



South & South East

&

London in Bloom

Bumper Christmas Edition



With the end of the year approaching its time to look forward to next year. Hopefully, the pandemic will be coming under control and the prospect of immunisation looks very promising.

So, what of 2021? We are planning to run our usual range of categories and to be visiting our communities and entries once again. The registration system is now open for our South & South East & London in Bloom.

Following the considerable amount of work to create an on-line desktop judging system, Trustees of both regions did not wish to waste the opportunities this provided in extending possibilities for other smaller entries to get involved.

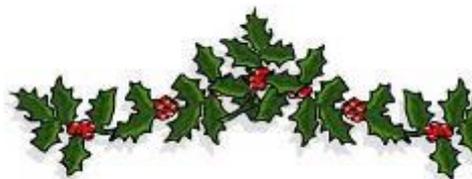
So, in January, we will be adding a small number of additional categories that will be desktop judged. These will include awards for Pubs, Restaurants, Hotels and Guest Houses to recognise the major role these business play in the tourism of our regions but to highlight their achievement after a devastating year for the hospitality industry.

Also given the considerably increased interest in homegrown produce in gardens, on balconies and allotments we are introducing a new category which has a working title of Grow (at) Home to recognise all of those who are growing vegetables & fruit.

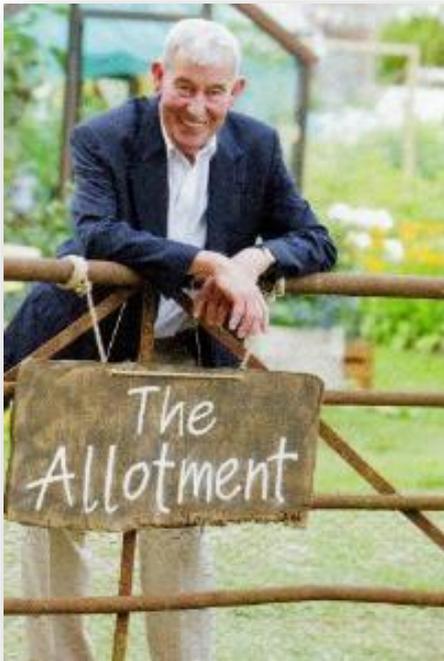
Finally, a category to recognise the efforts to encourage and support wildlife especially invertebrates such as bees, moths & butterflies a new category, currently being titled as Wildlife & Weeds will recognise the smaller scale efforts in gardens (front & back) and balconies or community gardens. Sadly, due to the major hit each of our regions took on a financial front, we will have to make a small charge for entry to cover our costs. We will be publishing our plans and adding the entry information to our website in the new year and let you all know where to find the information, criteria, and guidance.

Finally, from Mark & I, Anne & Kate, our Trustees, Judges and Ambassadors thank you so much for your support this year. You have all been outstanding and we wish you all a safe, healthy, and pleasant seasonal break and New Year when we look forward to visiting your entries and communities again.

Just for a bit of Christmas fun after a horrible year, send us pictures of your outdoor Christmas light displays. We will put these up on our facebook pages and share some Christmas cheer.



A Year to remember or Forget?



Every year since I retired from the Royal Parks which unbelievably was 23 years ago, I spend the 27th of December organising all my engagement into my diary and wall chart for the following year.

I always find great satisfaction when completed despite having to rearrange some double bookings along the way!!

January 2020 arrived, and I was on my travels. At the end of February, I had given 24 talks. In March we were being advised about a virus in China. I like many people assumed it would not affect us. How wrong you can be!

Slowly all the talks, shows, competitions were either being cancelled or rearranged to 2021.

As I have had plenty of time on my hands, I added up all my cancelled engagements until the end of the year

25 Shows, 52 talks, 10 gardening competitions.

During the last week in November, I helped my neighbour locate her tortoise so that it could hibernate for the winter in his box of

dried leaves in the garage. I jokingly suggested we joined him.

I have always adopted a positive attitude to life and therefore would like to reflect on all the good things that have emerged from the COVID virus.

I have only read or seen in films how everyone rallied to support each other during and after the 2nd World War. This same spirit has been very evident during this pandemic. Every day we have been informed of how people have got involved to help others. I have personally witnessed tremendous kindness.

Many of my Horticultural colleagues that I would see during my travels to the shows have made regular phone calls or sent messages via email. My neighbours have been fantastic at providing meals on wheels.

My deputy when I was Superintendent at Greenwich Park lives at the top of the road. Every Sunday he has personally delivered a Sunday roast which has been prepared by his wife. I have renamed him, Hudson, after the character in "Upstairs Downstairs".

Every Christmas I would get a selection of sporting autobiographies which I was always going to read but never found the time. No excuse this year.... Once I have finished the books they will be recycled to my neighbours in return for new books. I have managed to be involved in some virtual shows and have contributed to Radio Sussex & Surrey with DIGIT on a Sunday morning (10.00-13.00). One of the most positive results of the virus is the incredible increase in the numbers of people turning to gardens & gardening as therapy. The numbers of enquiries I have received via Facebook, email & Twitter is amazing. Joe Talbot the presenter of DIGIT says the number of phone calls and texts has also reflected this increased interest.

After a drop in interest, allotments have now got waiting lists again.

I understand from Peter & Anne that following communities getting together during the lockdown, new entrants are asking to take part in 2021 South & South East & London in Bloom. Great News.

Already seed companies are reporting tremendous interest, so I would suggest (if you have not done already) to order your flower & vegetable seeds and seed potatoes before supplies become short.

It would also be a good idea to purchase Growbags and compost for the same reason.

A colleague of mine who teaches Horticultural courses says that the number of people who applied to start in September trebled from the previous year.

Before lockdown, it would have been a struggle to get people to submit articles for the newsletter, including yours truly. Each month it increases in size and the circulation is growing. Keep up the good work.

Looking ahead to 2021

The Royal Horticultural Society is hoping to operate the following:

Malvern Spring Festival

5th May-9th May (The floral marquee will be replaced by a floral area in the open air).

RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival

6th July – 11th July

RHS Chelsea Flower Show

18th May (Members) 8 am – 8 pm

19th May (Members) 8 am – 8 pm

20th May (Public) 8 am – 8 pm

21st May (Public)c 8 am – 8 pm

22nd May (Public) 8 am – 8 pm

23rd May (Public) 8 am – 5 pm

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park

21st July – 25th July

RHS Hyde Hall

4th August – 8th August

RHS Wisley

7th September -12th September

Malvern Autumn Show

25th September – 26th September

Other shows where I will be hoping to judge

Toby Buckland Garden Show – Powderham Hall

30th April – 1st May

Gardeners World at the NEC Birmingham

17th – 20th June

Lots to look forward to as well as all the gardens visits.

Keep Safe, Stay Positive, Happy Gardening, Jim Buttress

[Chris Collins, Horticultural Consultant & Head of Garden Organic](#)

Well, it's safe to say 2020 has been the strangest of years and one no one could have predicted. In late March, I was extensively travelling the country, appearing on QVC, and was looking at a very packed and busy year, on March 23rd I started feeling unwell and promptly came down with Covid. In short, I took to my bed and 8 days later after what felt like a very intense flu, I got up and the whole world had turned on its head!



There are many things to be frustrated about but also it has been great to time to reflect and appreciate things. We have such busy lives I realised sometimes we just don't take enough time out to smell the Roses. For me, it gave me a chance to reconnect with the physical side of gardening. Suddenly I had all the time in the world to spend on the allotment. An amazing place, that in the afternoon I often found myself alone, which in London, a city of 10 million people, is some achievement. I can honestly say I've never eaten so well, fresh Veg straight from the ground is just unbeatable, let alone the mental well-being achieved by the gentle art of gardening. Whether you have an allotment or just a few pots on the balcony, growing a bit of fresh food reaps rewards. For those of you wanting to grow food but don't have much space, a large trough with quick crops, such as Salad leaves, Rocket, Spinach, sown thickly in short drills will greatly improve your salads. In a mild weathered London and on a South facing balcony, I can manage to do this all year round, maybe with the exception of January and February if

things get cold.

Long walks and plant spotting have been a feature of 2020, it once again stressed to me the importance of front gardens. Please none of this bricked driveway, these small gardens are havens for both plants and wildlife. You do see some great flora. The second lockdown has enabled me to see this autumn right up close. London's autumns seem to move in slow motion these days, due I think to the weather being so mild. The result is that in December I am still enjoying the beauty of autumnal Birch trees, my absolute favourite.

So now the New Year beckons and hopefully life will be getting back too normal come the spring. Once again, I find my passion for gardening carries me along in life with a smile. It also seems looking at plant sales during the lockdown, that a whole new generation of gardeners have discovered this fine art and that's good for us all. Good for our surroundings, our environment, and our well-being. I will be making a point to speak to as many of these new gardeners as possible in 2021.

It is with those happy thoughts that I'm off to get my fingers in the soil and it only remains for me to wish everyone a very merry Christmas.

CM Collins

1st December 2020.

For more information about Garden Organic and plenty of Gardening advice, click on the links below for a great listen.

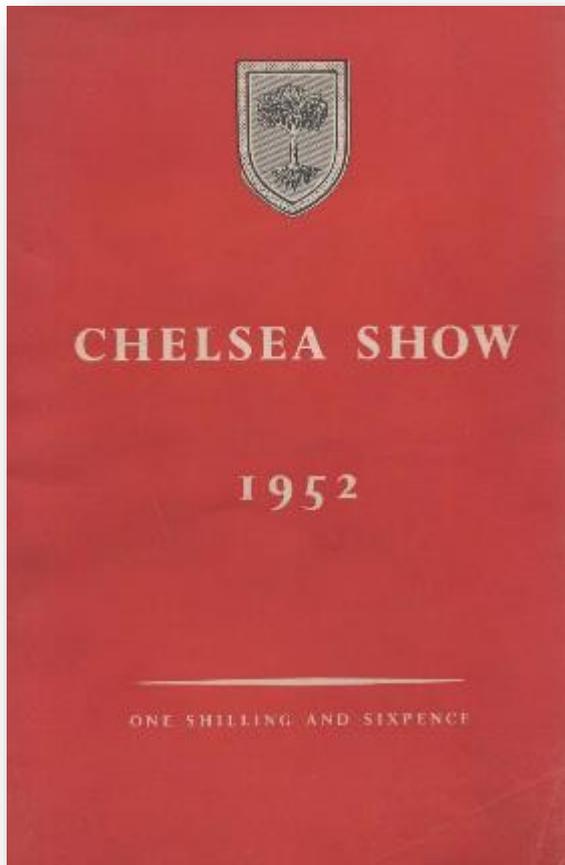
[The Organic Gardening Podcast](#)

[Unpruned interview - Tony Kirkham, Head of Arboriculture at Kew](#)

The Chelsea Flower Show – then and now – By Ruth Growney, Trustee

The other day my best friend Diana asked if I would be interested in a 1952 Chelsea Flower Show Guide that had belonged to her mother Pamela, who had worked as a PA/Secretary to one of the directors of Cuthbert's Tested Seeds and went to Chelsea every year. Diana still remembers her first visit to Chelsea when she was five years old!

I jumped at the chance to take a look through this before it got passed on anywhere else, and when I started looking through its pages, I thought to share it with you all via the newsletter as it was so amazing, a real trip down memory lane for some and an insight into how the RHS was in those days.



In 1952 the show guide was just over 100 pages long all in black and white with lots of drawn illustrations but with very few photos and it cost 1s 6d (around 7p in today's money). The show ran from the Tuesday to the Friday, with Tuesday being "Fellows and Associates Day" - if you were a fellow or associate you could go to the show for nothing as far as I can ascertain! Admission to the show for the public was 15s (75p) for the Wednesday and 7s 6d (37p) for Thursday and Friday.

It is remarkable how many of the company's advertising in the 1952 show Guide are still going today!

In 2019 the show guide was a glossy book in full colour of over 200 pages – stuffed full of all sorts of information on everything to do with the show. It cost £10.00 and to be honest I feel the show guides are worth every penny for the amount of information inside, they make a lovely reminder of your day, and more importantly, it has a map that shows you where everything is so that you can make the most of your day (I plan the most ergonomic route for me and try to stick to it).



As an aside - I volunteer at both Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows for the RHS and am always amazed at the questions we get asked by people (most of whom have failed to buy a show guide) – my favourite all-time question was a lady who asked, “Have I seen everything?” – as if I was supposed to know where this particular person had been all day?

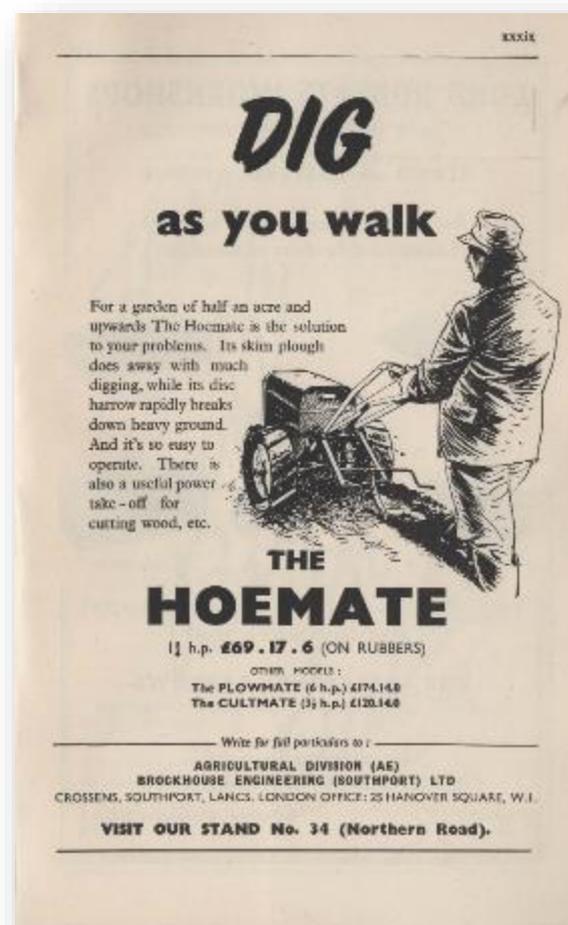
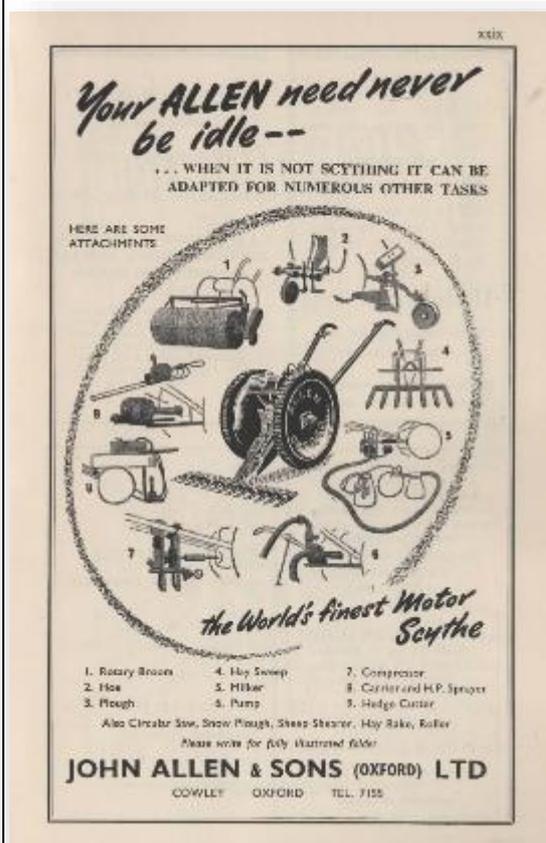
RHS Members were known as “Fellows” in 1952 and there were different levels of annual subscription costing either TWO, THREE or FOUR GUINEAS (for younger readers unaware of what a guinea is - it is worth £1.05p in today's money). The average wage in 1952 was £9 a week for a man and £5 for a woman!

A £1 from 1952 has the equivalent value of £22.50 in 2020 so you can work out the relative costs of everything if you so wish. For our younger readers, the pre-decimal currency was 12 pennies to the shilling, 20 shillings to the pound, and then you had wonderful coins like threepenny bits and half-crowns, but I digress



The subscription fees for 1952 were slightly less than the current membership fees (with my tongue very firmly in my cheek!) but I feel you still get tremendous value for money by being a member of the RHS when you consider all the various

perks involved - I especially love the monthly “The Garden” magazine. If you are interested in becoming a member of the RHS visit their web site at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/join?>



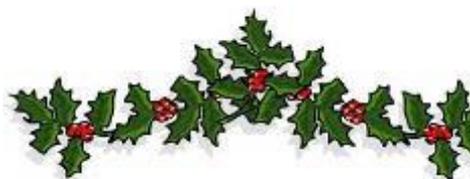
Anyone who has ever been to the Chelsea Flower Show in recent years or indeed watched it on television can appreciate the scale of the show and the number of exhibitors and show gardens spread over the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. In 2019 there were around 30 Show Gardens along with literally hundreds of exhibitors in the Great Pavilion and hundreds of more stallholders spread throughout the grounds and over 157,000 visitors.

In 1952 there were some 14 Show Gardens and a Marquee containing displays of Flowers, Fruit and Vegetables.

The initial page of the 1952 guide explained “The Purpose of the Show” and says “The purpose of the President and Council in promoting this show is partly educational and partly scientific. The exhibits shown at a meeting of the horticultural society are necessarily spectacular, but their primary objective is the instruction of the Fellows of the Society, and the public, as to what they may reasonably expect their garden to produce.” Not much has changed in the purpose of the show between then and now I believe except the use of the English language.



The Chelsea Flower Show is scheduled to run for 6 days in 2021 and is currently completely sold out to members (although I understand there are a few tickets available on the public days) - a testament to the enduring nature of the worlds most famous flower show.



GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR JANUARY

Reg Leach, Judge, and former Parks Manager

As the winter period is more associated with project work the next month or two, I will outline some of these tasks.

The main topics this month are Pruning of shrubs and Hedge planting.

Shrub Pruning:

Although pruning was touched on in the last Bulletin and many of you may well have started the pruning process, it's just worth reminding ourselves, as pruning techniques are useful all year round.

What are you pruning for – more flower; coloured stems; shape; containment; improving the health of the shrub, or all of these reasons? When to prune shrubs will depend on its flowering time in the year. As a general rule, the best time to prune flowering shrubs is after flowering has finished. This enables the plant to produce enough new growth to flower the following year.



The principles of pruning are: To remove all dead and dying wood; cut out thin and weak growth; remove stems that are crossing over each other and open up the centre of the shrub to allow more light in.

Sometimes we also need to prune to contain a shrub's size within a small space in the garden or stop it encroaching onto a public pavement. Always use secateurs for pruning - not hedge trimmers or strimmer's as I have witnessed! When you have finished pruning, the shrub should look a natural shape and **not** rounded off or lollipop shaped – unless of course, you are creating 'interesting' topiary!



Some shrubs flower on the previous year's wood while others flower on the current seasons wood. For example, Forsythia and Philadelphus will flower on the previous year's wood whereas Buddleia flowers on the current year's wood, so this will determine how and when to prune.

With Philadelphus prune after flowering (around July/August) taking out to ground level about a third of the older stems to encourage new growth from the base. A similar process is followed for specie roses (the more natural roses such as the rugosa types), which are pruned after flowering, taking out a

percentage of the old wood to ground level.

Always use clean, sharp secateurs, and make a sloping cut just above an outward-facing bud. Make sure that the cuts are clean, as a jagged cut may allow disease to get in. A clean-cut also allows the wound to heal quicker and to form a callous over the cut more effectively. Also, avoid leaving 'snags' a section of stem left above a bud or leaf joint. This will die off and may cause disease into the plant, so always prune as close above a bud as possible.

After pruning, lightly fork the soil around the shrub to relieve any compaction. Add well-rotted manure if you have any so that the winter rains can water the nutrients in, and it will also act as a mulch keeping annual weeds at bay.

When it comes to pruning shrubs that are grown for their coloured stems, such as Cornus (Dogwood), these should be pruned after the Winter period, just as the stem colour is starting to be masked by the appearance of new leaves in the spring. Cut the stems down to about two buds just above ground level where new red stems will grow. If the stems are not cut down, the bright red colour, which appears brightest on new wood, will be higher up the stem year on year and it will lose its vibrancy. Try inserting some of the cut stems into the ground as they can root reasonably easily!



Hedge Planting:

If you are considering planting a hedge in or around your garden, here are a few considerations to help decide what type of hedge you want. Hedging rather than fencing panels give better wind resistance; will be softer on the eye and the right mix of plants can also be a deterrent for intruders.

As we know there are far fewer birds in our gardens than there used to be, so we need to encourage them back. Planting a hedge will not only provide a good habitat but can also help provide a source of food and protection

and provide a good location for nesting. An ideal hedge for garden birds would be a native mix that includes beech, copper beech, purple beech, hawthorn, hazel, dog rose, hornbeam and guelder rose with some field maple.

If you want boundary security you could plant a hedge of hawthorn or if you are looking for good berry colour choose Pyracantha, either as single colour berry or select a mix of colours and being evergreen Pyracantha also has the benefit of retaining their leaves in winter. However, if you have young children thorny and berried species may not be appropriate! A favourite hedging specie of mine is Escallonia, also being evergreen and having good flower in early summer.

Native hedge mixes can be bought relatively cheaply from nurseries as bare-root plants whips, whereas Pyracantha is often pot-grown. Plant hedging material as soon as possible ideally before the end of February, so the roots can start to put on some growth before the buds break and the warmer spring weather arrives. If you have enough space a staggered double row of bare root hedging plants will help develop a good thick hedge quicker. Make sure bare-root plants/whips from a nursery have roots that have not been allowed to dry out. When you get them home, if the ground has not already been prepared, carefully heel them into the ground in their bunches, burying their roots and water in until you are ready to plant them out into their final location.

Ideally, a prepared trench, with a forked over the base and with well-rotted organic matter in the bottom is best to plant into, but native hedge plants are tough. You can plant them into the soil just by cutting a slit with a spade and placing the whip's roots into it and then firming it in carefully with your foot. A prepared trench though will help promote better root growth and help retain moisture during the following spring.



Don't forget:

- There is still time to plant bare-root trees, but make sure the tree's roots are wrapped by the nursery supplying them, to protect them from the cold air and from drying out. Always plant them to the depth of the nursery's soil mark on the trunk.
 - Collect up any remaining leaves from the garden and compost them.
 - Wash and disinfect last year's pots and containers during the winter months with Jeyes fluid, so they are free of pests & diseases and ready to reuse next season.
- If you haven't already done so, sow sweet peas in a greenhouse to give them an early start next year. They prefer deep pots.
 - There is still time to divide the hardier perennials to increase your stock.

Best wishes to all our readers and 'Bloom' entrants for Christmas and the New Year. Let's hope 2021 is a Horticultural Gem!

Bumper Christmas & New year Quiz

1. What is a "Chicken or Hen of the Woods"?
2. The botanical name for the Box Elder?
3. What common summer bedding plant has explosive seed pods?
4. Name three of the worlds deciduous conifers?
5. How many worm's species produce casts?
6. What is the name given to insects such as Aphids that produce live young?
7. What kind of plant is Mistletoe?
8. What common garden vegetable is called *Pisum sativum*?
9. An annual flower whose name is connected to a TV cook.
10. What does the K in NPK relate to?
11. 72, small 60, 60, 54 or 48 refer to what in years past?
12. What is the main constituent of John Innes compost?
13. What compost name do we associate with the peat-based compost of the '70s & '80s?
14. Haws, a famous name, associated with what garden implement?
15. What plant was Plant of the Month in the November edition?
16. The Monkey Puzzle tree originates from which country?
17. Lancelot Capability Brown hailed from which county?
18. Who founded Kew Gardens in 1759?
19. Name a Botanical Garden in England (Not Kew), Scotland & Wales?
20. What two trees benefit from fire (serotinous cones)?
21. Which deciduous conifer was discovered in 1947?
22. What is a Ha-Ha?
23. What compound is added to soil to counteract acidity?
24. Where was the first Tea grown in the UK?
25. What is the glass structure called that was used to grow exotic fruits and plants in Victorian times?
26. Where would you find the longest UK double herbaceous border?
27. A salad crop with a peppery taste, not Radish?
28. There are two main types of Celery- Name them?
29. When is a Geranium not a Geranium?
30. What shrub has a culinary use where the leaves and leaf buds are picked?
31. Through which type of cell(s) does a plant breath and respire?
32. Who discovered the first Forsythia and in what Country – *Forsythia suspensa*?
33. Name a plant associated with E.A. Bowles?
34. Which famous garden is associated with the Arts & Crafts movement?
35. What *Prunus* (Flowering Cherry) is planted at the new entrance to RHS Wisley?
36. Who was the youngest person (age 32) to become a Parks Superintendent and where?
37. Who designed the Palm House at Kew Gardens?
38. What *Crocus* specie produces Saffron?
39. If "alba" is white and "nigra" is black what colour is denoted by "aurantiaca"?
40. Where would you find the oldest UK Maidenhair tree?
41. Which Garden was created by Capability Brown in West Sussex?
42. Which famous garden in London was designed by William Kent?
43. From what tree does cork come from?
44. What compost was originally associated with Kettering, Northamptonshire?

45. Where is Edward Augustus Bowles VMH famous Garden?
46. "Surfinia" is a type of what bedding plants?
47. The original hardy winter Pansy was out of this world – what name?
48. One of UK's oldest seed companies based in Devon?
49. RHS Garden soon to be opened in North West – what is it to be called?
50. A cross between **Cupressus nootkatensis (Nootka Cypress)** and **Cupressus macrocarpa (Monterey cypress)** produces what dubious hedging plant?

Answers to December's Quiz will be on the websites in January www.sseib.com & www.londoninbloom.co.uk - Go to downloads and in the January's edition

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Aster | 16. Grapefruit |
| 2. Sweet William and Stinking Billy | 17. The Garden of Cosmic Speculation |
| 3. Giant hogweed | 18. Mango |
| 4. Weeping Willow | 19. Rose (or Rosaceae) |
| 5. Iris | 20. Garden gnomes |
| 6. Australia | 21. False. It's tulip bulbs. |
| 7. True | 22. Carnations |
| 8. Percy Thrower | 23. Percy Thrower |
| 9. Madagascar | 24. Ikebana |
| 10. Hidcote | 25. Sunflower |
| 11. True | 26. Monty Don |
| 12. Nebuchadnezzar II | 27. Watercress |
| 13. Saint Dorothy | 28. Orchid |
| 14. Cucumber (which is a fruit and not a vegetable) | 29. Tomatoes |
| 15. Fruit | 30. Yew |



Finding food in winter

Winter is a difficult time of year for birds, the days are short, and the nights are cold, so they must eat a lot of food in a short amount of time to have the energy to survive until the morning.

Also, food is harder to come by in winter. Insects are hibernating, grubs are buried deep in the ground and snow and ice make it harder to find food.

Each bird has developed its ways to make sure it finds enough to eat in the cold months.



Robins mainly feed on small invertebrates, which they find in the soil. They will hunt through the leaf litter and under bushes, where the ground is sheltered from frosts. Robins have proportionally very large eyes, which allows them to see well in these dark places.

It gives them another advantage, too – they can see in the half-light of dawn and dusk, so can start to hunt earlier and feed until later than other birds. In towns, robins will feed after dark in the artificial light.

Goldcrests, the UK's smallest birds, need to feed constantly throughout the day to build up their energy stores for the night. They have learnt a sure-fire way of making sure they never have to look too far to find food.

They feed on tiny insects and spiders that live on pine trees and spend most of their time in coniferous woodlands where they can easily flit from tree to tree, finding their ready-made lunches on the way.



Picky eaters?

Whilst goldcrests survive by having one main source of food, other birds will eat a huge range of foods, increasing their likelihood of finding enough to eat every day. Blackbirds will eat worms, spiders, fruit, and seeds. Herring gulls aren't fussy either and will even pick through our dustbins to find a bite to eat.

The master of restraint and forward planning is the mistle thrush. This is the UK's largest thrush and in early autumn birds gather in large flocks to feed together. But as soon as holly berries appear, they will split off on their own or into pairs and get defensive. Each bird or pair will find itself a holly tree or bush teeming with berries and will set up a territory.



The berries on that tree won't be eaten but will be guarded with such care that no other birds

can take them either. Mistle thrushes are so good at protecting their trees, just in case, that by spring many will still have their full crop of berries untouched, long after any unprotected holly has had its fruit stripped.



So, if you see a holly tree that's still full of berries at Christmas, you'll probably find there's a mistle thrush nearby keeping out a watchful eye for thieves.

Sharing your dinner with the birds

Many of your kitchen scraps and Christmas leftovers make ideal snacks for birds visiting your garden and can help them get the food they need to survive. Here's a quick guide to what you can put out:

Fat - fat from cuts of meat (as long as it comes from only unsalted varieties) can be put out in large pieces, from which birds such as tits can remove morsels. Make sure that these are well anchored to prevent large birds flying away with the whole piece. Please remember [cooked turkey fat from roasting tins](#) is NOT suitable for birds.



Roast potatoes - cold and opened up, these will be eaten by most garden birds.

Vegetables - cold Brussels, parsnips or carrots will be eaten by starlings and other birds but remember not to put out more than will be eaten in one day, otherwise, you run the risk of attracting rats.

Fruit - excess or bruised apples, pears and other fruit are very popular with all thrushes, tits, and starlings. Cut them up and leave them on the bird table or the ground.

Pastry - cooked or uncooked is excellent, especially if it has been made with real fats.



Cheese - Hard bits of cheese is a favourite with robins, dunnocks, blackbirds, and song thrushes. It will also help wrens if placed under hedgerows and other areas in your garden where you have noticed them feeding. Avoid feeding them very strong or blue cheeses.

Dried fruits - raisins, sultanas and currants are particularly enjoyed by blackbirds, song thrushes and robins.

Biscuits and cake - Stale cake and broken pieces of biscuits from the bottom of the tin are high in fat and ideal for birds in the winter.

Golden rules for feeding birds

Don't put out salty foods. Birds can't digest salt and it will damage their nervous systems.

Only leave enough that can be eaten in one day – otherwise, you may attract unwanted visitors, such as mice and rats. Always follow sensible hygiene measures, including washing hands thoroughly after filling and washing feeders.

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Keep calm and keep planting

Patience Atkinson-Gregory, MD of Amberol (www.amberol.co.uk) looks back on the big challenges and little victories of 2020.

The last 10 months have had more than their fair share of challenges for everyone. But times of hardship and difficulty can also bring out the best in people. The community has always been at the very heart of Britain in Bloom, and although many of our communities have been physically distanced, the spirit that makes In Bloom so special remains.

This means that many of you have found ways to keep calm and keep planting throughout the pandemic – all within government guidelines of course. And at Amberol, we have felt happy and privileged to be in a position to help. So, apart from a brief closure when the first national lockdown was announced which allowed us to ensure our premises were Covid secure and fully compliant with health and safety standards, it has been business as usual.

And the demand for planters' litter bins and benches is still there, proving that In Bloomers are a dedicated bunch, not to be deterred in their mission of making their environments better places to live, work and visit.

In fact, despite the significant challenges, looking back over the year, there have also been numerous high points to celebrate.



Britain in Bloom Buzz – our [Facebook group](#) continues to grow, offering a dedicated space for like-minded In Bloomers to share amazing photos, helpful tips, and the latest news. With the restrictions placed on us all by Covid-19, the group is a great place to communicate, catch up or be inspired. If you're not a member yet, do come and join us!

Inspiring plant ups for 2021 - 2019 was an exciting year for us, having commemorated 50 years in business. So, once the celebrations were over, we wanted to produce something

that would be helpful to our customers who have been so supportive of the company over the years.

We decided to mark the occasion by releasing our free Inspired Plant Ups guide. Published in the summer, the guide is downloadable from our website. It is comprised of photos and descriptions of some of our customers' most successful plant ups, illustrated with beautiful photos. The guide is perfect for inspiring your 2021 planning and planting.

The Inspired Plant-Ups booklet can be downloaded for free [here](#) or by going to www.amberol.co.uk/downloads/inspired-plantups.

A green study published - in the autumn we were intrigued to see the results of a very worthwhile collaboration with the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the Universities of Sheffield, Westminster, and Virginia. The project was a timely four-year study of the impact of green spaces on mental health, which we were delighted to support by donating 60 of our popular self-watering barrels planters, half for free and a half at cost price. The containers were distributed to participants living in areas of deprivation who planted them up to create green spaces. The report demonstrated that having a greener front garden can make people feel happier, more relaxed, and closer to nature – something which most In Bloomers can vouch for! Our congratulations go to Dr Lauriane Suyin Chalmin-Pui, now an RHS Wellbeing Fellow who researched as part of her PhD.

Photo opportunities - regular readers of our newsletters and social media will know that we run competitions throughout the year as a way of thanking customers for their support. So far this year we have had a 'Name the birdie' competition with our one-off chocolate orange bird bin, named Chomp, as the prize. Other competitions have included a quiz run in Clerks and Councils magazine with prizes of Amberol vouchers and prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed entries in our Inspired Plant Ups guide.

More good news on the competition front: our popular annual photo competition is now running all year round. This means that entries for our customer galleries can be submitted at any time throughout the year via the online form on the Amberol website at www.amberol.co.uk. Winning photos will be

awarded £200 worth of Amberol vouchers to spend on any rotationally moulded product so get snapping. Even in winter, keen-eyed Amberol spotters will be able to find some stunning displays. They don't even have to be in your region – the photo just has to be taken and submitted by the winner.

Looking towards 2021- We may not have seen our customers and friends as often as we would have liked to during 2020, but we continue to be here to support the Regional in Blooms and their members in any way we can, through sponsorship, advice, and personalised customer service.

The next few months may be challenging, but as we head into 2021, there is cause for optimism. And I do not doubt that the community In Bloom groups will emerge stronger and more determined than ever.

Thank you for your support and custom during this difficult year.



Free trees for schools and communities

Introduction to the Woodland Trust's Free Trees for Schools and Communities



The Free Tree Pack Scheme delivers over 1 million trees throughout the UK each year. The scheme supports and engages schools and community groups who wish to plant trees on publicly accessible land. It is funded by corporate partners and thus free for groups to access; please note there is no requirement for any community group using the trees to align themselves to those sponsors. We have sent trees to a broad spectrum of community groups – from the Scouts, football teams, health services, In Bloom and Friends of groups through to the Prison & Probation Service and all stops in between.

Ideally, group members would be involved in the planning, planting and on-going care and maintenance of the trees, before subsequently enjoying the benefits of the hedge or copse to which they had contributed. The trees are fully funded by our corporate partners and are therefore provided free of charge. The scheme is outlined on our website and applications are taken online at: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/freetrees. Many tree pack recipients are new to planting and we provide plenty of advice and information on how to plant the trees and look after them, both in the weeks leading up to delivery and in the years afterwards. We can offer a maximum of 420 trees to a group each delivery, but welcome repeat applications. Deliveries are made each November and March, so groups can benefit by 840 trees each growing season.

The packs offer 15, 30, 105 or 420 trees and a number of the choices are suitable for planting hedgerow. They arrive as 20-40cm small saplings so are very easy to plant – you don't need to dig a hole the size of a football! We have supplied trees to thousands of groups, and they are a fantastic resource, here's why:

- The trees, protection and planting guidance are provided for free by the Woodland Trust
- The planting can be done by all ages, group, and community members
- Suitable for rural and urban sites
- It provides a genuine opportunity for community engagement
- Community engagement continues with opportunities to hold social events whilst weeding /caring for the trees
- Secure boundaries, deter vandals and trespassers (thorny shrubs), provide shelter for people and wildlife, and increase air quality.

The scheme is very well-organised and aims to support the groups who participate with ongoing support for their trees.

