

Amersham Gardening Association

www.amersham-gardening.org.uk

November 2025 Newsletter

From the Secretary

It has been another year of mixed weather conditions; let's hope it is not a bad winter. During the dry spell, it was a struggle to keep plants alive and one began to think of planning to change the types of plants to grow. A difficult decision in a long established garden.

Elsewhere in this newsletter (pages 8 - 10) are details of next year's holiday in June. Everyone is welcome on what is usually a very enjoyable holiday.

The Christmas party on Friday December 19th will be the same format as last year and we hope all those who

have purchased tickets for a notional £1 will enjoy it. The cost of food and drink will be met from Association funds. This will be the last event of 2025 but a full programme for 2026 has already been organized, and detail will be in the membership card when you renew; information about meetings for the new few months is on pages 6 and 7.

The committee wish everyone a happy festive time and a successful gardening year in 2026.

Jean Bowling

Two pleas from the treasurer

With this newsletter are forms to book the holiday in June and an outing to Touchwood for snowdrops in February, as well as the form to renew your membership.

If you are paying by bank transfer, **please make a separate payment for each**, so that I know not only who has paid, but what they have paid for. I know this sounds rather bureaucratic, but it does allow me, the auditor and you the members to see how much each activity has brought in and / or cost. Of course, in return for making perhaps three separate bank transfers, you are saving three stamps!

If you are paying for an outing by Bank transfer, **you must email the organiser** to make sure that you have a place reserved.

I have now been treasurer for 13 years, and wish to pass the cheque book, etc on to someone new. If you think that you could undertake this not unduly onerous task, please contact me (treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk), or talk to me at a meeting.

David Bender

Two new speaker organisers

Sue Evans and Julie Burton have arranged a very fine set of evening talks for several years now, and have arranged a complete programme for 2026. They have now passed the baton on to Sue Lynch and Ann Turley.

If you hear a speaker somewhere who you think would make an interesting meeting for AGA, please pass on the speaker's name and contact details to Sue and Ann – email speakersec@amersham-gardening.org.uk, or look for them at a meeting.

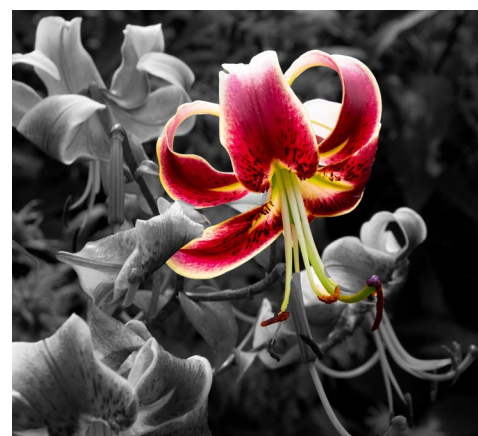


Visit to Stockcross House Garden & Henry Street Garden Centre

13th August 2025



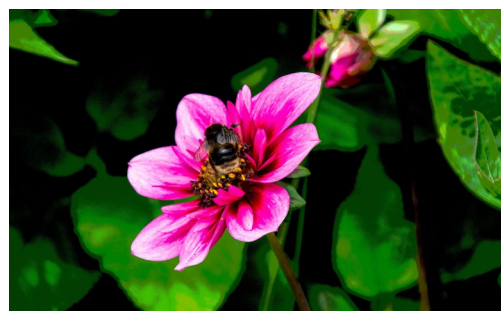
After some very hot weather, we were lucky to have a cooler day for our visit, with a good journey. On arrival we were given helpful maps of the garden by owner Susan Vandyk. Most people had their tea/coffee and delicious cake first, sitting outside the pavilion.



The garden is in a lovely setting next to the church with the church tower reflected in one of the ponds. In a wilder plant setting, the other and larger pond was full of carp which jumped up out of the water when being fed by the owner.



The borders were deep with an interesting mixture of plants and colour, including bananas, which have to be transferred to the orangery in the winter. Our questions were answered by the owner and the very helpful gardener. The garden was advertised as two acres but it seemed larger. Unfortunately there were no plants for sale on the day we visited.



After the garden we left for Henry Street nursery and garden centre, which one of the speakers at a recent AGA talk had said was where she said she always bought her roses, as they grow their own. Arriving at around 1.30pm it was busy. Luckily the queue for food moved quickly and any food ordered arrived promptly. The plants selection was large, including their own and David Austin roses.

Joan Clark, Susan Russell & Althea Godfrey

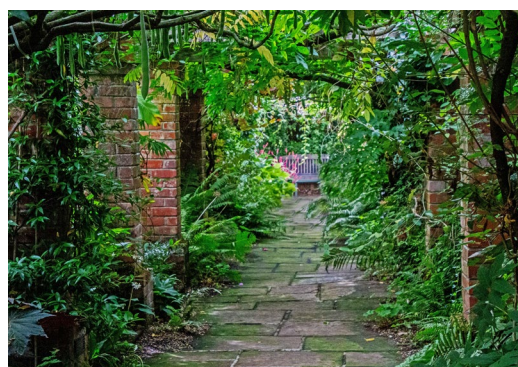
Many thanks to Joan and Althea; this was the last of the visits that they have organised over many years.

They will be missed, and we wish them well attending outings as members rather than organisers.

There is a need for new members to join the sub-committee that organises outings.

If you are interested, please contact Liz Moulton: libbym6740@gmail.com, or ☎ 01494 784913.

You will not be plunged in at the deep end; plenty of help will be available as you learn the job.



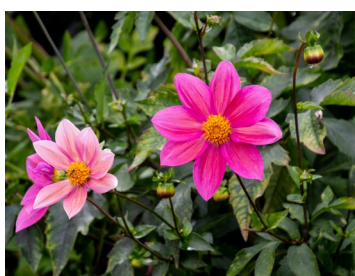
In the wisteria and grape vine "tunnel" we saw what looked like slightly hairy runner beans – the gardener told us that these were seed pods of wisteria, something most of us had not seen before.

Visit to Kelmarsh Hall and Gardens, September 24th 2025



Fifty members of the AGA visited Kelmarsh. We were lucky as the weather remained mostly fine and reasonably warm. We were welcomed by the visitor organiser, Molly, and then shown to the Sweetpea tearooms, where the manager, Michèle, and her helpers welcomed us, having prepared tables, laid out with white table cloths, tea pots, coffee pots and plates of biscuits; a welcome sight after two hours in the coach.

We were then free to explore the gardens and the house. Sadly, like many gardens this year, they had suffered from a very hot summer and drought. There were some nice features and we were able to chat to the gardeners and volunteers. Walking through a polytunnel of tomatoes and basil was like being seeped in pesto! As the gardens had been designed by three well known garden designers, the lay out and structure were very evident.



By contrast, the house was breath taking. Volunteers in the various rooms were able to tell us some of the history of the house. Many of us felt we could have comfortably lived there, especially in the master bedroom and bathroom, with the view across the garden to the lake. It was also a bonus to be able to explore the servants' quarters, which were extensive.

Some members had taken packed lunches which they were able to enjoy sitting out on the well-positioned garden benches, while others made use of the tearooms.

On the way back to Amersham, we stopped briefly at the Buckingham Nurseries. Many of us enjoyed a cup of tea here, sitting out in the sun, whilst others made purchases.

I think, overall, it was felt to have been a successful trip.

Liz Moulton



Ed. notes: We were perhaps a few weeks too late visiting, because of the odd season – as usual people can say “you should have come last month / next month”, but the (possibly unique) triangular walled garden, so shaped to fit in with the lines of existing trees, was nevertheless full of interest.



More photos from Stockcross and Kelmarsh at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/127260098@N04/albums/72177720329672025>

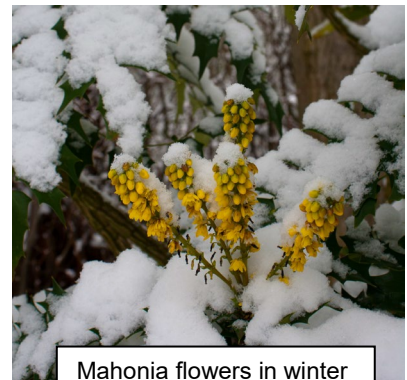
Take the pollen and buzz off



Nectar guides on Streptocarpus Eve.

Plants need to be pollinated to form viable seeds, and most, those that we call flowering plants, attract pollinating insects by producing flowers. Some are brightly coloured and many have ornate patterns to guide insects to the stamens with their pollen – so-called nectar guides. Some are visible to us as patterns on the flowers; others are invisible to us, but visible to insects that see in the ultra-violet range as well as what we call the visible range. The insects are attracted to the nectar produced by the plant – a solution of sugars which is an energy rich food for the insect. As they enter into the plant towards the nectary, they have to pass the stamens, coated in pollen, then the stigma, which collect the pollen that the insect has accumulated from visiting a previous flower. This pollen then travels to the ovule, fertilising it to produce seeds.

Nectar production is relatively expensive for the plant – it is diverting sugars formed by photosynthesis that would otherwise be used for growth or supporting symbiotic fungi. Many plant species have evolved mechanisms that ensure the insects have taken pollen, but then are prevented from taking nectar. An article in *The Guardian* ([August 20th 2025](#)) tells us that hundreds of plant species perform touch-sensitive movements of the stamen. For example, insects visiting berberis and mahonia flowers to feed on nectar get slapped by stamens that bend over and smother pollen on to the insect's face or tongue; this scares the insect and it retreats before it has reached the nectar. When the insect reaches another flower, it transfers this pollen onto the stigma; presumably it learns not to be frightened by the slapping by the stamens, and manages to reach some nectar as well as transferring pollen.



Mahonia flowers in winter



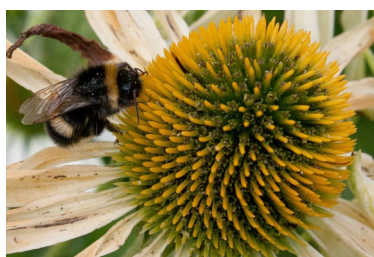
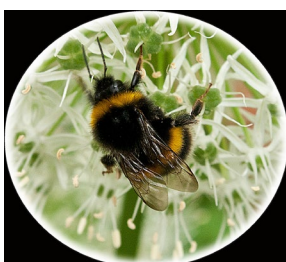
When an insect lands on the flowers of cymbidium orchids (and other members of the Catasetum family), it gets a violent reception; it is hit by a pair of sticky pollen bags shooting out at such great speed the insect is knocked out of the flower with the pollen bags glued to its body.

The flowers of Australian trigger plants (*Stylidium* spp.) carry their stamens and stigma in a club-shaped organ; when touched, this club swings through 180 degrees in milliseconds, hitting a visiting insect with pollen and receiving any pollen it may be carrying. The trigger is then reset over a few seconds, ready to hit another visiting pollinator.

Other plants attract pollinators by producing a scent. Commonly this is not only attractive to insects, but also pleasant to us – think about roses, carnations and pinks, sweet peas, etc. Other plants, such as the wild arum, produce a scent that will attract flies that are attracted to carrion (a smell of rotting meat), and trap the insect after it has performed its task of pollination until the stamens are ready to release pollen onto the insect, when it is released to visit another flower. Unlike most flowers, which rely just on air to disperse the scent,

arum lilies have a peculiar biochemical adaptation which means that the stigma heat up to 15C above the ambient temperature, to volatilise the attractant chemicals.

Some beetles and insects “cheat” by nibbling the back of the flower to get at the nectar without transferring pollen. Others have a long thin proboscis that can reach the nectar while bypassing the stamens.

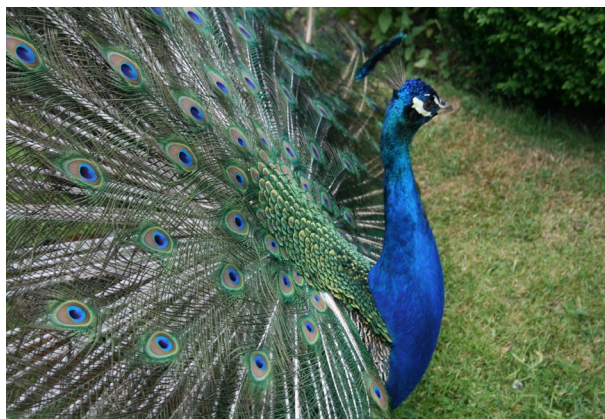


Of plants and animals

One of my A-level textbooks was Vines and Rees *Plant and Animal Biology* – since I was taking A-level zoology, but not botany (which I do not think was taught in my school), I only read the chapters on animal biology. Indeed, at that time botany was considered to be either boring taxonomy, or associated with delicate botanical illustrations – my painting and drawing skills were nil. Another textbook was Borradale's *Manual of Zoology*, which, among other things I remember told us that *Anodonta*, the freshwater swan mussel moved one inch per year. Don't ask me who measured this, or how, or indeed, why?

For O-level biology I had, of course, come across plants, and knew that the roots grew down, and shoots up – both under the influence of gravity, as well as knowing about plants growing towards the light. Indeed, we were even introduced to primroses, which can be either pin eyed or thrum eyed (or, as one of my fellow students put it, pin eyed or boss eyed). Over the years, university departments of botany and zoology have merged into departments of biology, and where botany is taught it is generally called plant science, to get away from the image of Victorian ladies painting flowers. At UCL the department has, more recently, been called Genetics, Environment and Evolution, thus bringing together all the modern aspects of biology in its widest sense, and certainly not what one of my biochemical colleagues rudely called the fur and feather brigade!

As gardeners, we are used to being exhorted to consider the wildlife of the garden; planting suitable plants for pollinators (the RHS now has a list of more the 10,000 [pollinator friendly plants](#)), as well as gaps under hedges and fences to create highways for hedgehogs, foxes and badgers (much though I support protection of badgers, we have been pestered by them rather too much – see the August newsletter). The frogs and, if we are lucky, toads, in our ponds are useful predators of slugs and snails, as indeed are many of the birds that we attract with nest boxes, bird baths and feeding stations – as well as giving us pleasure and amusement.



Some gardens of stately homes have gone further, introducing aviaries, sometimes roving peacocks, and in a few cases small menageries of more or less exotic animals. Some have displays of exotic butterflies in the glass house in summer; when I was in Ecuador some years ago, I was taken to a butterfly farm in the highlands; apart from a small number of tourists who pay to enter the enclosure, their main source of income is exporting chrysalids to glass houses in UK and elsewhere to provide summer displays.

Now, according to a report in *The Garden* in September 2025, the pendulum has swung the other way, and zoos are increasingly introducing planting to enhance the environment for the animals. No longer is it considered appropriate to keep animals in more or less bare and boring enclosures; they are being given as close as possible the vegetation they would have encountered in the wild. Fortunately, gone are the days when animals were kept in zoos to amuse gawking visitors. Think for example about the Chimps' tea party, Guy the gorilla who raged in his small cage and spat at visitors who taunted him – both in London Zoo in recent memory. More recently, a stupid tourist in Kenya [filmed himself](#) in a wildlife sanctuary putting a can of beer into an elephant's trunk – it was the local brew, Tusker beer ha! ha!.

Of course, many zoos were originally founded to allow scientific study of animals, and later became extremely important for conservation of endangered species; opening to the public was a way of providing income to fund the scientific work.

Nowadays, the animals are seen more or less in context, and have stimulating environments, sometimes with food plants being grown, and sometimes with plants whose leaves they will find aversive or bitter, so they will not eat them, but may, for example, strip some leaves for bedding, or even learn to eat flowers of plants they would not have encountered in the wild. There is a new discipline of zoo horticulture, and head gardeners of zoos are Curators of Horticulture; some even suggest that people come to visit more, or at least as much, for the plants as for the animals.



An outing to book now

Snowdrop visit to Touchwood, Great Missenden. February 19th 2026 (self-drive).



Touchwood is a 2 acre garden containing drifts of common snowdrops as well as some unusual ones. Strong structure is provided by terracing, walls and topiaried yew hedging. The visit starts with a short illustrated talk about snowdrop varieties before exploring the snowdrops lining a shrubbery, a woodland path and a rockery. Naturalized snowdrops also line the lawn on either side of the driveway. The visit will end with coffee/tea and cakes

Most paths are even, but a few can be slippery (signs will warn of this).

**There is a maximum number of 25 people for this visit.
See the booking form with this newsletter**

Forthcoming meetings in the Drake Hall

November 27th Carolyn Ormesher: Dahlias

From the [Missenden seeds](#) website

"Hi, I'm Carolyn and I run Missenden Seeds, a small, independent seed company based in Great Missenden in the beautiful Chiltern Hills.

I absolutely love varieties of perennials, biennials and annuals which make beautiful cut flowers and are equally as good for pollinators. I believe that growing flowers should be simple and sustainable. All of the seeds and tubers are grown by me (often in the company of my springer spaniel). I do not import or repackage seeds or dahlia tubers. I also only stock open-pollinated varieties from which you can save seed year after year - you will see no F₁ varieties here. My [blog](#) pages give advice on seed saving."



Friday 19th December: Christmas party

You must reserve tickets for this party for a notional £1; food and drink will be paid for from Association funds. To reserve a place, contact Jill Harris email (jillharris50@btinternet.com) ☎ 01494 433025

January 22nd Anya Lautenbach: the money saving gardener

Anya Lautenbach is a gardener, digital creator and author. [She writes](#) "As a child, I loved growing things. I was born in Poland and was inspired by my mum and grandparents, who were passionate about nature, wildlife and plants. They grew everything and taught me how to be resourceful and not to waste anything. Aged 12, I was obsessed with propagating, and still am.

I'm a self-taught gardener and propagating 95 per cent of the plants in my Buckinghamshire garden has given me a huge sense of achievement."

Anya's book *The Money-Saving Gardener* reveals the tips and tricks to keeping costs down without compromising on style or impact.



Learn how to repurpose what you have, make the most of so-called garden "waste", and boost your plant collection for next to nothing with seed-saving and propagation hacks.

February 26th Steve Catanach: Amersham in Bloom

Steve Catanach is Amersham Town Clerk for community and services; Amersham in Bloom is part of his responsibilities

Over the past 18 years, Amersham in Bloom has improved its floral displays, refurbished neglected areas and sought to involve all ages of the community in the improvement of the town.

With the help and enthusiasm of local schools, community groups, residents, volunteers and the Town Council, we are making a positive difference to the local environment, increasing biodiversity and working towards a climate-forward, more sustainable future.

Amersham in Bloom participates in the RHS Britain in Bloom competition — a nationwide initiative that inspires community groups in towns, cities and villages to make positive changes to their local environment through horticultural, environmental and community action.

This year, we were delighted to welcome the regional Thames and Chilterns in Bloom judges on 23rd July, and the national RHS Britain in Bloom judges on 6th August. Following an exciting afternoon at the RHS Thames & Chilterns in Bloom Regional Awards Ceremony, we are absolutely thrilled to announce that Amersham has received:

- 🏆 Gold in the Town category
- 🏆 Best Town
Judges' highlight for community engagement
- 🏆 Gold Award for the Memorial Gardens
- 🏆 RHS National Certificate of Distinction for the Memorial Gardens
The highest regional award for a park

These incredible achievements are a testament to the hard work and dedication of so many — from local businesses and schools, to the Bucks Council Waste team, Veolia, and other valued community groups.

Of course, a special thanks must go to our tirelessly committed team at the Council, the wonderfully talented leaders of the 1st Chesham Bois Scout Group, and our brilliant Bloom volunteers, whose unwavering support makes Amersham truly special.



March 26th AGM at 7:45, then Sandy Primrose: The art of low maintenance

Sandy Primrose is a biologist by training and has degrees from the University of Strathclyde in Scotland and the University of California. He has had a varied career having worked as an academic and then in the pharmaceutical, diagnostic, life science and specialty chemistry industries. After 20 years in industry, he began working as a biotechnology consultant to early stage companies, academia, and to various UK governmental organizations. In this latter role his jobs included managing major projects on the safety of genetically-modified foods and the detection of food fraud. Sandy has written a number of books including 'Plants, Poisons and Personalities', 'The Modern Plant Hunters' and 'Plants, Murder and Medical Mysteries'.

Sandy's passion is gardening and the half-acre garden of his house between London and Oxford is filled with unusual trees and shrubs. Over the years he has shown many groups round his garden and when he does so he tells them the stories behind the plants that he grows. These stories, and his experiences in industry, form the basis of his entertaining lectures that cover topics in gardening, uses of plants, plant history and plant conservation.



AGA holiday to Shropshire gardens, 1st – 4th June 2026

This year we travel north-west to see some exciting gardens; nearly all are new to us.

The holiday includes four days coach travel and driver's tip, three nights bed, breakfast and evening meal, and garden entrances except National Trust properties, so **please remember your NT card**. Lunch and snacks are only included where stated. Many of the gardens have plants for sale.

Please arrive at Amersham Lifestyle Centre, Chiltern Avenue by the Pottery Room at 8.15 am for a prompt 8.30 departure on Monday 1st June

On the first day, most people like to bring a picnic which the driver usually lets us eat on the coach, provided we don't drop any crumbs.

All the gardens except Pettifers and Upper Farm have one or two wheelchairs available and if you would like the use of one, please contact the individual gardens. Some gardens may have uneven paths and slopes so all coming on the holiday should be able to get on and off the coach and go round the gardens unaided or with the help of a friend or partner.

All photos here are from the hotel's and gardens' websites.

The booking form is included with this newsletter. Please return it with your cheque or confirmation of a bank transfer to Brian Moulton.

We will be staying at Albrighton Hall Hotel and Spa, Ellesmere Road, Shrewsbury, SY43AG

Set within the walls of a stunning 18th century manor house, Albrighton Hall Hotel and Spa, a member of Radisson Individuals, offers a beautiful countryside retreat, in 15 acres of landscaped grounds with an ornamental lake. Located just four miles from the historic town of Shrewsbury, the four-star hotel offers excellent amenities, including a restaurant and bar in the main building with an accessible lift from the bar to the restaurant. There is free use of the luxury spa and indoor pool and all rooms have free wifi and coffee and tea making facilities. There are several separate buildings and Lakeside which is attached to the main building has a lift and some walk-in showers. The two annexes have ground floor rooms and are a short walk from the main building.

There are no shops near the hotel but there is a bus stop for the 501 buses to Shrewsbury a few minutes' walk away. It is on a busy main road without a pavement.



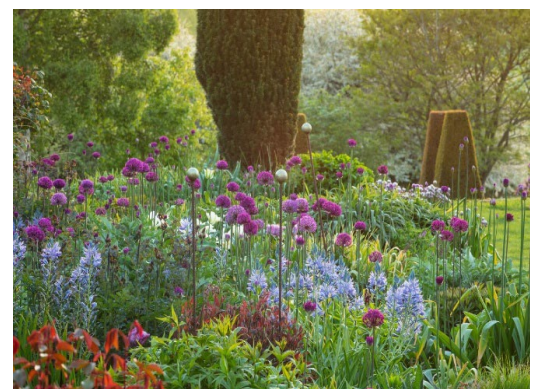
Brian Moulton

Day 1 morning: [Pettifers Garden](#), Wardington, Banbury OX17 1RU

An influential private garden situated very close to Banbury in Oxfordshire. It has been created gradually since 1984 by Gina Price and her husband James.

The wonderful one and a half acre site slopes gently downhill with a series of beautiful terraces. Some paths are over grass but I am told that all are accessible by wheelchair.

Gina died in 2023 but head gardener Polly works hard to maintain her vision and inspirational planting. Visit the [website](#) to access Gina's blog - her thoughts as she developed the garden and lots of photos of the garden at various times of the year.



Coffee is included here

Val Cannon

Day 1 afternoon: [John Massey's garden](#) at Ashwood Nurseries, Kingswinford DY6 0AE

John Massey is famous for his wonderful displays for the RHS shows. His private garden is next to Ashwood Nurseries in a stunning canal-side setting. It has a large collection of herbaceous plants, trees, clematis and shrubs.

We have booked an introductory talk and a self-guided tour.

There is a tearoom and a wildflower meadow and plant hunters will enjoy searching through the nursery for treasures.

Frances Billington



[Click here](#) for photos from our visit to John's Garden in 2019

Day 2 morning: [David Austin Roses](#), Bowling Green Lane, Albrighton, Wolverhampton WV7 3HB

Our visit to David Austin's roses will be a free flow tour through the six themed gardens, covering two acres. Lunch (at your own expense) can be taken at the Garden Room.

Nestled in the rolling Shropshire countryside, the David Austin Plant Centre and Rose Gardens is a sanctuary for anyone who loves gardens and the beauty of roses.

"We invite you to wander through six themed gardens, each telling its own story through fragrance, colour and form. Discover over four hundred varieties of English roses, all available as potted plants throughout the year. Whether you're planning a new border, seeking inspiration for your own garden, or looking for something special for a loved one, we hope you'll find delight around every corner."

There is a shop as well as an opportunity to buy any of the 190 David Austin roses which he developed in his life-time. We will also be entitled to 10% off any purchases in the shop, including plants.



Liz Moulton

Day 2 afternoon: [Wightwick Manor](#) (National Trust), Wightwick Bank, Wolverhampton WV6 8BN

Wightwick Manor was built in the 1880s and the owners were influenced by Oscar Wilde, as can be seen in the collection of objects from Japan and China and the designs of William Morris and his British Arts and Crafts contemporaries.

There is a remarkable collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Marie Spartali Stillman, Elizabeth Siddal and many others. The collection now forms one of the largest public collections of work by female artists in Britain. You'll also find a separate gallery dedicated to the work of 19th-century painter Evelyn De Morgan and her husband, ceramicist William De Morgan.

Surrounding the house are gardens with ponds, an orchard and a formal garden. The site slopes up from the car park.



Entrance for non-members of the National Trust is £17.
Diane Taylor

Day 3 morning: [Bridgemere Show Gardens](#) and Bridgemere Garden Centre, Nantwich CW57QB

Bridgemere Show Gardens cover 6 acres and have 16 beautiful individual gardens, nine of which are gold and silver medal gardens from RHS Chelsea, Hampton Court, and Tatton flower shows. They refurbished the Japanese Garden for 2024 and, new for May 2025 is the rebuild of the multi-award winning RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden, 'The Octavia Hill Garden by Blue Diamond Garden Centres'.

Most of the plants for these gardens were grown in their own nursery and many can be bought in their large Garden Centre, now owned by Blue Diamond, which stocks 3000 different plants and almost everything you could need for your garden. There are several outlets including a Hobbycraft.

The site has three cafés, two in the garden centre and the Garden Cafe which is open air, near the show gardens.



Althea Godfrey

Day 3 afternoon: [Upper Farm Garden](#), Rushton TF6 5AG

A farmhouse garden with views of the Wrekin and the Stretton Hills, comprising several garden 'rooms' connected by gravelled walkways interspersed with ample seating opportunities.

Unusual features include a raised scree terrace, a rose pergola and bed with 40 varieties of English shrub roses, a two-sided herbaceous walk, an elevated viewing deck, a cactus house and self-sufficient allotment beds.

Tea is included here and as much cake as you can eat!
Felicity Vickery



Day 4 morning: [Middleton Hall Gardens](#), near Tamworth B78 2AE

Set within 42 acres of north Warwickshire countryside, Middleton Hall and Gardens boasts rich historical and horticultural interest spanning nearly 1,000 years.

Built in 1717, the Grade II-listed formal walled garden was originally a produce garden. The current planting scheme has a cottage garden feel, with large herbaceous borders. Features include a black mulberry and apple trees that are more than 200 years old, a pergola adorned with wisteria, roses and clematis, and a herb garden with a small knot garden and a working smithy – which opens seasonally.

Drinks and snacks will be available here.
Joan Clark



Day 4 afternoon: [Avondale Nursery](#), Coventry CV8 3AG

At our last stop we plan to visit three venues on one large site.

David Cheshire's is a bonsai retailer; they recently exhibited at the Wisley Bonsai exhibition.

Avondale Nursery specialises in unusual plants. It has the National collection of sanguisorba, wood anemones and michaelmas daisies. Particularly interesting is their small plant library, which is a 'spaced planted'

herbaceous border. You can see how the plant grows, interacts with neighbours, flops, waves in the wind etc., so that you can visualise exactly how it will look when it comes home with you to adorn your garden.

Russell's is a full-scale family run garden centre and plant nursery with a cafe, plants and a full range of gardening accessories.

Jane Jenkins

Don't sniff the compost

My immediate reaction to being copied into an email to a large number of people (naughtily sent as an open copy rather than as a confidential BCC) about something that happened “to a friend” is to dismiss what seems to be yet another unfounded health scare.

In this case it was an email that informed us:

“A close friend recently died of *Legionella longbeachae*, a form of Legionnaires' disease, by accidentally inhaling contaminated dust in a bag of compost.

There is a movement happening around the world and a team of health experts have recommended warning labels be put on bags of compost because of the risk of Legionnaires' disease, specifically *L. longbeachae*.

This form of the disease the most common form in Australia and NZ (rather than the water-borne form) and the authorities have taken steps to make sure that warnings about good hygiene practice, glove masks, etc are placed in large print on the bags.

Manufacturers around the world have been switching from peat-based mixtures to wood-based mixes, and these wood mixes are perfect breeding grounds for *Legionella longbeachae*.”

Before I dismissed the email as scaremongering, a hoax or a conspiracy theory, I did a Medline search (covering almost all research published in reputable scientific and medical journals) and came up with a total of 25 peer-reviewed articles.

Some of the papers were:

Chambers, S.T., et al., *How safe are gloves and masks used for protection against Legionella longbeachae infection when gardening?* Lett Appl Microbiol, 2021. **73**(5): p. 616-622.

Huss, A., et al., *Green waste compost as potential reservoirs of Legionella in the Netherlands.* Clin Microbiol Infect, 2020. **26**(9): p. 1259 e1-1259 e3.

Kenagy, E., et al., *Risk Factors for Legionella longbeachae Legionnaires' Disease, New Zealand.* Emerg Infect Dis, 2017. **23**(7): p. 1148-1154.

Currie, S.L. and T.K. Beattie, *Compost and Legionella longbeachae: an emerging infection?* Perspect Public Health, 2015. **135**(6): p. 309-15.

Lindsay, D.S.J., et al., *Legionella longbeachae serogroup 1 infections linked to potting compost.* J Med Microbiol, 2012. **61**(Pt 2): p. 218-222.

Casati, S., A. Gloria-Martinoni, and V. Gaia, *Commercial potting soils as an alternative infection source of Legionella pneumophila and other Legionella species in Switzerland.* Clin Microbiol Infect, 2009. **15**(6): p. 571-5.

Hughes, M.S. and T.W. Steele, *Occurrence and distribution of Legionella species in composted plant materials.* Appl Environ Microbiol, 1994. **60**(6): p. 2003-5.

So, this does not seem to be a hoax or conspiracy theory, but potentially a problem.

It might be sensible to wear gloves when handling (peat-free) potting compost. Perhaps also wear a mask, or at least don't handle it in an unventilated confined space (eg, keep the greenhouse or potting shed door open).

Certainly don't pick up a handful of compost and sniff it.

Equally certainly, wash your hands when you come in from the potting shed – but you would anyway if they are dirty!



Some requests for help

We always need people to meet and greet members and visitors at our meetings.

If you can help, please contact Felicity Vickery Tel: 01494 726284, email felicityvickery@yahoo.co.uk

We need people to help with the tea and coffee at our meetings. There is a rota so you are not expected to help at every meeting. If you can help, please contact Liz Moulton Tel: 01494 784913, email libbym6740@gmail.com

As ever, it will be much appreciated if some members could arrive about 7 pm to help put out chairs and tables; they do not put themselves out! Carol Barratt has a rota, so again you do not have to do it every month.

Please remember the raffle at each meeting. The profit on the raffles makes a very useful contribution to our expenses; subscriptions alone do not cover the cost of meetings and speakers.

Publicity. If you know where you could put a publicity poster please contact david.bender@btinternet.com

At present we have posters in the following places:

White Hill Centre, Chesham; Blue Diamond (formerly Van Hage) garden centre; Little Chalfont Library; Amersham Library; Chesham Library; Coleshill Village Hall, Tesco Amersham, Amersham Old Town

Committee and Contact Details

President	Tim Hillier	president@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Vice-President	Susan Jeffery	
Chairman	Colin Ross	chairman@amersham-gardening.org.uk
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Treasurer	David Bender	treasurer@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Visits Secretary	Liz Moulton	
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Web Coordinator	David Bender	webmaster@amersham-gardening.org.uk
Committee Members	Frances Billington; Joan Clark; Carol Daw; Jill Harris; Irene Glyn-Jones;	
Newsletter Editor	David Bender	newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk

Past newsletters

There is an archive of past newsletters from May 2014 to the current issue on our website at

<http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/newsletter.html>

Photos from outings

You can see links to lots of photos from our outings at <http://www.amersham-gardening.org.uk/outings.html>

Click the button on the top right of the screen for a slide show; you can scroll through the pictures using the > and < arrows on the right and left of the screen

Half price entry to RHS gardens

We are affiliated to the RHS, and one of the benefits is a card allowing two AGA members at a time to visit one of the RHS gardens at half price. If you want to borrow the card, please contact Jean Bowling (secretary@amersham-gardening.org.uk)

We are not psychic

If you change your email address (or indeed your postal address) please email membership@amersham-gardening.org.uk and / or newsletter@amersham-gardening.org.uk, so that we can keep the records up to date and make sure you receive the newsletter and booking forms for outings.