



South & South East in Bloom & London in Bloom

Green Lines

January 2023



January has been a challenge, not just in terms of the Global & National situations, but the weather hasn't helped us, gardeners much. Long periods of freezing and cold weather mixed with heavy rainfall have limited what we can do in the garden. Still, this should kill off a few unwanted pests that, in recent years, have survived the milder winters and terrorized the garden, so perhaps there is some consolation.

My colleagues Ian White and Kevin Taitt provide insights into what to do and plan in the following few pages, and Molly asks us to do what we can to protect all species of Bees.

I am sure you have all seen the emails from our Campaign Managers, Anne & Kate, to remind you that our system is open for this year's entries. Although many will think it's a bit early, the sooner we know entry numbers, the better our planning becomes.

Thanks to Faversham, our first South & South East in Bloom seminar this year will be at the Faversham Guildhall on 29th March, and we are looking to add a second seminar in the west of the region; more information shortly. In London, we are pleased that Grosvenor Estates is providing the venue for this year's London in Bloom seminar, and its location should make access via public transport reasonably straightforward. This seminar will be on 26th April, again more details shortly.

I am often asked what the purpose of Bloom is. Not an easy one to answer but fundamentally.

- Care for the community, large or small, by becoming involved with activities such as gardening, horticulture and conservation or growing your own.
- Taking action to secure our environment wherever you live or work by pursuing the goal of supporting biodiversity, using sustainable gardening methods, and using drought-tolerant plants that can remove pollutants. Maintaining local green space, creating attractive features and places and engaging with people to work together for the betterment of all.
- Through gardening enhance well-being and mental health.

The above does not require groups to become involved with Bloom directly; however, by entering your community and becoming involved, you become part of a growing family working hard to respond to climatic change, with gardening at its heart.

Happy gardening. Ed.

The world is a very sad place at present, we cannot change the world, but we can make a difference to our small corners.

Quote from Lesley Crowcroft at Friends of Eastcote House Gardens

Don't forget the Big Garden Birdwatch 2023 -27-29 January

Down on the Plot - Kevin Taitt, Trustee & Judge



January/February traditionally are the months when nothing much is happening on the allotment plot, but some things can be done.

If you dig the plot, you can do this but keep off the plot if the soil is too wet. On my sandy soil, it is still too wet to do any digging at the moment after all the rain we have had. Mind you saying that. I never dig my plot until after Christmas, as if we have a lot of rain, it just pans the soil down, so it would have to be dug again. Digging when the soil is wet destroys the soil structure. What is soil structure? This is the arrangement of soil particles into granules, crumbs or blocks. Structure is vital to perform effectively as a growing medium, and soil needs an open structure. It is essential to allow water and air into the soil, which is important for healthy plant growth. This is why it is essential to keep off the soil as much as possible when wet.

There is an option that I know some people practice is the “No Dig” theory. This is championed by Mr Charles Dowding, who has an excellent website charlesdowding.co.uk where you can find lots of information about this subject.

You could also empty your compost bin onto the plot if the compost is well-rotted. Also, you could make another compost bin easily by just getting some old pallets from builders’ merchants and joining them together. Most plots have a clump of rhubarb, try covering a piece of it with an old bucket which will encourage it to grow in the dark, and you will get some lovely pink stems to cook. Now is the time to start Broad Beans if you grow them. I start my beans in an old mushroom tray filled with peat-free compost, water them, and place them in the greenhouse. Once they have germinated, grow them in plenty of light, keep them cool and plant them out later when big enough. By doing this, you tend to avoid the worst of the blackfly. One important thing you should do is keep a diary of sowing dates and when you plant out plants. This is a good reference for future years, so you can adjust sowing dates etc. if needed. If you are thinking of growing some soft fruit, raspberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants and red currants, this needs to be completed by the end of March at the latest if the bushes are bare-rooted. It would be best if you did this when the ground is frost free.

Now is an excellent time to plan what you are growing on the plot and where. Seeds are readily available in Garden Centres, but I prefer to order seeds from seed companies. It is always good to look through catalogues and select from the catalogue in the comfort of your armchair with a brew rather than spend time at the garden centre. The company I use and have done for many years is D.T.Brown, but many other seed companies, Marshalls, King Seeds and others, have websites. Try growing something you haven’t grown before for a bit of fun.

Seed potatoes are now available in many garden centres with 1st earlies, 2nd earlies and Maincrop. Onion sets, shallots and garlic are also readily available now. If you buy these from the garden centre, you will save yourself the postage and packaging.

Gardening tips for January/February Ian White, Trustee, Judge and Horticulturist

If there are suitable weather conditions, wash and clean your greenhouse with a diluted multi-purpose cleaner solution in preparation for the growing season if you have not already done so.



Now is the time to check and start preparing your seeds for sowing. Store your seeds in a box, and catalogue the sowing times each month to start your succession of sowing for your annual displays.

Check on your stored Dahlia tubers and Begonia corms to ensure they are firm and dry. If there are any signs of mould, discard corms or tubers and dress the remaining with flowers of sulphur to minimize risks of the spread of mould.

The leading nurseries are beginning to advertise early plant offers; plan and order your plug plants now. Alternatively, you can transplant early annual seedlings into cell trays and create your own plug plants, such as Lobelia.



If conditions are suitable and if we ever get a dry spell!! There is still sufficient time to look to lift any large clumps of herbaceous perennials; use two forks to divide the plants by inserting forks as illustrated below to divide and split plants.

Make sure you either replant fill in any gaps in your borders or share with other community projects or volunteers!!

Cut back any remaining dead foliage to herbaceous perennials just above the ground, and apply a thick mulch around the plants to suppress weeds and retain moisture for the summer. Make sure you don't cover the centre of the crowns of the plants, which can cause dieback and decay.





Order or buy bare-root roses now from your local Nursery; remember to either dig out and replace the existing soil with fresh soil and add rich organic matter or compost where existing roses have been previously planted

Alternatively, when planting, you can treat the ground with mycorrhizal treatment to prevent rose sickness; prepare by adding rich organic matter, compost, and replanting.

Prune back roses towards the end of February if frosts month just above a bud, with an angled cut to prevent die back, and remove crossing branches and dead wood.

Prune using loppers or secateurs Rhododendrons reducing down to a cluster leaves to encourage bushy growth and remove any dead heads still present from year.



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last

Plants to consider for future planting to add both scent, colour, and interest in January/February.



Hamamelis mollis Pallida

An ideal shrub that requires minimal maintenance, adding both scent and colour with its bright yellow spider-like flowers and produces flowers from late December to Mid-February with a strong sweet smell. The plant likes neutral to acid soil and are ideal in a border or woodland setting,

Chimonanthus praecox

A Deciduous shrub with a strong scent with wax-like flowers, flowering from January to February, is a relatively slow-growing shrub. The flowering stems can be cut and picked for an indoor floral display. The shrub can tolerate most soil types and thrives in sunny and part shady conditions.



Sarcococca confusa

An evergreen shrub from the box family, the plant is a bushy shrub with small sweet-scented flowers, followed by blackberries; the shrub ideally likes shade and prefers a well-drained fertile soil so it could be used in a courtyard or woodland area and requires minimal maintenance.

Lady Gardeners – Jean Griffin Deputy Chair, Trustee, Judge & Broadcaster



Perhaps one of the greatest of all lady gardeners was Gertrude Jekyll. Her influence spread far and wide, and much of what we do in the garden reflects her thoughts and deeds. She died in 1932, leaving behind a gardening legacy for us all to be proud of. Born in London, she moved to Surrey early and said that making friends with Dandelions in Green Park started her interest in plants. Perhaps, encouraging children to the garden will once again produce a gardener who will go down in the history books.

Always known as 'Miss Jekyll,' she stated, 'it is important to get to know your plants by sight and handling and inquisitive smelling. '

One of my favourite of all her quotes must be, gardening is an art demanding constant restraint and constant sacrifice as well as knowledge ' her words go on, but I have found over the years that a good gardener should work with nature and not against it and not be afraid to sacrifice something unhappy in the place where you put it !!!

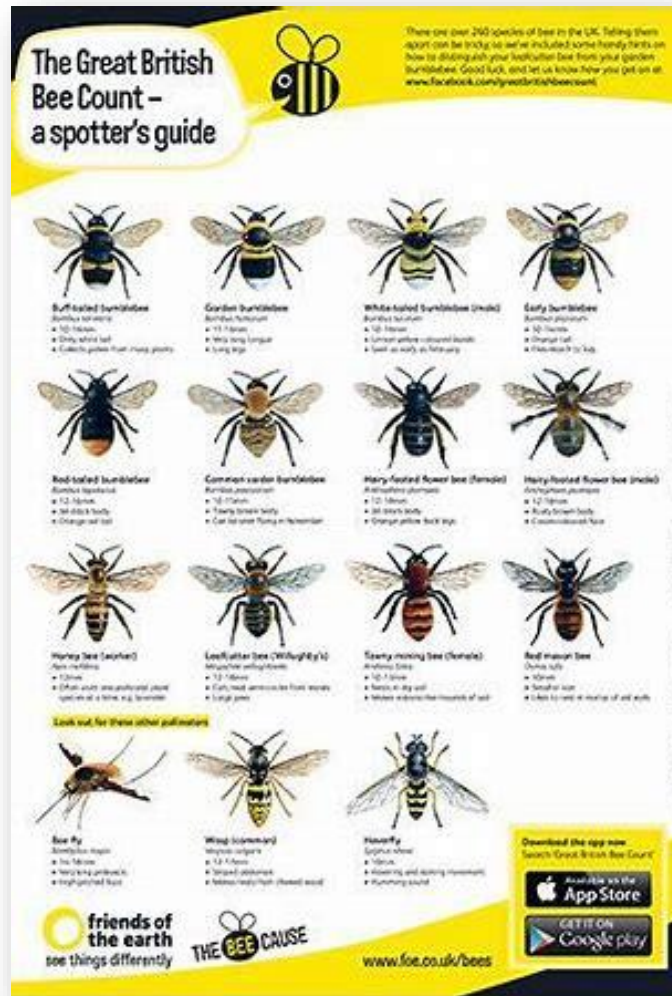
Fond Memories

Another great lady gardener was Joyce Robinson, who started Denmans Garden in Sussex.

Mrs R as she was known to me, was an amazing character, bold and forward thinking which is why she got on very well with John Brookes, who later worked with her before finally turning the garden into what it is today. I have fond memories of her telling me what to propagate in her inimitable imperious manner. I loved her straightforward approach and even now follow her direction of ' Girl, if it is in the way of something else which is better, pull it out, don't mess about. '



Let's talk about Bees Mollie White, Trustee, Judge & Horticulturist



The UK boasts an incredible 270+ species of Bee; if you are anything like me, you can probably name 5 or 10, those that are spoken about most, but what about the other 260? These beauties are unique; each is vital to our ecosystem, food production and survival of our planet. With our climate and environment evolving, we must extend the season of nectar and pollen for our bees to better understand their needs and adapt our horticultural practices to ensure their survival. With that said, we need to design our planting schemes so that there are flowers throughout the year, especially in the Autumn, Winter and early Spring. We need to look at the type of flowers, how quickly they can refill their nectar, and their nutritional value. For example, Borage can refill its nectar supplies in as little as 2 minutes, but the Birds Foot trefoil takes as much as 24 hours, but this doesn't mean the trefoil doesn't have other worthy benefits; the silvery leaf cutter bee chooses the petals of this flower in its nest construction.

A bee needs three things to thrive: food, shelter and water. I will focus on food and share some of my favourite plants to have your green space buzzing with delight 365 days a year.

In Spring, bees come out of hibernation, often earlier and earlier and need to rebuild their reserves. Snowdrops for the first emerging honey and bumblebees, Pussy Willow to aid the queen bumblebee needing to establish new colonies, also popular for the Clarkes mining bee and the chocolate mining bee. The Queen bumblebee also appreciates Apples, Pulmonaria, Norway Maples and Crocus. Pulmonaria and Crocus are also popular for the hairy-footed flower bee. For me, Hawthorn blooming is a sign of those frosts being left behind, and a whole host of solitary bees bask in their flowers; the red mason, tawny mining, ashy mining and the specialist hawthorn mining bee. Professor Dave Goulson once said that Phacelia is the most attractive plant on the planet for bees; perhaps it's worth a try. Wanting to dabble in your grow own, the Raspberry attracts early bumblebees, tree bumblebees, and solitary and managed honeybees; with the introduction of Cowslip to a more natural landscape, you'll lure in the long-tongued hairy-footed flower bee and garden bumblebee with its spring flowers.

Summer; is probably the season you associate with a plentiful amount of flowers; this is where it's worth thinking about which plants attract which species of Bee. Honeysuckle is ideal for long-tongued bees such as the garden bumblebee and the carder bumblebee; Monarda is similar, attracting a wool carder. With the perennial wallflower, Erysimum Bowles Mauve boasting flower bees, red mason, common carder and the garden bumblebee. Our summer staple of Lavender attracts the leafcutter bees, flower bees and mason bees whilst our herb garden has some of the most nectar-rich plants, firstly Marjoram, attracting a host of bumblebees, honeybees, leafcutter bees & furrow bees. Worthy additions would include Chives, Sage, Rosemary, Kale and Strawberries.

The common carder bee is also the primary pollinator of our Runner and Broad beans. Top favourites also include Alliums, Foxgloves, Roses, Knautia and Echinops. Vipers bugloss for its high nectar and pollen content, and lastly, the Forget me not, feeding solitary bees such as mason, nomad, mining & small farrow. For the natural landscape again, I suggest that Yarrow aid short-tongued solitary bees such as plasterers and yellow-faced ones.

Autumn; these are getting milder, often wetter, and we can be forgiven for the long summer exhausting us, but our bees need us now to build up their reserves for hibernation. Consider Abelia and Mahonia varieties for bumble and honey bees; perennial Salvia's have an incredibly long flowering season for tree bumblebees and buff-tailed bumblebees. Species such as Buddleia, Verbena bonariensis and Arbutus unedo are valid plant choices. Leaving Ivy unpruned aids the Ivy mining bee and is a late source for honeybees and queen bumblebees. The Erysimum is often still in full Bloom and joined by Sarcococca confusa, Fatsia japonica, perfect for shade and the Viburnum bodnantense Dawn with its strong scent. Hylotelephium spectabile hosts the honeybee, furrow bee & short-tongued bumblebee, whilst the white deadnettle plays host to flower bees, garden bumblebees & sometimes the rare large garden bumblebee



Winter: the time of year when the cold crisp days draw us outside, but the grey rainy days make us want to hibernate until Spring, but with 270+ species of Bee, there are a fair few that would appreciate a meal. Hellebore foetidus is good for the fantastically named Hairy footed flower bee, The Mason bee and even Queen bumblebees; both Mahonia Japonica Apollo & Lonicera fragrantissima have long flowering periods making them great additions to any garden. The aptly named Winter aconite, Eranthis hyemalis, helps bumblebees, honeybees' & the spring mining bee, whilst the lesser celandine: one of the earliest wildflowers, attracts queen bumblebees, spring mining bees and the tawny mining bee. Often seen as a pest as its sprouts from nowhere across your borders, but it's gone as quickly as it arrives and is hugely beneficial. A few worthy mentions go to Erica carnea; the heather, Salix caprea; the goat willow and Clematis cirrhosa Wisley Cream and as winter turns to Spring; don't forget the field speedwell and its carpet of blue flowers for small mining bees, the specialist red girdled mining bee & the queen bumblebee.

I hope that gives you a little insight into the vastly huge and complex world of bees and perhaps prompts a new year resolution to plant something for a rare, endangered or solitary species of Bee.

In Memory of Fantastic Fiona- Ali Cobel Swale in Bloom

Fiona Jackson has been the Eastchurch parish clerk for the past fourteen years. Along with Chairperson Kathleen Carter, she has transformed the village of Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey.

A few years ago, when the free parish's entry was announced, I suggested this might be an opportunity for them to give it a try.

They already did much of the work, with their local in-bloom judging, Christmas lights competition, Christmas tree festival, floral planters, Aviation Memorial Day, and other one-off events. They entered and caught the bug.

By their second year, they were a village entry and won gold. At the following meeting, Fiona said, 'Best Village,' that's our next goal! And by last year, they were entering the church, the local woods, the open space, and IYN Green Days and had encouraged a local business to enter too. Everyone was noticing Eastchurch!



Her enthusiasm had spread, and they were now a team of nine, linking with scouts, the garden club, the school, the church, Sheppey Matters, and the prison.

Fiona transformed the garden at the village hall with her 'partner in crime' Nicola.

The village was always themed for judging day and was planned with military precision. Fiona didn't suffer fools, and the answer 'No' was never acceptable to her - we loved her for that.

Returning after the Christmas break to hear she'd passed away was devastating for us all.

I'd seen her the Saturday before, her red hair and rainbow cardigan like a ray of sunshine on a gloomy day, bouncing around encouraging Christmas supermarket shoppers to buy an extra tin or packet to add to the Rotary Foodbank collection. She was a dedicated Rotarian, a parish clerk who went way above and beyond her duties and a plant enthusiast who loved the Bloom.

She is an irreplaceable part of her community.



Kickstart your physical and mental fitness in 2023 with Perennial's Health and Wellbeing platform and app

For a positive start to 2023, people in horticulture can kickstart their physical & mental fitness for free with Perennial's Health and Wellbeing platform and app.



The service provides advice and support for mental health, fitness and nutrition for all those who work, or have worked, with plants, trees, grass or flowers and their families. For people in this type of work, a good level of physical and mental fitness is necessary so it's important for them to keep their health and wellbeing in top condition.

Hundreds of people are already benefiting from the platform and app which is packed full of guidance, tools and tailored insights, created by experts, to help with the body, mind and life. There is something for everyone to explore whether you have a healthy lifestyle already or want to create one. Popular articles and paths include: Stay mobile - stay flexible, The stress boat, Looking after your emotional wellbeing and Snack smart. New content is added regularly to keep people coming back for more rewarding recipes, fitness plans, exercises, articles, podcasts, meditations and eLearning modules.

Perennial's Director of Services, Julia Hayne, says: "We're delighted to know the platform and app is enhancing people's health and wellbeing. Having a free service like this is really valuable right now and we're keen to share it with everyone in horticulture and their families. So, if you're enjoying it, please tell your colleagues and workmates and if you've yet to benefit, please do sign-up. Content is added all the time so there's plenty to keep you going throughout the year."

Take a look and see what's there to share at
perennial.org.uk/wellbeing



To download the app from Google Play or the App Store search 'Spectrum.Life'. Use the Organizational code 'well'.

Perennial's Health and Wellbeing platform and app is provided in partnership with Spectrum Life.

About Perennial - The UK's only charity helping people in horticulture.

Green spaces do wonders for wellbeing, yet those who work with plants, trees, flowers or grass, often need support more than nature can provide to overcome personal challenges or financial pressures. Jobs within the industry can be physical, low paid, or seasonal, with gruelling work that's dependent on good health and family support.

As the UK's only charity helping people in horticulture, there are lots of ways that we can help. We give free, confidential, advice and support and have a network of caseworkers and debt advisers across the UK. Get involved to support us in building better futures for people in horticulture and their families.

Helpline: 0800 093 8543

For more information, email: marketing@perennial.org.uk

Congratulations

Many congratulations to our London in Bloom Co-Chair Mark Wasilewski for his promotion from MVO (Member of the Victorian Order) to LVO (Lieutenant of the Victorian Order) for services to the Platinum Jubilee of Her Late Majesty The Queen.

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John O'Connor Grounds Maintenance employs over five hundred staff and manages over 250 vehicles across the UK, providing complete landscape solutions to various sectors, including commercial and local authorities. The Company has always been mindful of its business's impact on the environment.



London in Bloom Donors and Associates



London in Bloom is grateful for the continuing support of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, which has provided a grant to London in Bloom for 2022. MPGA is a long-established Charity that has played a vital role in preserving and improving countless gardens, neglected sites, and green open spaces across London. We provide modest grants to those who share with us a desire to improve the environment and, thus, the quality of life for the local community. Our work brings us into contact with various groups, including local councils, schools, hospitals, hospices, museums, voluntary organizations, and community groups.

The Worshipful Company of Gardeners, first mentioned in City Corporation records in 1345, is a survivor of the medieval craft guilds which exercised control over the practice of their crafts and ensured proper training through the system of apprenticeship. The Company is a "living" guild, and the numbers of its members are both professionals and amateurs actively involved in the craft. A common bond of horticulture and gardens unites all.



The Royal Parks Guild is a voluntary Partner Organization of The Royal Parks who are responsible for managing and preserving over 5,000 acres of historic parkland across London. Our aim is a serious one – championing The Royal Parks by promoting their qualities, including horticultural excellence and historical significance, whilst offering practical support where appropriate. Allied to this is the service to its members through the provision and development of a broad range of social activities and keeping members abreast of current and past news of The Royal Parks.

The Royal Parks has worked with London in Bloom since its inception in 1967.

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