



Welwyn Garden City Horticultural Society

www.wgchortsoc.org.uk

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NEWSLETTER No. 162

Summer 2026

A New Season Begins

Welcome to the start of our 2026/27 programme of talks. As ever, we have a varied line-up of topics to inform, educate and entertain us as the nights draw in. We begin with the world of hellebores before turning to the fascinating subject of forensic botany. In November, we will enjoy a reminder of summer as we look at butterflies. Then, for our December meeting, we have something a little different, in response to requests for an event with more opportunity for social chat between members. We will begin with a 'gardeners' question time' Q&A, featuring a panel of local experts — so start thinking about your questions now, as we will gather them up nearer the time. After a break for wine and mince pies, there will be short garden-related group quiz: a really lovely way to kick off Christmas.

We are also taking bookings for our holiday in June to the gardens of Somerset and Devon, including a day at RHS Rosemoor.

There is lots to look forward to, so please spread the word among your friends: the Horticultural Society is the place to be this autumn.

Alison Ewington, Chair

PS You can now pay for membership and outings by credit card.

Could you spare a few minutes before and after the Speaker Meetings?

The Committee Members need help putting out the chairs for these meetings and then putting them away again. If you could possibly help, please could you give us a hand at these times? Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Our 2026/7 Speaker Programme

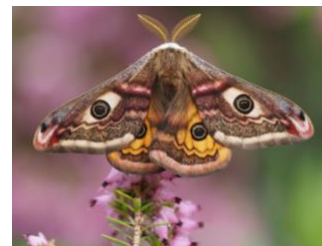
Meetings are at St Francis of Assisi Church Hall, Church Road, AL8 6QJ. Doors open at 7.30pm with refreshments served before the talk which starts at 8pm.

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 field of botany.



10 November - Roger Gibbons - Butterflies of Britain and Europe

Roger divides his time between Hatfield and the south of France where he helps local conservation groups. His in-depth knowledge of butterflies enables his talk to focus on their often-surprising behaviour, which is still not fully understood, as well as how to make gardens butterfly-friendly.

Laurence Bauer and Susan Friend

8 December – Christmas Crackers – **an earlier start at 7.45**

Something different this year - our own version of Gardeners Question Time, a quiz and a social get together. Alison Ewington will be our chair for the event. We will have a panel of well-known local gardeners including Adrian de Baat and Nick Evans to answer your questions. As it's December we will also be serving mince pies and festive drinks.

You can then test your horticultural knowledge with a light hearted quiz. To make it a relaxed social occasion we'll be arranging the chairs in groups. This will give you a chance to sit next to someone you don't know and make a new gardening friend.

To make this work, we need your questions so thinking caps on please.

If you have a question for the panel please email it to me: Anne Freimanis

a.freimanis@icloud.com.

Our 2027 Holiday: The Garden Heritage of Devon and Somerset. 29 June for 4 days. £863 (single) £784 (if sharing). Coach travel, 4* hotel, half board, tours and non-NT garden entrances are included.

Based in Exeter, we will be visiting RHS Rosemoor, Killerton Garden, Knighthayes Gardens, Iford Manor and Forde Abbey. These beautiful gardens are famous for their variety and full of interest to us gardeners. The star visit will be a full day at RHS Rosemoor set in the glorious north Devon countryside. Our hotel is in the centre of Exeter, a stroll away from the cathedral and its charming green. I do hope that you can join us.

The brochure is attached to the newsletter. It includes a full itinerary and a booking form.

Anne Freimanis



Our 2026 Outing on 16 September to Green Island Gardens and Langthorns Plantery. This trip is now full

Our 2027 Outing- Kew Gardens – 16 September 2027. £60 including coach, entrance and gratuities. 9.30 College Way WGC, AL8 6DG.

This year we are visiting Kew Gardens to catch the beauty of the autumnal setting. There is so much to see at Kew that a day isn't enough. Highlights include:

The Princess of Wales Conservatory, a glassy labyrinth leading you through a series of fascinating ecosystems with ten computer-controlled climate zones. You'll discover the conditions that helped predatory species like Venus fly traps or pitcher plants evolve to swallow their prey in less than half a second. Take in spiky cacti and succulents as you travel through the dry tropics and emerge into the dense, steamy zones where tropical orchids and bright bromeliads flourish. The giant waterlily floats in the wet tropical zone.



Kew's innovative Carbon Garden showcases the essential role plants and fungi play in tackling climate change, and how our gardens will have to change in the future. It reveals the invisible, bringing to life the critical role carbon plays in sustaining life. In the centre the pavilion designed by Mizzi Studio is inspired by the symbiotic relationship between the

plant and fungal kingdoms.

The Arboretum Nursery is where some of Kew's 11,000 trees are born. From the visitor viewing area, you can now discover how their experts use cutting-edge technology to propagate and nurture these precious plants. You can wander around to see Kew's Heritage trees: Some of our oldest trees date back to the 18th century and include the Japanese pagoda tree, the Lucombe oak and the black locust tree. Giant redwoods: Our tallest tree lives in the atmospheric Redwood Grove. A coastal Redwood stands at 40 metres tall – the height of a 13-storey building. Mighty



Oaks: the fastest growing tree in the Gardens is the chestnut-leaved oak measuring over 30m tall and 30m wide. With its many limbs and trunks, this is a sight you don't want to miss.

For the fit amongst us, the pagoda is open. Climb 232 steps for a breath-taking view of west London. If you do wish to make the climb, then please book tickets online in advance – and take a photo for the Society at the top!

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 card at the meeting or by BACS.

Important Outings Advice

The Society wants everyone to be able to participate safely in our day trips and group holidays. We have reviewed the advice given to members before they sign up for any trip, and the wording below now appears on our booking forms. We welcome members who travel alone, but ask everyone to consider whether they feel comfortable managing the day independently. If you pass your ticket on, or are going with a friend, please ensure they are also aware of this advice.

Trips may involve a lengthy coach journey to gardens with uneven surfaces and steps. It is the responsibility of individual members to decide if the trips are suitable for their level of mobility and physical capabilities. Members requiring support can book and pay for an extra place for a companion. The companion does not need to be a Society member. Please remember that members are responsible for their travel party's personal insurance.

Membership Renewal

Your Membership subscription of £20 for 2026/27 is due on 1 September 2026. If you would like to renew your membership you can do it in one of the three ways, detailed below.

Whichever way you choose, you must complete your details on the Subscription Renewal form attached and email/give/post them to Denise Madden, Membership Secretary, whose contact details are shown on the form.

Payment by BACS is preferred. The Society's Bank Account name is Welwyn Garden City Horticultural Society. Account number-10733806, Sort Code 20-92-54. Please use your name as a reference.

If you are paying in person, at a meeting, a card reader will be available for contactless credit card payments.

You can pay by cash or cheque (made payable to WGC Horticultural Society).

Membership cards will be available for collection at the September or October meetings.

If you do not wish to remain a member, we will be very sorry to lose you, but please would you let Denise know on gladers2@gmail.com and then she will not chase you!

New Members

If you have a friend, neighbour or Family Member who might be thinking of joining our Society, please tell them that they would benefit from:

- 8 fascinating lectures a year – with tea & coffee provided!
- Access to outings including the biannual holiday, and several day-trips by coach.
- Member plant swaps (usually 2 per year)
- A twice yearly newsletter

All for only £20 per year.

Attached is a New Members' application form that you could give them.

Recent Outings

23 April - Pashley Manor Tulip Festival

Pashley Manor's Tulip Festival was spectacular. The garden was carpeted with over 40,000 tulips, creating stunning scenes to enjoy and inspire in our pots and gardens. There were colour themed garden rooms throughout the grounds and in pot displays. The white varieties were particularly stunning – simple and effective.



There were also woodland walks, a sculpture walk and of course delicious homemade cakes to be enjoyed on the terrace.

17 July - The Abbey Gardens, Bury St Edmunds and Fullers Mill

Bury St Edmunds seems to be a place many of us have planned to visit but never got



round to it. The Abbey Gardens were a traditional Edwardian bedding scheme. Miraculously they have kept their freshness despite the drought. The Abbey itself provided an interesting visit in the welcome shade. The star of the show was Fullers Mill. This gorgeous garden with its pools and river vistas was a delightful



green paradise of calm. The naturalistic planting encouraged us to meander and wander throughout the garden, with always a shady

corner available nearby.

Autumn Events - Shaw's Corner

These events being held at nearby Shaw's Corner, Ayot St Lawrence may be of interest:

16 September - Garden Tour: Day in the Life of a National Trust Gardener

18 October - Apple Day

21 October - Garden Tour: Specialist Apple Tour

For details and how to book see <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk> and search for Shaw's Corner/Upcoming Events.

Alison Ewington

Have You Seen a Ginko Tree?

According to the National Trust, next year is 300 years since the first Ginkgo Biloba tree was brought to the UK. It is by all accounts, the oldest living organism on earth, dating



back to the age of the dinosaurs. It is also incredibly hardy, one tree having apparently survived being just 2 km from Hiroshima at the time of the bomb. It has a totally unique leaf shape which photographs well.

There are 5 such trees in a row in the Sainsbury's car park, I have one in my garden, and one was planted opposite the Barn Theatre to commemorate the life of Siobhan Elam, former copper, Barn stalwart and borough councillor who died a few years ago.

Do you know of any other examples in the town. If so, please let me know at malcolm.cowan@virgin.net. I look forward to hearing from you.

Malcolm Cowan

Floral Wellies Celebrate the Centenary of WGC Station

A big "Thank you" to society members who donated wellington boots.

You may recall that the All Aboarders are using the theme of wellington boots for the centenary celebrations. This is based on the Punch Cartoon "Mud Modes" published in 1924. It depicts city gents in boots trudging across fields when the garden city was being built to the temporary Halt station behind the Cherry Tree Public House. These early commuters would leave their muddy boots haphazardly at the station in the morning. The railway staff would clean and line up the boots neatly for the gents on their return in the evening.

We have chosen the 14 pairs of boots needed. By the time you read this article they will be in place on Platform 2 creating two imaginative floral displays. Do pop along to see them. Access to the platforms should be ok if you explain why you are there and you could also have a tea or coffee at Marchios cafe on the platform while you are there.

Events later this year in the Howard Centre will also celebrate 100 years of the station:

- A window display in the old Thomas Cook shop on the first floor of the Howard Centre - Saturday 26th September to Saturday 3rd October.
- The Station Celebration Day itself on Saturday 3rd October with an exhibition of the history of the station by the Together for WGC Heritage Group, exhibits by All Aboarders and GTR, a model railway and guided walking tours by the Heritage Group.



For more information about All Aboarders find us on www.allaboarders.org or phone me, Lynda Cowan, on 07939323180. New volunteer gardeners are very welcome to join our friendly group.

Lynda Cowan; Janet Dobney (photo)

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.