



Welwyn Garden City Horticultural Society

www.wgchortsoc.org.uk

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NEWSLETTER No. 161

Spring 2026

News Flash – 12 May Plant share

Please start saving your cuttings, seeds and spares for the plant share. You don't need to bring a plant to join in, but please bring a plastic bag to take your new treasures home with you.

Looking Ahead

We are now well into our programme of talks for the 2025-26 season and looking forward to our three outings this spring and summer. There are still a few places on the outings – see details below about how to book. We also have a sneak preview of the talks programme for the latter part of the year.

We will hold our AGM before the March speaker meeting. This will start at 7.45pm (there will not be a raffle this month to give us more time). All members will receive the papers for the AGM by email but if you want to volunteer to join the committee, or raise any matters, please contact me on the email at the top of the newsletter.

We will hold a 'plant share' at the meeting on 12 May. As plants pop-up in your garden do think about potting up any spares and bring them along to the meeting to give away to others. And you never know what you may come away with. All freely given and received. So, there is a lot going on as we look forward to the new growing season. Do encourage any friends who you think may be interested in trying a meeting to come along. If you have any ideas/requests for future meeting topics, do get in touch. Whatever the weather – enjoy your garden!

Alison Ewington *Chair*

Our 2025/6 Speaker Programme

Meetings are at St Francis of Assisi Church Hall, Church Road, AL8 6QJ. Doors open at 7.30pm with refreshments served before the talk which starts at 8pm.

10 March - Andrew Mikolajski - Permaculture for gardeners



Andrew is a horticultural consultant, speaker and author of 40 gardening titles.

The term 'permaculture' was coined in the 1970s to describe a design system that creates sustainable gardens that mimic natural ecosystems. By working with nature rather than against it, you can reduce waste and your impact on the environment.

Our AGM will start at 7.45pm followed by Andrew's talk.

14 April - Paolo Arrigo, Franchi Seeds - Tips for spring sowing and perfect pesto

Franchi is the oldest family run seed company in the world, established in 1783, specialising in rare and heirloom seeds. Paolo, another returning friend, is a seedsman, and an enthusiastic champion of slow food, endangered vegetables and biodiversity.



A keen grower, he believes we shouldn't overcomplicate gardening and is adept at advising which plants will thrive in the UK climate.

12 May - Anne Rowe - Lost houses and gardens of Welwyn Garden City

Anne is a freelance landscape historian who has coordinated research for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust and lectures in landscape history. She has written several books about medieval parks and the history of Hertfordshire landscapes.



Looking forward to our 2026/7 Speaker Programme

8 September - Gail Harland – Hellebores: a cure for madness or the start of it

Gail's talk will be telling us everything about this classic plant which brings colour and life to your garden in the winter months, as well as being a flower with a rich history and many contradictions - the light and the dark.



13 October - Dr Mark Spencer - Murder Most Florid

Dr Mark Spencer is a renowned forensic botanist, working on missing person enquiries, murders, arson, burglary, the illegal trade in endangered species and other serious crimes. Mark will be offering an insight into his world and describing his work in this unique, and very specific, field of botany.

10 November - Roger Gibbons - Butterflies of Britain and Europe

Roger will focus on the often surprising behaviour of butterflies, which is still not fully understood, as well as how to make gardens butterfly friendly.

8 December - Something different this year, our own version of Gardeners Question Time.

An opportunity to combine our traditional social event with wine and mince pies and to take advantage of the wealth of knowledge present in the hall to ask questions, or share precious information.

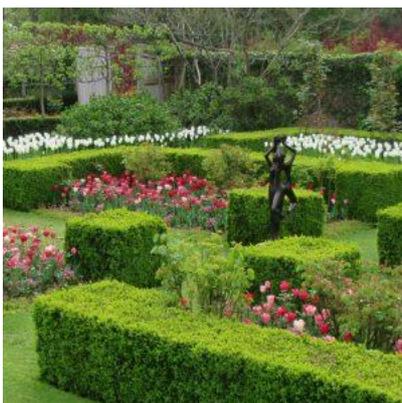
More details nearer the time but get your thinking cap on! *Laurence Bauer and Sue Friend*

Our 2026 Outings

Tickets will be on sale at our meetings or you can book by sending the completed booking form, attached to this newsletter, to Anne Freimanis. Payment is by cheque or BACS.

23 April - Pashley Manor Tulip Festival. £53 including coach, gratuities and garden entry. Depart 9.30am College Way, WGC.

Pashley Manor's spectacular Tulip Festival sees this garden, on the border of Sussex and



Kent, carpeted with over 40,000 tulips, creating stunning scenes to enjoy. A hundred varieties of tulip are planted in colour themed garden 'rooms' throughout the grounds and in pot displays. Bloms Bulbs marquee shows tulips as cut flowers and Bloms experts are on hand throughout the



Festival to share their knowledge of these beautiful bulbs and to take orders from those inspired by the spectacle. The café serves locally sourced homemade cakes, scones and light lunches, which can be enjoyed on the terrace.

17 July - The Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds and Fullers Mill. £48 including coach, gratuities and garden entry. Depart 9.30am College Way, WGC.

The award-winning 14-acre Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds is on the site of the former



Benedictine Abbey. Created in 1837 approximately 20,000 plants are bedded out for the summer display. It is internationally renowned for its colourful and attractive displays and the heritage of its backdrop. Refreshments including light lunches are available in the gardens or a short walk away in the town.



Fullers Mill Garden is a tranquil seven-acre waterside and woodland plantsman's paradise. It combines a beautiful site of light dappled woodland with a collection of unusual shrubs, perennials, lilies and marginal plants. The garden was created by the late Bernard Tickner MBE. He moved to Fullers Mill in 1958 and spent over 50 years creating the garden you see today from rough scrub and woodland. In 2013, the garden was gifted to Perennial, for its long-term preservation.

16 September - Green Island Gardens and Langthorns Plantery. £48 including coach, gratuities, garden entry and group tour. Depart 9.30am College Way, WGC.

Green Island Gardens is 20 acres of award-winning private gardens. Professionally designed by its owner Fiona Edmond, who will be leading one of our tours, it is laid out as a series of structured gardens displaying



a huge range of unusual trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs. Holding two National Collections with Plant Heritage for Hamamelis and Camellias (Autumn and Winter Flowering),

Green Island is designed to create year-round horticultural interest and delights for the senses. In 2024 it was the RHS Partner Garden of the Year overall winner and regional winner for East Anglia and the Midlands.

On our way back we are stopping at Langthorns Plantery to stock up ready for our autumn planting. It specialises in top quality ornamental plants, shrubs and trees, and boasts many uncommon and heritage species. The company motto 'We Live Plants; We Love Plants' reflects the dedication of Edward Cannon, a self-confessed plant addict, who took over the the Plantery in 2001.

Anne Freimanis

Spring is coming and people get interested in

So, if you know someone who is showing such an interest, perhaps you might introduce them to the WGC Horticultural Society.

Then every year they would benefit from:

Eight fascinating lectures– with free tea & coffee provided!

Access to outings including the summer holiday (every other year) and day trips by coach

Plant swaps (usually in Spring and Autumn)

Two newsletters

All for only £20 per year. Please tell them to contact Membership Secretary, Denise

Madden, 1 The Glade, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7LG gladers2@gmail.com or, why not bring them to our next meeting?
Denise Madden

Our Visit to Beth Chatto's Garden

Last September we visited Beth Chatto's garden in Essex. We had a glorious day with the gardens at their peak. The famous dry garden was still full of colour and form, even after our blistering summer. The display of grasses, woven through the borders and gently waving in the breeze gave the whole garden rhythm and movement. We all had the chance to enjoy home made cakes, including a delicious apple crumble scone made from apples harvested in Beth's own orchard. Returning home, the coach was full of the specimens we had all purchased in the nursery ready for us to plant and remember our delightful day.



Photos: Alison

Ewington

There are many more photos for you to enjoy on our website

<https://wgchortsoc.co.uk>

If you have any spare time...

RHS Wisley is looking particularly lovely this year. One of our members visited last week and reports that the spring displays are outstanding. She also says that the road works that have put many of us off are now under control.



Green roofs in London open to the public, Last year Dusty Gedge has sent us a list of gardens that members might like to visit:

120 The Garden is open six days a week from 10am until 9pm in the summer time and until 5pm in the winter. There is no need to book but you may need to queue.

Museum of the Home (Hoxton Overground) is open from 10am until 5pm but usually the gates are open earlier. The roof is on the way to the entrance. It is also viewable from the overground station.

Nomura (Cannon Street) is usually open to the public on Open Squares Weekend. It is very popular with about 5000 visitors over the weekend.

Eversheds-Sutherland 1 Wood Street is also open during Open Squares Weekend.

Summer Events

Sunday 7 June 2pm – 5pm

WGC Rotary Open Gardens. Proceeds to Herts Homeless and Isabel Hospice. Gardens open in Handside Lane, Turnmore Dale and Barleycroft Road. Refreshments will be available.

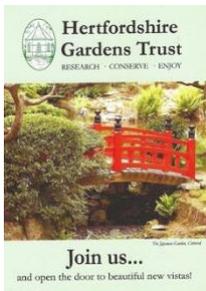
Saturday 4 July

Jazz on the Island is an event organised by WGC Rotary Club. It will be held in the garden of 13 Lemsford Village with doors opening at 4pm. Bring your own picnic and listen to musicians; take part in the duck race and raffle. Tickets are available now from Sue Forrow susan.forrow@ntlworld.com Price £17.50 per person

Sunday 26 July from 2pm – 5.30pm

NGS Open Garden at 35 Digswell Road – Adrian and Clare de Baat. Refreshments will be available in aid of Isabel Hospice. Admission £5 – children free.

Hertfordshire Gardens Trust



Working hand-in-hand with members of the public, owners, managers and local authorities, we help protect and conserve Hertfordshire's parks, gardens and designed landscapes. Each year we plan a lively mix of activities: winter talks from experts in their field, summer visits to beautiful gardens and historic landscapes, and occasional study days, courses, and social get-togethers.

Interested? Visit the new website to find out more.

<https://hertsgardenstrust.org.uk>

All Aboarders - WGC rail station centenary - getting ready to celebrate 2026

In November 2025 All Aboarders received an *Outstanding* award in the Royal Horticultural Society's *It's Your Neighbourhood* scheme. This is the third successive year that we have reached this level with our gardening work on WGC rail station.

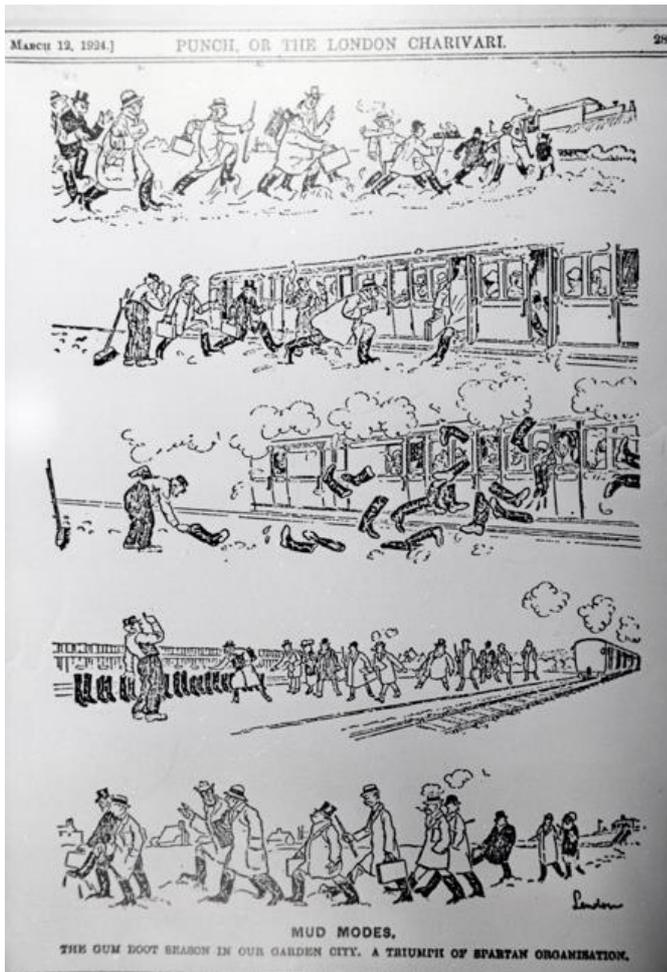
In December we unexpectedly received very many plants and bulbs from the council; with help from Dellcott Close



friends, we planted 280 polyanthus and countless bulbs in a previously unloved flower bed in Wigmores North near Cafe Nero.

December was a busy month with activities elsewhere. We participated in the St Francis Christmas tree festival with our sustainably decorated celebration tree (which was then trolleyed to the waiting room at the station), and entered two teams in the Rotary quiz (held early to celebrate their centenary year). The target was on our backs having achieved first and second places in their previous quiz, but we didn't do quite as well this time.

Despite torrential rain this winter you can still see us carrying the watering cans around station. Most troughs are sheltered under canopies so get dry whatever the weather! Our weekly gardening sessions start in March, but before then we also had a rose pruning session on Valentine's Day!



Our team of volunteers is growing; we have some interested people trying taster gardening sessions this spring. New volunteers are always welcome especially as 2026 marks the station's centenary. Look out for activities and displays in and around the station. Learn more by visiting our website www.AllAboarders.org or attending our AGM on Wednesday 18 March at 1pm, at St Francis Church Hall. The AGM is closely followed by a station makeover day on Tuesday 24 March jointly organised by GTR and All Aboarders, at which we would be pleased to meet anyone else interested in volunteering.

Barbara Davies for All Aboarders

SOS: Help the All Aboarders to celebrate the station's centenary

All Aboarders are still on the hunt for old wellies, for a display on the station to celebrate the station's centenary. You may have seen the photos of the lines of boots outside the station waiting for their commuting owners to return. This Punch cartoon should put a smile on your face.

Please contact Janet Dobney on 07534 444166 if you are able to help.

If you have any news, seen plants in our public spaces or have plants in your garden that you would recommend please let the Editor know: Anne Freimanis, a.freimanis@icloud.com, 07879 402783.