



South & South East & London in Bloom

Green Lines April 2021



We are coming to the end of our first ever Zoom seminar program which were well attended. We are pleased that we have had a very good response to this year's competitions across both regions, thank you and we look forward to visiting entries as normal. More details of how visits will work this year will be sent out in advance of judging.

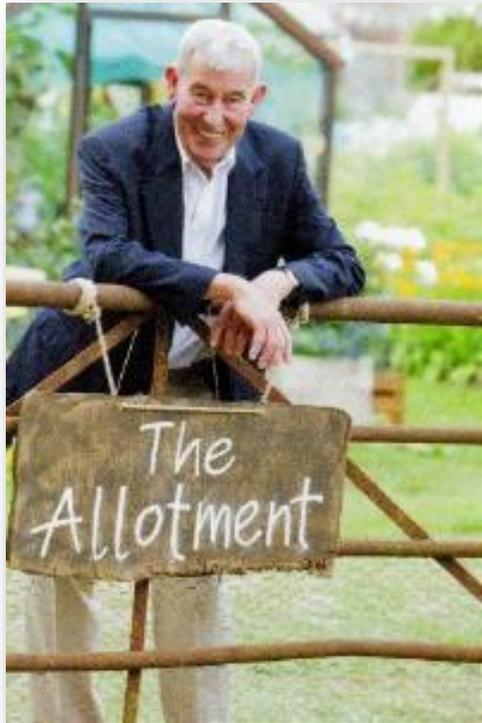
During our seminars we highlighted the new Environmental Challenge award which asks entrants to let us know what is being achieved to reduce air pollution and the excessive use of water during long dry periods through the planting of plants that are more resistant to drought and/or plants that can reduce air pollution by trapping particulates. Reg Leachs' article in this edition has some pointers towards plant selection.

The Environmental Challenge is sponsored and supported by Southern Water but is open to all across both regions. We would like to hear from individuals, community groups, shops and premises, Villages, Town, Cities/Boroughs, Business Improvements Districts etc., and all involved in the Bloom.

We are planning a major review of Bloom in 2021 and information gleaned from the Environmental Challenge will help us understand what should be included in our programs in the future. Entry forms can be obtained from anne@sseib.com or kate@londoninbloom.co.uk. Entrants are asked for a written background to your activities and images of your work will be considered for an award to recognise your achievements. Submissions must be made by the 30th of July 2021.

It also been a sad month, not only the passing of HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh for which we send our deepest sympathies to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the members of the Royal Family. Also, our highly supportive and influential London in Bloom Patron, Daniel Hearsom (Pembroke Lodge) passed away on the 7th of April. Our condolences go to his family.

Best wishes from the Trustees and Campaign Managers



Jim Buttress VMH – Patron

Everyone is hoping the Prime Ministers “Road Map” will bring about some sort of normality to our lives. However, how lucky are we that nature does not adhere to government guidelines or conform to “lockdowns”. Spring has arrived and has put a smile on everyone’s face.

Everywhere you look whether it is your garden, the neighbours or the local park, trees and shrubs are bursting into colour.

I think because of all the restrictions, this spring show seems more important than ever. It has also increased sales at the Garden Centre, apparently in some cases they are higher than pre covid for this time of the year.

However, without wishing to dampen your enthusiasm please accept the following advice. Unless you have a greenhouse, cold frame or conservatory do not purchase the summer bedding plants that are readily available. They should not be planted in the garden until late May or early June when all risk of frost has gone. You could plant window boxes, hanging baskets or containers provided you have cover at night. A couple of layers of fleece will ward off a few degrees of frost if you haven’t got access to a frost-free area.

Instead of the usual deluge of cancellations for talks and show judging, I have received several invitations which is encouraging. I include all of the following dates which have been rearranged and will go ahead provided the governments guidelines hold.

RHS Orchid & Plant Show at Hyde Hall 18th -20th June 2021

RHS Hampton Court Palace - Garden Festival 5th-11th July 2021

RHS Hyde Hall Flower Show 4th-8th August 2021

RHS Garden Wisley Flower Show 7th-12th September 2021

HS Chelsea Flower Show 21st-26th September 2021

Malvern Autumn Show 25th-26th September 2021

Due to the increased sales of the Gardeners World Magazine, the publishers have decided to add two new shows to their existing show at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

Gardeners World Live, at Wimpole (near Cambridge) 3rd-5th September 2021 & Gardeners World Live (NEC) 26th -29th August 2021.

In late February/early March, The London Children's Flower Society arranged for all the children's entries to be submitted for a virtual judging. It was encouraging to see all the children's efforts despite the restrictions.

One of the entries which I judged was particularly commendable. When the children received their Hyacinth bulbs which they planted in pots and waited until they were in flower and sold them to raise funds for the school garden clubs.

Recently the 2019-20 the most visited tourist attractions in Great Britain were published. I was delighted to see for the first time a garden had reached number 8. It was the RHS Gardens at Wisley which only the previous year was only placed 29th.

Finally, I would like to suggest the following plants which I grew last year and flowered right up until the first frost.

Amaranthus Love Lies Bleeding, Cosmos Peppermint Rock & Psycho White, Rudbeckia To To Gold, Tithonia rotundifolia The Torch (Mexican Sunflower) which grows up to 150cm.

I was also sent a picture of a flowering currant, which was new to me (no surprise I hear you say) Ribes sanguineum White Icicle, absolutely stunning.

South East Flower Shows 2021

August 7th Southfleet Gardeners

September 4th Shorne Cottage Garden Society

September 11th Biggin Hill Horticultural Society

More information about opening times and other detail will be published nearer the time.

Keep safe, keep smiling, keep gardening.

Jim B.

GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR MAY

Reg Leach, Judge, and former Parks Manager

May is a very important month for preparing and planting our gardens with summer flowering plants, sowing hardy annual flower seeds, and planting up baskets and troughs. The more you are able to achieve this month the more rewarding the garden will look later on. One of the main themes this month is hanging baskets.

Trees and Shrubs:

Although it is getting late you can still plant trees and shrubs, but only containerised ones and you need to make sure that they are well watered in after planting and check regularly. To give them their best chance, dunk their roots while in their containers into a bucket of water, for at least an hour before planting, to ensure the rootball is moist all the way through. As mentioned previously try to avoid buying overly pot bound plants.

Pruning:

Hard prune those early flowering climbers, such as Clematis montana, now they have finished flowering. With the montana forms of Clematis, which are rampant growers, you need to be harsh with pruning each year; otherwise, dead wood builds up with new growth getting further and further away from the fence or wall you are growing it against. If you never got around to pruning Forsythia, Ribes, Winter Jasmine and Osmanthus in April as they were still flowering, hard prune them now.

Lawns:

Lawns now need regular mowing, preferably weekly and if possible, with a box mower to reduce the risk of thatch build up. Maintain a defined edge to borders and paths by edging up each time you mow. A regular liquid feed will help maintain a good green sward. Use a selective weedkiller if weeds persist, but only if you feel you really need to. Flowering dandelions or clover for example will attract bees and if you've sprayed those flowering weeds it increases the danger to bees, so please avoid weedkiller if at all possible.

Roses:

Tie in climbing roses as the new growth lengthens to increase the framework and once, they start to flower, regularly deadhead to encourage further flowers throughout the summer.



Bedding Plants:

Before the end of the month, you will need to remove winter/spring bedding plants from beds, borders and containers and prepare for planting out summer bedding. If you have polyanthus, they can be lifted, divided, and planted in a shady corner at the back of the garden for the summer period to grow on for replanting in the border again next autumn. Any spring bulbs that will have died down, lift, and store, or try naturalizing in borders.

Prepare the beds you have cleared, ready for summer bedding by lightly digging them over and top up with new compost adding a slow-release fertilizer. If the soil level in your beds is some way below the brick or wood surrounds, try to add enough soil to bring the level nearer the top of the surrounds, so that the bedding will give a better visual impact once flowering. Check out your local garden centre for bedding plants, or if you sowed your own earlier in the year, harden them off ready to plant out.

Seed sowing:

Sow hardy and half-hardy annuals directly in beds and borders or into troughs and containers. Perhaps sow some of the old favourites such as: Nasturtium, Godetia, Clarkia, and Cornflower. Try sowing some into gaps at the front of shrub and perennial borders for an extra splash of colour later on. If you want to raise your own winter/spring bedding plants for next season sow seed of Polyanthus and Wallflower now in an empty patch at the end of the garden allowing them to mature, before lifting and planting out next autumn.



Summer Flowering Bulbs:

If you have not already done so, now is the time to plant them into pots and borders, once all risk of frost has passed, bring out Dahlias, Agapanthus and Cannas that were kept and stored in frost free conditions last winter, but as mentioned last month, be ready to bring them in overnight if there is a risk of a late frost.

Borders:

Keep up with regular hoeing to keep annual weeds from flowering and seeding. Check herbaceous and perennial plants are well supported as they become taller. There are a number of ways to support them. For an informal look use dried twigs, green canes, or bamboo canes. For a more formal look use wooden pyramids/tripods,

During the season cut down old flower spikes on plants such as Lupin and Delphinium to encourage a second flush.

Hanging Baskets:

Some of you will have already planted up your baskets last month and be growing them on under cover.

If you haven't started yet, rather than buy a pre-planted hanging basket, why not make up your own. When buying a basket, try to get one with a water reservoir bowl at the base. I prefer open sided baskets, lined with moss as you can plant the sides as well as the top, but it's your choice.

As an alternative, line a basket with a pre-shaped liner and punch holes into it, then gently push small bedding plants through from the outside.

Visually it is better to see a fully planted basket that also covers the sides of the basket's frame with plants. When selecting plants for your basket you'll need some height on the top and importantly trailing plants for the sides.

You may consider using just one type of plant, such as impatiens (Busy Lizzie) to create a ball of colour.

You also need to consider the flowering period too. Select plants that flower from June through to the first frost to get the best value from your basket.

Here are a few tried and tested favourite plants for baskets:

Petunia – trailing surfinia types; Ivy Leaf Geraniums; Bidens; Trailing Begonias; Trailing Fuchsias; Brachycombe and Busy Lizzie. Include foliage plants too, such as Helichrysum to set off the flowers.

If you do decide on an open sided basket, line the outside edge with moss and add the compost gradually, planting through the sides, one layer at a time, as you work your way up the basket from the bottom to the top.

It is better to use peat free compost and one that contains a slow-release fertilizer, you can also add a gel to the compost mix that holds water and releases it during times of drought, helping the plants survive if you are away for a few days. Peat free compost is preferable, as peat can dry out quickly and is difficult to wet again. As with any planted container, water, and feed regularly throughout the summer to keep the basket flowering well and deadhead frequently.

Before hanging your basket, check the bracket is safe and secure and that the chains are in good order and can take the increased weight of a watered basket. Make sure they are high enough so nobody can walk into them!



Watering:

If you have not previously invested in a water butt, it is well worth it. Rainwater is so much better for the garden than tap water and is a great environmental benefit. Connect the water butt to down pipes from the house, garage or other outbuildings and you will be surprised how much water is collected. When watering plants, to minimize water loss through evaporation water before sunrise or after sunset, this will avoid leaf scorch too.

Pest control:

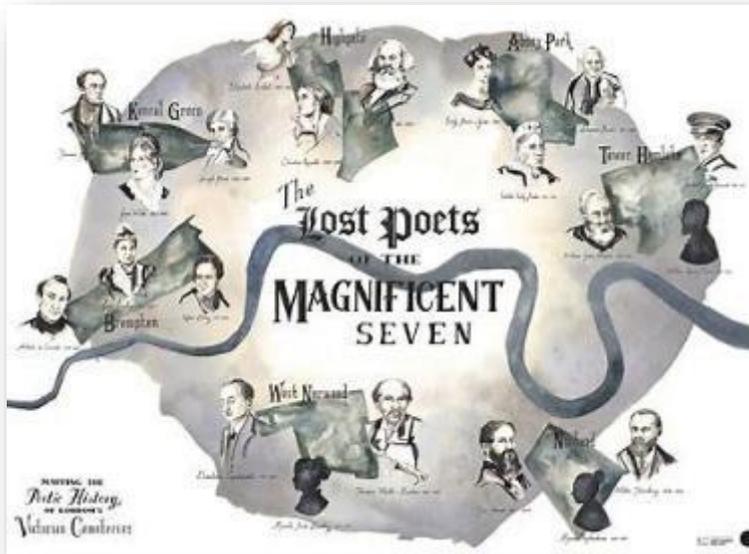
Continue inspecting plants for aphid attack, black spot-on roses and control with pesticide and fungicide and control slugs and snails. Use natural controls and natural ingredients wherever possible.

Don't forget:

- Watch out for late frosts.
- Hoe beds and borders regularly to prevent emerging weeds from flowering and seeding, especially annual weeds such as Chickweed, Shepherds Purse and Groundsel.
- Trim hedges regularly, before the new growth becomes woody. BUT check hedges for bird nesting first!
- If you have tight bunches of snowdrops in the garden, now they have flowered, lift, thin and replant while they are 'in the green' – still have their green leaves - and split the bunches and plant out in other parts of the garden.
- If you have hanging baskets, the water that drips from them will create the perfect environment for weeds to flourish at their base, so weed underneath regularly.
- Keep paths clean of weeds, moss, and algae.
- **And, most important of all** – when you have a sunny day, give yourself time to sit in the garden and admire all your hard work!

Photos © Reg Leach

The Magnificent Seven - Kate Harris. South & South East & London in Bloom Co- Campaign Manager



Though macabre in their nature, cemeteries are often places full of fascinating architecture, that fill many of us with intrigue about their history and the thought of those who have gone before us.

Of the 130 plus cemeteries across Greater London, the Magnificent Seven are some of the largest, each steeped in their own unique rich history.

In 1800 the population of London was thought to have been around the 1 million mark, but by 1850 the population had grown rapidly to around 2.3 million people. The increase left people living in crowded conditions, this in turn contributed to epidemics of typhus, influenza, scarlet fever, measles, diphtheria, cholera and smallpox. Burial grounds could not keep up with the demand.

An Act of Parliament passed in 1832 allowed and encouraged new cemeteries to be created however, these were not going to be like any cemetery London had seen before. Inspired by Pere Lachaise in Paris, a beautiful garden cemetery, more akin to a park, with tall trees for shade,

winding paths to encourage people to stroll and benches to allow visitors to sit peacefully, these were to be something new.

Kensal Green Cemetery, in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, is the oldest and largest of the seven, opening in 1833, covering 72 acres. Amongst those laid to rest here is Charles Blondin, master tightrope walker, who famously crossed Niagara Falls, with a 160ft drop below him. These days due the range of flora and fauna, the site has two marked conservation areas and has recorded over 30 species of birds.

West Norwood Cemetery, in the London Borough of Lambeth, was next to open in 1837. The 40-acre site was the first cemetery in the world to use gothic style and home to 69 Grade 1 and Grade 2 listed buildings. Under the site are catacombs, the maze of tunnels is able to accommodate 3500 coffins.

The cemetery is now recognized as a site of nature conservation value, bats, foxes, stag beetles, woodpeckers and Tawny Owls make up a few of the 35 recorded bird species. Field Maples, Lime trees and a collection of Oak trees pre-date the cemetery. West Norwood Cemetery is also a first-time entrant into London in Bloom this year.



Highgate Cemetery was built in two stages, the west opening in 1839, followed by the east in 1854. This site, covering 37 acres, is shared by the London Boroughs of Camden, Haringey and Islington. The cemetery has some fascinating structures including those in Egyptian Avenue and the Circle of Lebanon, home to a 280-year-old Cedar of Lebanon until it had to be cut down in 2019. The cemetery was neglected after WW2 allowing nature to begin to reclaim the land, becoming home to insects, bats, badgers, foxes, around 40 species of bird and 20 species of butterflies. Ferns, mosses, and wildflowers are visible across this nature reserve. Karl Marx and Michael Faraday just two of its notable residents.



Next came Abney Park Cemetery in the London Borough of Hackney, opened in 1840. Set amongst 31 acres, it was the first cemetery in Europe to use as an arboretum, planted with over 2500 trees and shrubs, organized in alphabetical order, from A for Acer to Z for Zanthoxylum. Also, a nature reserve, there is a huge diversity of fungi, resident bats, owls and other animals. Famous lion tamer, Frank Bostock and William Booth and his wife Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army, are just a few of the interesting people buried on the site.

The 39-acre Brompton Cemetery, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, was also opened in 1840. The site has small scale wooded areas, meadows and over 60 variety of trees, including Lime trees that date back to around 1838, creating a habitat that attracts countless insects, moths, butterflies and mammals and birds, making this a site of importance for nature conservation. Beatrix Potter, who lived locally, is known to have often visited the site and possibly took inspiration for the names of her famous characters.

1840 also saw the opening of the 52-acre Nunhead Cemetery, in the London Borough of Southwark. Possibly the least well known of the Magnificent Seven, it is no less fascinating in its architecture and history. During WW2, the iron railings around the perimeter were removed to be used in the war efforts and in 1976 the catacombs were raided, and jewelry and lead stolen from the coffins. Much like the others, the site is a designated local nature reserve, home to some 207 insect species, some rare and unusual and a fascinating tree walk.

The final of the seven to be built was Tower Hamlets Cemetery, in 1841, in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Alongside the notable names found here, there are many unmarked graves of local working-class people and sailors drowned at sea, washed ashore at nearby Docklands. These days, also a local nature reserve, the site is home to a natural woodland, attracting all manner of wildlife. Tower Hamlets Cemetery has been part of London in Bloom for many years and our judges get to experience the work firsthand.

The range of habitats these urban havens can offer are incredibly important, from mosses and lichens that grow around monuments and graves, to the ancient trees that provide shelter to countless bird species, the hedges, secondary woodland and even the well-maintained flowerbeds and lawns. The relatively undisturbed nature of cemeteries allows for the development of unique habitats. Recognized for their biodiversity and managed as natural conservation areas in many cases, these offer a much-needed green oasis for our incredible native wildlife.



Hope is Growing

Communities in Bloom, our Bloom cousins across the water in Canada are promoting the planting of yellow flowers this summer as Yellow is a symbol, of Hope. Everyone can get involved, from individuals, villages & towns to schools and churches, anyone can join in. . So why not grow or plant yellow flowers this year and send in your photos which we can share on social media. Yellow flowers have another benefit as they are attractive to pollinators.

DROUGHT TOLERANT AND POLLUTION CAPTURING PLANTS

Reg Leach, Judge, and former Parks Manager

We are all becoming increasingly aware of our environment and our precious natural resources. There are of course many complex issues around the environment, but there are two areas in particular where we can help in a small way to improve the air that we breathe and to reduce the amounts of water we use in our everyday gardening world.

So, to that end I have put together a list of plants that are either drought-tolerant, so they need less water once established and a list of plants that do a great job capturing air pollutants. These lists are by no means exhaustive but may encourage us all to consider such special plants in new planting schemes or for replacing old and tired planted areas. I'll also touch on front garden car parking at the end of this article.

Drought Tolerant Plants:

If we think of Mediterranean (Temperate) plants, particularly if we have been lucky enough to travel to some of these countries, then this gives us a good idea of which plants can tolerate hot dry summers. Rosemary and Lavender are probably some of the best examples. Our towns and cities have microclimates not too dissimilar to the Mediterranean climate in summer.

Another consideration is to replace high maintenance traditional bedding with herbaceous/perennial planting, which are also very beneficial to wildlife. With the likelihood of milder and wetter winters and dryer summers in the future, particularly in the south east, we need to rethink our traditional planting schemes.



Acanthus.

Here's a list of some drought tolerant plants, including perennials and herbs:

Bamboo

Callistemon

Ceanothus

Cistus

Crambe

Cytisus (Broom)

Echinops

Erigeron

Eryngium – Sea holly

Lavender, Rosemary and Santolina

Gypsophila

Hibiscus

Iris – rhizome types such as the Bearded and Siberian

Lavatera

Marjoram

Myrtle

Nepeta (Catmint)

Olive trees - do well in urban locations.



Phlomis

Phormium

Poppy - Californian

Sedum

Sempervirens

Sisyrinchium

Stachys

Tamarix – good for coastal areas and tolerant of salt winds.

Thyme

Verbena

Yucca



Perovskia

There are a number of late spring/summer flowering bulbs, corms, and tubers too, if they are planted out into borders rather than in pots such as: Agapanthus, Canna, Crocosmia & Dahlia

It has to be remembered that such drought-tolerant plants as listed above, will need some nurturing and watering initially to get them started, but will soon need less water (if any) to mature well. Ensure the soil is moist after planting and before applying a mulch, which will help to retain the moisture in the soil. However, if you have heavy clay soil that is very wet in winter, some of the summer flowering bulbs and tubers, which are not winter hardy may rot if left in the ground, in which case lift at the end of the summer and dry off. Pot up into dry soil and keep in a frost-free shed or outbuilding until the following spring, when they can be planted out again.

Another consideration - is to replace an ornamental lawn with a wildflower meadow, this will help reduce maintenance and the regular use of air polluting mowing machines as well as attracting a great deal of wildlife especially bees and butterflies!

If you still wish to use bedding plants here are some that are less demanding of water –

Gazania

Geranium (Pelargonium)

Impatiens

Nasturtiums

Nicotiana

Osteospermum

Portulaca

Ricinus (Castor Oil) - good as a 'dot plant' in formal schemes.

Pollution Capturing Plants:

Probably the best example of a pollution capturing tree is the London Plane, which not only captures pollutants in its leaves, which then fall in the autumn, but they are also able to shed their polluted bark at intervals too. Another good street tree is Pyrus 'Chanticleer' which is fastigate (upright) and has cheerful flowers. I planted these in the town centre of Wokingham in Berkshire many years ago.

Below is a list of some of the pollution capturing and pollution tolerant plants:

Berberis sp. Also good as a security hedge

Escallonia – a good evergreen flowering hedge.

Buddleia sp. Great for butterflies too.

Gingko biloba

Buxus sempervirens - Box

Lonicera – honeysuckle

Chaenomeles – Quince

Sea Buckthorn – good for roadside planting. Survives winter road salt!

Cotoneaster – hairy leaved varieties.

Viburnum spp.

Some of the above are useful to plant as hedges dividing a road from an open space or children's play area. Providing a natural barrier that captures vehicle pollutants.

Front Gardens car parking:

Those of us that live in urban areas will know of the increasing difficulties of parking in the street. This is of course why there has been a spate of paving over front gardens to create off-street parking.

Whilst it's understandable, the front garden does not have to be excessively paved over. The use of 'grasscrete' (concrete or toughened plastic sections with soil pockets) is a very good way of parking on the front garden whilst retaining some natural landscape. – these 'pockets' can be seeded with grass or planted with low growing herbs such as Thyme. The incorporating of planted borders either side of the parking area will also enhance the frontage. Front gardens are a very important green link for wildlife in our towns and cities and we need to try and preserve them.

A major disadvantage of hard paving the whole of a front garden is the loss of rainwater, which will run off into the road drain and be lost. The RHS have produced a very useful guide on this under their 'Gardening Matters' list of publications 'Front Gardens' and includes some good design suggestions.

Photos © Reg Leach

Watercress - Kate Harris. South & South East & London in Bloom Co- Campaign Manager



It seems like every year we are told about a new super food, hailed for its miracle properties, the buzz surrounding these often short lived, replaced by the next new thing. But it would appear that the idea of superfoods is not new.

As far back at Roman Times people were aware of the value of Watercress and unlike many fruit and vegetables, it has remained unchanged since it was eaten by the Romans and Ancient Greeks. Persian soldiers and sailors used it to treat scurvy and Hippocrates used it as a blood purifier, to treat bronchial disorders and to increase stamina.

Watercress is an indigenous plant, related to the mustard family, its Latin name is *Nasturtium officinale*, meaning the 'nose twister'.

1800's working class diet often included watercress sandwiches if you lived in Dorset or Hampshire. The hollow stems of this plant allow it to float and made it easy to collect from local rivers and streams, where it grew wild.

The perceived health benefits of this plant meant that farms sprang up all over Hampshire. The commercial cultivation of Watercress began in 1808, but the Georgian town of Alresford became the center of the Watercress industry in 1865 when the "Watercress Line" opened. The Mid Hants railway got its new name due to the huge volume of Watercress that was transported to London's Covent Garden Market. The line allowed for crops to be picked, packed and be in London within 24 hours, ensuring the freshest possible produce was on sale.

The geology of Alresford made it the perfect place, rainwater feeding through the chalky downland, bubbling up as mineral rich fresh spring water. Mature Watercress beds need around 20,000 gallons of spring water per acre per hour, with water allowed to flow back into the river system after use. The Watercress Line closed for good in the 1960's and by the 1980's 90% of growers had left the industry leaving only a handful of traditional growers. These days Watercress is grown by most in soil.

If you fancy celebrating the wonder of Watercress, the Alresford Watercress Festival is the place for you. Although cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to restrictions, the street festival will be back in 2022 celebrating all things Watercress, including the World Watercress Eating Championship. So, if you are up for the challenge and can eat 85grams in less than 32 seconds there may be a World Record with your name on it.

Friends of the Earth

If you've got kids in your life who love nature and want to protect the planet as much as you do, then we've got a great way to get them started.

Our Planet Protectors pack for 5 to 11-year-olds teaches kids about taking care of our planet and shaping its future. They're the perfect way to keep little ones busy and get them outside and engaging with nature again.

I'LL DONATE FOR A PACK

Your pack will include lots of activities, so young nature-lovers can:

- Plant wildflower seeds and watch the bees come buzzing.
- Put up their own 10 Top Tips to Save the World poster.
- Get creative with plastic-free stickers.
- Busy themselves with a fun activity handbook – perfect for indoors or out.

I'LL DONATE FOR A PACK

Every pack that's ordered helps us fight for people and planet. It funds both our behind-the-scenes work and our front-page wins.

Whether you're sending a pack to a loved one or ordering one for your own family, I hope these packs bring you a bit of much-needed joy. And if you've donated for a pack already, thanks so much. **Why not treat someone to an extra pack or send another pint-sized planet-lover in your life a special gift?**