



South & South East & London in Bloom

Green Lines March 2021



Welcome to the March edition which has a new name – Green Lines which seems more appropriate as we will be pursuing a more ambitious environmental program in the coming years.

The closing date is near, so thank you to everyone who has entered this year and for those who have not yet decided we look forward to your receiving your entry as soon as. The Prime Minister has indicated we hope to be out of lockdown by June 21st and will be able to meet up before then. So, there should be sufficient easing of restrictions to allow a full Judges and Assessors program of visits to our Bloom community once again. If you are concerned about staying safe, we completely understand, and we will make sure that both you and our judges & assessors work most safely.

If you have not been able to achieve as much as you would wish due to the pandemic don't worry, judges and assessors will take a sympathetic view this year.

For 2021 we have a few additional categories including Front Gardens, Balconies, Pubs and Restaurants, Hotels and Guest Houses, Shops Fronts and Workplaces, Living Walls, Roof Gardens, Grow at Home, Wildflowers and Weeds, Residential Street or Road and of course the Environmental Challenge for Schools. So, a large or small project and displays are all covered. These go alongside our usual options for communities, Villages, Parishes, Towns, Town & City Centres, Coastal Towns, Cities, Parks & Greenspaces, and our It's Your Neighbourhood category across the region.

In the coming year, Trustees will be working to find a more flexible approach to Bloom allowing participants and entries of all kinds to participate in our annual celebration of communities across our regions and recognise our Environmental Champions.

The environment will feature more prominently in future as we all try to reduce our use of plastic and unsustainable materials, reduce the use of Peat and the use of Pesticides and conserve that most precious compound, water. Even though we have had a wet winter, garden watering during long periods of dry weather is something we should seriously consider reducing as much as we can. We, as Gardeners, have an opportunity to play our part in reducing pollution.

Best wishes from our Trustees & Campaign Managers at London & South & South East in Bloom

News Flash

South & South East in Bloom is proud to announce that Southern Water is joining forces with South & South East in Bloom as a sponsor for 2021. Many of you will fondly remember that Southern Water was our Headline sponsor from 2001-2014.

Southern Water supporting - South and South East in Bloom



Southern Water is thrilled to be back supporting South and South East in Bloom. This is such a community-focused initiative, which places environmental responsibility at the heart of its work while celebrating gardeners who are beautifying our South Coast and South East region villages, promenades, parks, homes, and communal green spaces. In addition to supporting all the fantastic entrants for this year, we will be helping to fund virtual seminars, where entrants can learn more about sustainable watering practices.

We are also proud to announce that we are supporting a new award category, which has been created and sponsored by us. The Environmental Challenge category will be open to everyone, not just existing entrants.

Those taking part will be asked to provide information about how they are reducing the use of water for gardening and horticulture, and what they are doing to manage the long dry hot summers. We'll also be taking into consideration the use of sustainable planting and any actions undertaken to increase biodiversity or to use planting to help reduce air pollution.

We are so looking forward to seeing all the fantastic entrants and wish everyone the best of luck with this year's awards.

About Southern Water:

Southern Water provides water and wastewater services to 4.2 million homes in the South East of England. It supplies 532 million litres of drinking water every day to more than two million customers and treats and recycles 717 million litres of wastewater for more than four million in Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight.

Water is essential to every aspect of our lives – for drinking, cooking, and cleaning. Southern Water is proud to be at the heart of managing water and wastewater services. The South East's water supply faces big challenges. The population of the region is growing fast, and climate change will bring droughts and more extreme weather. It's a future of more people needing water and wastewater services, with less water to go around.

Southern Water's vision is to create a resilient water future for customers in the South East. Its purpose is to provide water for life to enhance health and wellbeing, protect and improve the environment and sustain the economy. That's why it is acting now for the challenges ahead. We are proud to work with charities in the communities we serve.

Find out more about Southern Water: www.southernwater.co.uk

New Category

Southern Water is sponsoring a new category recognising the concerns about our environment, especially in the area of climate change and global warming. Issues such as the changing climate with hotter summers, air pollution and single-use plastics, the continuing effect pesticides have on our invertebrate pollinator populations and the loss of important carbon-storing habitats such as peat bogs are of considerable concern.

We therefore would like to hear what communities across both regions are doing locally to mitigate these issues. This could be as easy as an email to tell us what you are doing or planning as an individual or as part of a group or participate in our new Environmental Challenge category this year.

This new category is free to enter, and the winning entry will receive a small prize and all other entries will receive a certificate to denote their participation and action to support the environment.

The Environmental Challenge will be a desktop category with no need for a visit. We will only need you to tell us what actions you are taking under several heading (series of tick boxes) and we are asking for no more than 500 words that tell us what you have achieved and are planning to achieve.

Your submission will need to be with us by Friday 30th July with results published in September.

For an entry form and further details please contact Anne or Kate. anne@sseib.com & kate@londoninbloom.co.uk

London in Bloom sponsors and supporters for 2021

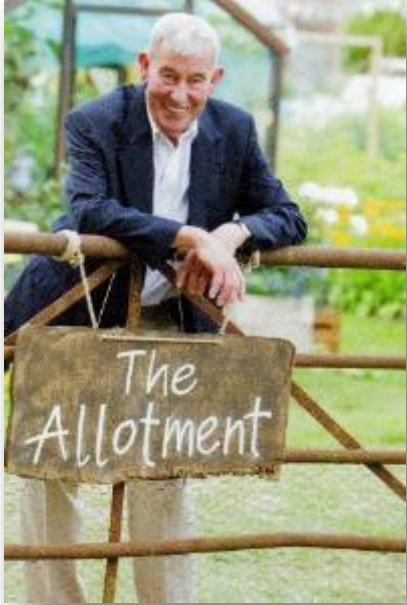


South & South East in Bloom sponsors and supporters for 2021



If you want to be part of either London in Bloom or South & South East in Bloom as a sponsor or contributor, please contact us.

A Gardeners Travels 'seconde partie' – Jim Buttress VMH – Patron



Once the show was set up, I asked the ladies what time the other judges were due to arrive. To my utter amazement, they said you are the only Judge!! I insisted they should select two ladies to assist me in judging classes 46-56 which involved flower arrangements.

Prior to the judging taking place the publicity and media co-ordinator told me that there would be a press and media presentation.

The organisers said entries had exceeded their original figures. Then announced to wild cheering and applause that they had over 700 students and individuals registered.

The launch lasted an hour, and I was extremely grateful for my interpreter! I was asked to explain how I would judge the exhibits.

Like all good judges who judge at shows, I had already visited all of the entries and was relieved to find quite a few classes only had 2 or 3 entries. Based on previous experience I explained that in my view it would be appropriate to award first, second or third and in some cases a commended.

Unfortunately, it was obvious to me that the ladies were allowing personal feelings to decide the results. Without a doubt, it was the most difficult

judging I have ever experienced. When it was all completed the organisers had arranged for all the schoolchildren to see what they had achieved in their respective classes. I took a well-earned break back at the hotel and prepared for the banquet and particularly to escort Her Highness around the show in my dinner jacket plus Bowler Hat!!

I explained all the reasons for making the awards and everybody seemed very happy particularly Her Highness until we arrived at Classes 41-42 which were the fruit classes. I stared in utter dismay at the empty plates and stalks. It turned out the children had eaten all the fruit!! The Committee agreed to find some more fruit from the entrants, and I would return and judge the following day before the show opened to the public.

As you can imagine the Gala Dinner was incredible. The only problem being for me was the only refreshment was fruit juice.

I sat next to Her Highness and an extremely elegant lady who picked up my name card and promptly asked who I was as she said, 'My name was not familiar to her'. I'm immediately thought this is going to be a long evening with no alcoholic drink to help. The lady was Di Hart Dyke, Tom Hart Dyke's Auntie and was married to David who was the son of Tom's beloved Granny. David was Captain of HMS Coventry which was sunk in the Falklands conflict. One of their daughters is Miranda Hart Dyke.



Before the show opened to the public, I decided to check there were no other problems. One of the classes in the floral arrangements required the entrant to create an artistic association with the sea. To make it more realistic several entrants had used models of shipwrecks and had added one or two Goldfish!!

To my utter horror because of the floral Oasis which they had used to arrange the flowers, and aeration supply for the fish had ceased to work and unfortunately, they were all lying upside down at the bottom of the vase alongside the wrecks. I told you in the February edition you would not believe what happened when judging took place!!



During the next two days, Stephen Bennett and I were taken to see every garden that had entered. Each one was like an entry into the Chelsea Flower show. They were almost unreal, and it was obvious to Stephen and me that each entrant was determined to spend more than their neighbour!!

Everywhere we were taken the emphasis was on Money. Finally, the reason why the Royal Horticultural Society became involved was the hope Her Highness would bring her Garden to the Chelsea Flower Show. I think the idea sank without a trace along with the Goldfish.

Keep safe, keep smiling, keep gardening.

Jim B.

Answers to Jim's Quiz in the last issue

1. Freesia
2. Busy Lizzie
3. Cowslip
4. Anemone
5. Foxglove
6. Sweet Pea
7. Bluebell
8. Crocus
9. Tulip
10. Cyclamen

GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR APRIL

Reg Leach, Judge, and former Parks Manager

Many of us will have now had our first Covid-19 vaccine and some may have had the second one. In any event, please keep safe and follow current guidelines whilst working outside, particularly in teams. That said, let's get out there and enjoy the brighter weather!

Spring is now coming on apace, so start to put your gardening plans into action. Most of you will have decided on your colour scheme for this year during the winter months, but if you haven't don't delay!

Consider the flowering time of bedding plants so they are at their best from mid-June and throughout July. Think about colours that complement each other and if you are using perennials and herbaceous plants, colour and height combinations are an important factor. Consider their ultimate heights so that smaller plants don't become hidden at the back of the border by the time they are flowering.

With warmer days and crucially warmer nights, those less hardy plants that you have in pots are at less risk of frost. However, if you have brought them out, keep an eye on the weather forecast and take them indoors at night if there is a risk of frost.

Sowing:

Some of those half-hardy subjects you sowed undercover last month can be brought out at the end of the month – protecting them at night if necessary.

Continue to sow hardy annuals direct into the ground where they are to flower – a useful technique in filling in gaps within borders that can give a splash of colour later on.

Borders:

Now is a good time to apply a general-purpose fertilizer to beds and borders as most plants are coming out of dormancy.

Prune back those early flowering shrubs once they have finished flowering, such as Forsythia and Ribes (ornamental current), to give them maximum time for new growth to establish, that will bear next spring's flowers.



Planting:

Now is the time to plant new herbaceous plants, which are beginning to appear in garden centres. If you already have herbaceous plants in your garden, new shoots will be emerging, so if you want to increase your stock, try taking cuttings from these new shoots. These shoots will be forcing themselves up through last year's leaves and mulch, so use care.

When buying any potted plants from nurseries only select healthy looking plants and make sure they are not pot bound. When selecting plants always consider their ultimate height, how colours will work with your existing plants and where in the border they will go. If you have an area in the garden where there is little or no colour throughout the year, select flowering plants to fill the void.

After any planting makes sure plants are well watered in.

Lawns:

It's not too late to repair worn areas of the lawn, either by seed or turf. If you decide on turf don't allow it to dry out once laid, as there is a risk of shrinkage until it has rooted in. For further details on the lawn, repair sees January's bulletin.

If you applied an autumn/winter feed, this would have helped to strengthen the grassroots. Now you should apply a high nitrogen feed to the lawn to help achieve a good greensward for the coming season.

As the weather is warming up you can apply a selective weed killer (but only if necessary) and a moss killer if required. Don't forget, a good lawn sets off the rest of the garden well. If using a moss killer, make sure the dead thatch is raked out after the moss has been killed off and mow the lawn to collect any remaining thatch, preferably with a box mower.

A box mower is always preferable for mowing the lawn as the clippings can be collected and composted along with other garden organic matter and there will be less risk of future thatch build up in the lawn.

Preventing a build-up of thatch allows the grass to breath better near the surface.





Roses:

Now is a good time to start applying a fungicide to deter mildew and black spot. Re-spray regularly throughout the spring and summer season to keep it under control. If you never managed to carry out the final winter prune of your Hybrid T roses in March, do so now. Reduce their height and remove any crossing over or weak growth and open up the middle of the plant. Remember to regularly deadhead roses throughout the flowering year to encourage more blooms.

Baskets & troughs:

If you have space in the glasshouse, polytunnel or conservatory, make up and plant baskets and troughs at the end of the month. They can then be grown on and begin to get established, while protected under glass or polythene. When ready to hang up or place outdoors in late May or early June, they will have put on a good amount of growth and colour, giving an instant impact once in situ. Make sure baskets and troughs have been fully hardened off before placing them in situ outside.

If you use basket liners try to get those that enable planting around the sides (not just the top). Planting the sides will give a much better impact when hanging on brackets and lamp columns.

Don't forget:

- Hoe beds and borders regularly to prevent emerging weeds from flowering and seeding, especially those annual weeds such as chickweed, shepherds' purse, and groundsel.
- If you have early spring-flowering bulbs in the lawn allow them to die down and the leaves go brown before mowing them off, as they need the leaves to build up a food store for next spring's flowers. The same applies to bulbs in beds and borders too.
- Keep control of those ever-increasing numbers of slugs and snails and watch out for earlier signs of aphid attack!
- While spring is on its way, we are still at risk of frost and dare I say it, even snow, so keep less hardy plants protected at night.
- Check hanging basket brackets and chains in advance to make sure they are safe to use for another season. Replace, as necessary.

Lavender Blue Dilly Dilly.....



Living in Croydon, I often find myself driving past Mayfield Lavender in Banstead, Surrey, an original Victorian Lavender Field, and this got me thinking about the rich horticultural history that surrounds us across London and the South and South East.

In this modern-day, it may be hard to imagine that just over 100 years ago much of Surrey was covered in miles and miles of Lavender Fields. The warm, mild weather and the rich chalky soil made for the perfect place for this once thriving industry. This was once the main produce of the North Downs.

“English” Lavender, as many of us know it, hails from the much warmer climes of the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and India. Its genus name comes from the Latin word, “lavare”, meaning to wash, its many other benefits are well documented.

When Lavender was first cultivated in England seems to be up for debate, but it is believed to be between the 1500s and 1600s. It is, however, believed that Lavender was introduced

to England with the arrival of the Romans. Roman soldiers carried herbal first aid kits containing various herbs to treat a range of ailments, with Lavender being used to dress wounds and for its soothing properties.

There are examples of Lavender being grown in Medieval Monastery hospitals and used by the Catholic Church to ward off evil spirits. By the 16th century, it was renowned for its cleanliness benefits, hung from bags to freshen the air, used to prevent moth damage in clothing and sprinkled in beds to help to prevent vermin and quilted into hats to provide comfort to the brain. Lavender was also popular with Royals, both Queen Elizabeth 1st and Queen Henrietta being partial to the sugary Lavender conserve.

During the Great Plague of the 17th-century prices skyrocketed, with street sellers being able to command higher prices for their wares as this was a much in demand herb. Tied to wrists it was believed that this would ward off pestilence and disease. Grave robbers in France doused their bodies and face masks in Four Thieves Vinegar, which contained Lavender and was believed to prevent them from contracting the Black Death.



Most known for its popularity during the Victorian era, Lavender girls selling posies were a regular feature in the Capital. It was also commonplace in English houses, used to scent linens and clothing and particularly popular in perfumes, with English lavender commanding higher prices than that grown across the channel in France.



Both World Wars saw an uptake in the use of Lavender for its antiseptic properties. The huge volume of casualties meant modern medicine struggled to keep up with demand, leading doctors to turn to more traditional forms of medicine.

Over the following years, the commercial production in England declined, the once-lucrative fields of Mitcham, Wallington and Carshalton making way for urban development. However, in recent years as people strive to use more natural products and the benefits of these plants are rediscovered by a new generation, Lavender fields once again have found popularity.

So, if you are lucky enough to find yourself driving past these fields in the summer, open your windows and let your car be filled with the glorious smell and the hum of the countless insect that this bounty attracts.

(Here are just a few of the popular sites across the South and South East, a short drive from London that you can visit yourself - Mayfield Lavender, Banstead, Surrey. Castle Farm, Shoreham, Sevenoaks. Lavender Fields, Alton Hampshire. Lordington Lavender, Lordington, Chichester. New Forest Lavender, Landford, Salisbury)

With more of us, as a result of the pandemic, exploring what England has to offer, it seems only right that we highlight some of our fantastic history of horticulture but also the incredible places we have access too.

Kate Harris – London & South East in Bloom Campaign Manager

Broadstairs Town Team Garden Group - Sue Wainwright



From floral bedding to an oasis for bees and butterflies, creating an oasis for wildlife on a raised bed in Broadstairs was challenging. The bed was created in the 1990s on a vacant plot of land on the edge of a busy main road as part of a winning entry for Broadstairs in Bloom. In those days, the bed was planted with seasonal bedding.

Fast forward to 2014, a group of the Broadstairs Town Team (BTT) Garden Group volunteers started to renovate the raised bed. Gone was the formal planting. In its place was a large Phormium surrounded by poppies to commemorate the start of WW1. By 2019, our dry Kent climate had taken its toll and the once statuesque phormium was dead and weeds had taken over. As the volunteers started to pull away from the dead leaves, the huge plant began to disintegrate. We carefully assessed the remaining plants. The established Lavender bushes, Helianthemums and Erysimum were all retained both for their colour and their attractiveness to bees and butterflies. After adding compost, we started to fill the huge hole with plants donated by volunteers. These included Salvias, Echiums, Verbenas, Agaves and Osteospermums. The bed was alive again both with colour and wildlife.

There is no water source on or near this site. In 2019, during dry weather, a resident offered to fill and leave largely used milk bottles of water for volunteers to use on the bed. This arrangement was not sustainable and in September 2019, we started to look at other options. There is no suitable place to install a water butt to collect rainwater. As the area is accessible to the public and wildlife, we also discounted a dipping pool/container. We reverted to a review of the planting. We decided an injection of bright, drought-tolerant planting would not only reduce watering but increase the kerb appeal of the bed, particularly during the hot dry summer months. We added tall daffodils and bright red and yellow tulips to give spring colour. To give summer colour, the most cost-effective interim solution was to grow perennials from seed. One of our volunteers chose the perennial Coreopsis, Early Sunrise, because of its hardiness and long flowering season. The Coreopsis seeds were sown in January 2020 to ensure they would flower in year one.

By May 2020, the work we did in 2019 to improve the overall kerb appeal was beginning to show results. We added donated home-grown yellow Alyssum and Geums which complimented the established Helianthemums and Erysimum.

Our review of the planting identified the single Euryops plant provided a long season of bright yellow daisy-like flowers. Volunteers deadheading often had to compete with the bees. This South African evergreen shrub thrives in our seaside location and is very drought tolerant. Mature plants are expensive so one of our volunteers took heel cuttings in Spring 2020. By autumn, we had several plants that were mature enough to be planted out in the bed.

To further reduce the need to water, we planned to top-dress the bed with chipped bark. Ideally, this should have happened in Spring. In July, as restrictions eased, a small group of volunteers were able to top-dress the bed with a load of chipped wood sourced from a local wood yard owned by the son of one of our volunteers. Even during summer, this greatly reduced the watering frequency, helped to suppress airborne weeds, and provided attractive ground cover on the bed.

While working on the bed, one of the volunteers spotted a small stone placed at the front of the bed. It was inscribed with the words "Lovely Thank You". This little act of appreciation was very much welcomed by all during this difficult year.

Empty Shop Fronts

Whilst it is very sad that so many shops are now empty in our High Streets, this may inadvertently provide an opportunity for 'Bloom' groups around the London and South-East regions.

I know that some Bloom groups have previously taken up the opportunity to take on empty shops. It's a very good way of promoting your group whilst brightening up an empty shop window.

Talk to your local councillor, ward representative, your local authority or shop landlord to see if you can display your Bloom group in an empty shop window, while a new tenant is sought.

There should be no cost to you if you are just using a window and not utilities etc, so it may just be worth giving it a go. Good publicity of your Bloom group cannot harm, and it helps to get the message out to residents who may not be aware of your group and the good work you are doing.

Here are a few pointers for a shop window...

- Display 'before and after' Bloom projects you have done that clearly show improvements to the local environment and street scene.
- Give details of how volunteers can join your team and get involved.
- Many of you involve schools in annual poster designs for the upcoming Bloom year, put these in the window.
- Put up a diary of events that will inspire other residents to join in. All ages welcome.
- Put up a 'Looking for Sponsors' poster.
- List the benefits of your local Bloom group and list future projects.

I'm sure you can think of many more things to add to the above list.

Above all, make the shop window colourful and inspiring.

Also link up with the local press for publicity shots, with maybe a 'Raising Bloom Awareness' article. Perhaps invite the Mayor to the shop front opening.

With spring fast approaching this is a good time to promote your Bloom group.

Good luck!

Reg Leach, Judge, and former Parks Manager

Making a Buzz for the Coast Ali Corbel Greenspaces Activities Co-ordinator, Swale Borough Council

Here in Swale, we have been working towards improving our borough for both our community and wildlife.

We have been lucky enough to be part of the Bumblebee conservation trust (BBCT) 'Making a Buzz for the Coast,' a lottery-funded project over the past three years as I mentioned in the last newsletter. www.bumblebeeconservation.org/making-a-buzz-for-the-coast

During this project, Swale has been identified as an important area for rare bees, including the rarest 'Shrill Carder' which is thriving in our country parks and coastal green spaces.



With this in mind, we have been working towards increasing early forage for all insects, extending the flowering season, and amending our grass-cutting contract to encourage wildflower areas.

As the project ends, we have been allocated legacy seed from BBCT to add to green spaces across Swale.

Photo 1- shows bulbs taken this week at Wildish Road Faversham. We added three areas of machine bulb and seed planting in December 2019- here, at The Glen on the Isle of Sheppey and at Mill Way in Sittingbourne.

This early forage is followed by a seed mix that flowers until early summer.

Photo 2- Hellebores and daffodils in Central Avenue Sittingbourne, taken last week. Adding seed mix this week to improve the summer planting.

This year we are working with all our in-bloom groups to educate our communities about the decline in pollinators and what we can do to change this. We are working with councils, business, and communities to increase biodiversity across Swale. We have added similar machine bulb

and seed sowing to outline the Castle site in Queenborough this winter. Seed is to be added to a green walkway at the Meads in Sittingbourne, with a new wildlife-friendly front garden at a Sittingbourne 'extra care' home. We are planning a nature walk with the Kent wildlife trust to promote wildlife gardening, along with creating a prairie and community garden at Beach Fields in Sheerness.

Faversham in bloom was delighted to be presented with 'Neighbourhood with the Best Buzz' – a special award for the end of the project in association with Kent Wildlife Trusts 'wild about gardens'.



Faversham was the overall winner for private and community gardens that were creating and promoting pollinator-friendly gardening. Plaques have been put up around the town to highlight the hard work of all the community garden volunteers.



Photo 3 - Neighbourhood with the best buzz celebration event at the Abbey Physic garden November 2020- Ted Wilcox – Faversham in Bloom chairman, Emma Lansdell – BBCT project manager and Alison Reynolds- Mayor of Faversham.

As only a small group were able to meet due to Covid 19, a larger virtual celebration took place online with a wildlife gardeners question time for the Faversham community.

Photo 4- Queen buff tail on red dead nettle at the Bee (r) garden Faversham on 23rd Feb 2021- IYN entry.



Photo 5 –Machine bulb and seed sowing in November at Queenborough.



News from the Ham Lands

Flowers are few and far between on the Lands. There are still swathes of last year's clematis (old man's beard) in the branches of shrubs, but almost the only obvious plant in flower is a small tree, the cherry plum, *Prunus cerasifera*. It is often confused with blackthorn, but flowers much earlier, and has larger, whiter more beautiful flowers.



Other trees are beginning to show growth, and even early flower, if one looks closely. Examples include elder, elm, willow, and ash.



The ground flora is similarly sparse, but one might find an occasional precocious, 'out-of-its-normal season' flower of cow parsley or the blue alkanet. Our main colony of coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara* is starting to bloom abundantly at its normal time. There are several patches of the common, small, early flowering white crucifer, wavy bittercress, *Cardamine flexuosa* that can be spotted if you look closely.



But there are other flowers too.

The Woodland Trust has noted that sweet violets are slowly disappearing. This is probably due to them being foraged for culinary use. Sweet violets are an important source of nectar for woodland butterflies, so it is important not to forage uncommon species like the sweet violet. The Trust recommend planting your sweet violets at home if you'd like to use them, they can spread quickly once established.

More common on the lands are the red deadnettle or purple archangel, *Lamium purpureum*, and white deadnettle, *Lamium album*. Many different species of long-tongued insects visit these flowers, including the red mason bee, bumblebees and burnished brass moth. The caterpillars of the garden tiger, white ermine and angle shades moths feed on the leaves, as do green tortoise beetles.

Several spring bulbs, possibly of garden origin, such as snowdrops, crocuses, and aconites are mostly past their best, but the daffodils are just coming into their prime.' Rev. Coupland's crocus picture is taken on nearby land.

