused mines around the country

Plant Pests and Diseases

A new outbreak of sweet chestnut blight and the presence of airborne spores have been found in south Devon. A ban on the movement or felling of trees has been introduced and members of the public are being asked to check local trees for discoloured and cracked areas of dead wood and pinhead-sized orange fungus. For more details visit www.forestresearch.gov.uk.

The RHS is banning yellow oyster mushrooms from its shows as they're a potential invasive non-native species. Mushrooms have become popular at garden shows over the past few years and grow-your-own kits are readily available. Several UK suppliers have now removed them from sale.

The RHS is the first multi-site public or botanical garden in the UK to have all its gardens and plant shops certified as plant healthy. The certification shows that the RHS has robust policies, processes and training to prevent the introduction and spread of diseases and invasive species that could harm gardens and the environment. Plant Health aligns with the RHS's mission to promote sustainable gardening practices and is designed to help protect against the more than 1,400 organisms that pose a significant threat to biosecurity on the UK Plant Health Register.. For ideas to keep your garden healthy, see: www.rhs.org.uk/protectyourgarden

Environment

Recent survey data from the 15th New Year Plant Hunt shows how wild plants are responding to changing weather and a warming climate. Organised by the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, the survey recorded 663 different species in bloom in January 2026 - the third highest total in the hunt's history. Scientists at the Met Office have analysed years of data from the plant hunt and found that for every 1°C rise in temperature, an average of 2.5 additional species are seen flowering.

John Craven and Charlotte Smith, presenters on BBC1's Countryfile programme have planted the 10 millionth tree in the National Forest, to mark 30 years since it was established. Covering 200 square miles in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire, the forest transformed a former coal-mining and industrial landscape into a beautiful green area. The presenters planted a commemorative oak in honour of the milestone.

Wildlife

RSPB scientists are trying to discover how the disease trichomonosis is spread. They have been collecting data and samples in gardens where the disease has been found and are looking at whether certain types of bird feeding are riskier than others. There is evidence to suggest that damp food on flat surfaces can increase the risk of disease transmission. While the RSPB awaits the findings of the research, it advises against using bird tables and window bird feeders. 'Which' has removed its Best Buy window bird feeders as a result. Trichomonosis which is caused by a protozoan parasite, has been linked to a large-scale decline in greenfinch and chaffinch populations in the UK. The parasite develops in the throat of affected birds and causes problems with swallowing. Finches are particularly susceptible to the disease. As well as avoiding feeders with flat surfaces, it's important to clean feeders and water bowls regularly.

An update from the RSPB on bird feeding advice. They advise gardeners not to put out bird food from May to the end of October. Birds can find plenty of natural sources of food at this time. Instead grow plants with berries and seeds, as well as plenty of flowers to attract insects.

Hedgehog research published in *Journal Ecology and Evolution* has shown that predators are the largest cause of death for these endangered mammals. A 10-year study of an isolated population in London's Regent's Park monitored their numbers twice a year using thermal cameras to locate them. The hedgehogs were examined, tagged, and then released. During the course of the study, total numbers in the park dropped dramatically to a level that's too low to maintain a viable population. Of the 88 dead or fatally injured animals found, 59% showed signs of predation., mainly foxes; nearly all juvenile hedgehogs' deaths were caused by predators. Camera traps set up around the park showed high numbers of foxes, although attacks by dogs could also be a factor. The study also recorded where hedgehogs were found in the park and revealed that short grass was a favoured habitat.

A habitat village at RHS Garden Wisley has been created using hollow-stemmed pruning's to provide shelter and food for cavity nesting bees and other wildlife. Stems from perennials support cavity nesting bees, which include mason, leafcutter and wood-carver bees to make nests in the hollow plant stems. They lay eggs in the stems, and the larvae can emerge the next spring or summer. Hollow stems of varying diameters are in the structures to attract a wide range of species. Many other invertebrates use plant stems in winter. Try to record the insects using the habitat hotel without disturbing them and if you add some stems with seed heads for birds and small mammals to eat, you may find toads overwintering at the bottom of the structure.

Gardeners are being asked to stay vigilant following reports of Asian hornets in new areas. In January, a disused nest was spotted in North Wales; another report came from South Yorkshire in February. Most of the confirmed reports prior to that had been from Kent and East Sussex. Report sightings via the Asian Hornet Watch app.

The National Garden Scheme is asking gardeners to take part in the new Big British Garden Survey to record the wildlife that visits their garden, allotment or balcony. Participants will also be asked to map their plots and complete a small habitat survey. The results will be used to get a better understanding of where wildlife is thriving in the UK and where help may be needed to encourage biodiversity. The survey runs until the end of September. For details and to register to take part, visit www.ngs.org.uk/the-big-british-garden-survey

This year's Wild About Gardens campaign is all about moths. Entomologist Dr Hayley Jones and wildlife gardening expert discuss these often-overlooked pollinating insects and what gardeners can do to help them. **Why are moths important in our gardens:** Moths are a diverse insect group with 2,500 species in the UK. Most of the caterpillars you encounter in your garden are likely to be moths, and they are a vital part of the food chain. So many things eat moths: birds who also feed their young with moth caterpillars, hedgehogs, bats, frogs, toads and small mammals. They form the backbone of our garden ecosystems and there is also evidence that moths are more efficient pollinators than bees and other day-flying insects. **Do moths play any other roles?** Yes! Because of their diversity, moths are an extremely useful indicator species for the overall health of an ecosystem. They've been well studied for decades so there's plenty of data, which means moths can help us look after insect groups we know less about. Scientists are currently diving into their DNA to uncover why and how this insect group has the ability to form new species relatively quickly in evolutionary terms, which could help inform conservation and address challenges such as food security. **Moths and butterflies: what's the difference?** There's no clear-cut line between them as they are both in the *Lepidoptera* family. Moths generally fly at night, but 150 of our UK species are day-flying – that's more than double the number of our resident butterfly species. While butterflies hold their wings upright at rest, a moth typically holds them tented around its body or flat against the surface it is on. Look at the antennae, too: butterflies have bobbles on the tips while moths' antennae are usually straight or feathered. There is also a misconception that butterflies are colourful and moths are a drab brown. The garden tiger moth has forewings marked like a giraffe, underwings that are red-orange with petrol blue spots and their caterpillars have crazy Mohican haircuts. **Why is there such a huge variance in their appearance.** Some species use camouflage to hide from predators, Some have bright colours or patterns to scare them. Others have markings that mimic other creatures like wasps or hornets. These vibrant and complex patterns are possible because moths are covered in thousands of scales like tiles, which are so small their bodies look furry. As well as keeping them warm, the scales easily detach so, if a moth is grabbed by a predator, it can escape. Another amazing method some moths use to avoid being caught by bats is to produce rapid ultrasonic clicks to jam their echolocation- they make themselves temporarily invisible. **How can gardeners give them a warmer welcome:** UK moths have declined by 33% since 1968. But the good news is that it's easy for us to help them. Some are picky eaters and only consume one plant, while others are more generalist, so the more diverse your garden, the more you'll cater for. Some adult moths use nectar-rich plants to supplement their energy. Help them by planting a range of strongly scented flowers, especially night-scented ones like evening primrose, dame's violet and honeysuckle, it's a diversity, across a local landscape that matters. Ivy is a great late source of nectar too. **Are lights a problem.** Light pollution distracts moths – the more sources there are, the longer they spend flying to them instead of feeding or mating. Angle lights down and switch them off when you are not using them and use warm toned bulbs rather than blue or white. Studies are now starting to show that caterpillars also react to light – they might be distracted and move towards it, or it may trigger nocturnal feeders to hide.

Plants/Trees

Last year was a good one for rare plants, according to the Wildlife Trusts. The first naturally seeded lady's slipper orchid was found in Yorkshire. This follows decades of work to reintroduce this plant, which was almost extinct because of over-collecting and habitat loss. In Northumberland, petty whin and frog orchids have been found on the Rothbury Estate. Frog orchids were last recorded on the estate in 1909.

The James Hutton Institute has looked at what trees could be used to replace the Scots pine, which is threatened by disease and climate change. Scots pine forests support 1,589 species within the UK, including 17 birds, 130 bryophytes, 539 fungi, 420 invertebrates, 468 lichens and 15 mammals – 137 species live only on Scots pine. The research found that just 41% of this biodiversity could be supported if 23 other tree species were grown together.

Plant Heritage has awarded National Plant Collection status to five new collections. These are holly at Bodenham Arboretum, Worcestershire; hawthorn across three sites in the North West; Venus fly traps in Essex; and tall bearded irises in Doddington Hall, Lincolnshire. HMP Eastwood Park Women's Prison in Gloucestershire now has a second collection, adding Agastache to its first one of tulbaghia

Hosta 'Red Ninja' was named winner of the Plant of the Year 2026 at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Its green leaves are streaked with dark red, while the stems are solid red. It's said to keep its vibrant tones in summer. In second place was *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Groundbreaker Ruby' which comes from the same series as 'Groundbreaker Blush'. The main difference is that 'Ruby' has flowers that turn a deeper shade of red than 'Blush'. In third spot was another hydrangea 'Velvet Night Red lace', which has almost black foliage and red lace-cap flowers.

Rosie Sanders' Apples by Rosie Sanders. Published by Batesford, 176pp, RRP £30. This authoritative guide shines a spotlight on both common and lesser-known apple cultivars and their fascinating histories. Featuring more than 140 detailed

watercolours of apples, their leaves and blossom, by five times RHS Gold medal-winning botanical artist Rosie Sanders, the book is both a trustworthy guide for identification and an endless source of inspiration for choosing trees to grow.

RHS Trials

In June the RHS reported that 100 roses had lost their RHS Award of Garden Merit (AGM) in a review conducted by the RHS to reflect the health reliability and availability of roses for modern rose growing conditions. However, seven newly bred varieties have since been given an AGM after being found to live up to RHS's high standards. These are lightly fragrant floribunda 'Lady Andrianna'; creamy apricot hybrid tea

Better Times'; sweetly scented shrub 'Delightful Deb'; yellow floribunda 'Honey BEE Mine'; rich apricot floribunda 'Impala'; rich red floribunda 'Trudy'; and bubble-gum pink hybrid tea 'Volcano'.

The RHS's first trial of gladioli was saved after companion planting helped to minimise the impact of sap sucking thrips. The insects caused streaking on gladiolus flowers, foliage discolouration and, in severe cases prevent flower buds from opening in the first year of the 2024-2025 trial at RHS Garden Wisley. After organic sprays were ineffective, the team noticed natural predators appearing so created a natural ecosystem in the second year by adding alyssum plants. They were direct sown in April 2025 across the beds of 52 large flowering gladioli. In May and June, were also drenched with predatory *Steinernema feltiae* nematodes. Thrips overwinter in gladiolus corms, so the nematode drench was the first line of defence to reduce their numbers. The alyssum then lured predatory insects, especially the pirate bug *Orius laevigatus*. The combination did not wipe out the thrips but got the level down so that the gladioli could grow and perform without the use on insecticides. For more information go to www.rhs.org.uk/gladiolustrail

Three *Phalaenopsis* orchids have received an RHS Recommended: award of Garden Merit in the first windowsill trial conducted by the RHS. *Phalaenopsis* Anthura Modena ('Phalhoch'), P 'Sunny Shore' and P 'Safe Haven' received the award after an unusual 13-month trial. In all, 120 RHS staff and volunteers, took 20 different *Phalaenopsis* home to observe. The orchids were kept in a range of rooms and aspects. The trial judge says: *Phalaenopsis* have been hybridised to be tough tolerant plants, but the trial showed things they don't like. One percipient had no heating and hers died. They like to be warm with no drafts, but they shouldn't be on a south-facing windowsill in strong sunshine either. Some participants also noticed that fluctuations in temperature caused buds to drop. Overwatering was the most common error and watching the roots is recommended. Once the orchids have been watered the roots turn green and healthy and then go silvery again when the plant needs watering. Use tap water at room temperature and always let the plant drain away the excess. The roots will rot if they are standing in water. To encourage their plants to reflower participants used a range of different orchid foods. Feed year round with a general orchid food. You can also use a general houseplant food such as Baby Bio but at half strength. If you keep them happy, they can live for at least 20 years.

Six scrumptious spuds have won a new Recommended: Award of Garden Merit in a trial of maincrop cultivars at RHS Garden Wisley. For the first time, the tubers were ranked for their taste as well as criteria such as yield and how well they store. The award winners, all of which can be planted in April, were 'Aloutte', 'Amour', 'Caledonian Rose', 'Marvel', 'Twister' and Valor. For more info go to www.rhs.org.uk/maincroppotatotrial

Wellbeing

The RHS has launched a science backed guide to creating an enhancing green space that benefit mental and physical health. The RHS Wellbeing Garden Blueprint for home gardeners is free to download and draws on 12 years of scientific and practical research to offer ideas to suit any budget and size of garden. From the types of scent and even individual birdsong that can evoke calm, to ideas to help those with dementia, there's something for every level of gardener in the Blueprint. Blueprint authors referenced 85 different studies including *The RHS State of Gardening report 2025* and drew on practical experience such as the creation of eight RHS wellbeing gardens for the NHS. They then identified three types of gardens that maximise wellbeing:

1. A Garden of Belonging - evoking a lasting sense of ownership and connection for all who use it.
2. A Garden of Emotional Wellbeing - a restorative place where people can rest and express their emotions
3. A Garden of Ecological Resilience - with diverse, robust planting that supports long term health for people and nature

An additional Wellbeing Blueprint for schools, hospitals, organisations and communities, which contains information on the logistics of creating a public space, is also now freely available too.

You can download both RHS Wellbeing Blueprints at www.rhs.org.uk/wellbeinggardenblueprint