

The Grapevine

Newsletter of the Finchley Horticultural Society

SPRING 2025

from *Troilus and Criseyde*
by *Geoffrey Chaucer*

In May, that moder is of monthes glade,
That fresshe floures, blewe, and whyte, and rede,
Ben quike agayn, that winter dede made,
And ful of bawme is fleting every mede;
Whan Phebus doth his brighte bemes sprede
Right in the whyte Bole, it so bitidde
As I shal singe, on Mayes day the thridde,

*In May which is the mother of all happy months,
When fresh flowers—blue and white and red—
Come to life again, that winter made dead,
And every meadow is full to overflowing with fragrance
When Phoebus the Sun spreads his bright beams
Right in the white Sign of the Bull in the Zodiac, these
things happened,
As I shall sing, on the third day of May...*



It is spring again, and there is so much to do on our allotments! We have had plenty of sunshine in the past month, encouraging seeds to germinate, seedlings to grow and fruit trees to blossom. Pollinators – bees, bumble bees, solitary bees, butterflies, flies, wasps and – yes, birds, are buzzing around, helping the plants along. Our Plant Sale Team has been busy for many weeks now, preparing for our annual Plant Sale, the shop has stocked up nicely on everything plot holders may need for the growing season, straw bales have been delivered, wood chips are being carted around in wheelbarrows to use as dressing and mulch. In this issue of the Grapevine, we shall take another look at ‘birds and bees’, discuss many types of edible plants on our allotments, continue sharing tasty recipes, look back at the events of the past few months and look forward to exciting trips and events. Happy reading!

Spring Social Lunch

By Julie Datta

On 23 March Gordon Road hosted a Spring Social Lunch and invited new plot holders to come and meet each other.

Lots of people brought delicious food reflecting the diverse range of passionate allotmenters. Animated conversations about the importance of chitting potatoes before planting - including the all-important question 'can you still plant your first potatoes after St Patrick's Day?' could be overheard to which there was a resounding 'yes'! People shared tips and tricks on growing seeds and nurturing delicate seedlings ahead of our beloved Plant Sale on 18 May. The Trading Hut offers lots of peat-free

compost and all were encouraged to use it and provide feedback to Erika and Julie on their experiences. More importantly, one of our allotmenters, James Robbins, kindly agreed to be the keynote speaker at our AGM on 22 April.



Philip kindly shared stakes that he had sawn down for people to use to identify their plots and Eric welcomed everyone. Erika reminded everyone about the re-location of the Trading Hut contents to the Tin Shed whilst it was being refurbished and put out a call for volunteers to help - both in the Trading Hut but also with the Plant Sale. Anyone interested should contact Erika or Julie. There was an announcement of the forthcoming delivery of straw bales organised by Jennie Abelman and everyone was reminded about any surplus produce that can be donated to the Food Hub.

It was wonderful to see everyone getting along so well, sharing food and stories about plants, as evidenced by these pictures.

The Gordon Road Allotment Society truly embodies the spirit and ethos of allotmenting.

Here's looking forward to the next event!



A New Campaign to Help Our Hoverflies

In previous editions of *The Grapevine*, we've highlighted the importance of bees—honeybees, solitary bees, and bumblebees—in supporting our environment. But there's another unsung hero of pollination that deserves our attention: the hoverfly.

This year, the *Wild About Gardens* campaign—a joint initiative by the **Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)** and **The Wildlife Trusts**—is shining a spotlight on hoverflies. The goal? To raise awareness of their crucial role in our ecosystems and encourage gardeners and nature lovers to take action to support them.

Why Hoverflies Matter

Hoverflies are **the second most effective pollinators after bees**, making them vital to the health of our gardens and food systems. These true flies belong to the order *Diptera* and the family *Syrphidae*. In Britain alone, there are over **6,000 species of fly**, and more than **280 of these are hoverflies**.



Despite often being mistaken for bees or wasps, hoverflies can be identified by their **larger eyes, shorter antennae**, and the fact that they have only **one pair of wings**—unlike bees and wasps, which have two pairs. Hoverflies range in size from just a few millimetres to up to 2 cm, and they **do not sting or bite**.

Their benefits go far beyond their charming appearance. Adult hoverflies are **brilliant pollinators**, contributing to the pollination of **52% of crops globally**. Meanwhile, the larvae of many species are natural pest controllers, feeding on **sap-sucking aphids**, and others are **detritivores**, helping to recycle dead organic matter and maintain the balance in natural and cultivated spaces. They also serve as a **key food source** for birds and other wildlife.

A Species in Decline

Despite their importance, hoverflies are facing a serious decline. Since the 1980s, their numbers in the UK have **dropped by 44%**. This dramatic reduction is largely due to:

- **Intensive farming practices**
- **Widespread pesticide use**
- **Urban development**
- **Climate change**

Some hoverfly species are now listed on the **Red List of Threatened Species**, highlighting the urgent need for conservation efforts.

How You Can Help

One of the simplest and most effective ways to support hoverflies is by growing plants that offer accessible nectar. **Flat, open flowers** are ideal feeding platforms for these insects. Here are a few excellent choices for your garden:

- *Viburnum opulus* (Guelder rose)
- *Rubus* (Blackberry)
- *Phacelia tanacetifolia* (Fiddleneck)
- *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather)
- *Hedera helix* (Common ivy)

These plants not only provide essential nutrition but also help to create **hoverfly-friendly habitats**, supporting both adult insects and their larvae.



Get Involved

The *Wild About Gardens* campaign provides a wealth of information on how to support hoverflies, from planting guides to habitat creation tips and species identification resources.

To learn more and get involved, visit:

 rhs.org.uk/wildaboutgardens

Together, we can make our gardens a haven for hoverflies—and in doing so, protect the wider ecosystems that depend on them.

OBITUARY

Dr. D.G. Hessayon, Author of the "Expert" Gardening Series, Dies at 96

Dr. David Gerald Hessayon, pioneering horticulturist and the author behind the legendary "Expert" series of gardening books, passed away on January 16, 2025, aged 96. Widely credited with transforming amateur gardening in Britain and beyond, Dr. Hessayon made horticulture accessible to the everyday enthusiast through a revolutionary publishing model that demystified the art and science of growing.



Born in Salford, Greater Manchester, on February 13, 1928, Dr. Hessayon studied botany at Leeds University and later earned a PhD in soil ecology from Manchester University. After time spent abroad in editorial and academic roles, he joined Pan Britannica Industries in 1955 as chief scientist, later rising to chairman. But it was his authorship that would define his legacy.

In 1959, he published *Be Your Own Gardening Expert*, the first in what would become the best-selling gardening book series in history. The "Expert" guides were designed for amateurs—not academics. They featured concise, jargon-free language, colour photographs, and clear, step-by-step instructions. The format was revolutionary, and readers embraced it in their millions. By combining scientific knowledge with everyday usability, Dr. Hessayon bridged the gap between professional horticulturists and home gardeners.

Over the decades, the "Expert" series expanded to cover nearly every area of gardening: houseplants, trees and shrubs, lawns, vegetables, greenhouses, and even pest control. With over 50 million copies sold worldwide, the books became staples on bookshelves and in potting sheds alike, empowering generations of gardeners to grow with confidence.

Beyond his writing, Dr. Hessayon remained a quietly influential figure in British gardening culture. He was honoured with numerous awards, including the Royal Horticultural Society's Veitch Memorial Medal and an OBE for services to horticulture and charity. Yet despite his fame, he kept a low public profile, allowing the success of his books to speak on his behalf.

Dr. Hessayon's contribution to the democratization of gardening cannot be overstated. He brought horticulture out of the realm of specialists and into ordinary homes, encouraging millions to pick up a trowel, plant a seed, and nurture something beautiful. His work lives on in the gardens he inspired and the joy he brought to so many through the simple act of growing.

The Perennial Pantry: A Gardener's Guide to Long-Lived Vegetables

Imagine a garden that keeps giving year after year—without the cycle of sowing, transplanting, and replanting. A garden that not only feeds you across the seasons, but also nurtures the soil, supports pollinators, and weaves a tapestry of biodiversity right in your backyard. Welcome to the thriving world of perennial vegetables.

These unsung heroes of the edible garden are plants that return every year, providing food for three years or more. From leafy greens and alliums to tubers and shoots, perennial vegetables are a vital part of the movement toward natural farming and polycultures—growing many different crops in the same space. Gardeners and growers like Joshua Sparkes, Huw Richards, and Mandy Barber are leading the way, championing this approach for its ecological benefits and aesthetic appeal.



The Roots of Resilience

Perennial vegetables may not dominate supermarket shelves, but many have deep agricultural roots. Once cherished in traditional gardens, crops like *Crambe maritima* (sea kale) and *Hablitzia tamnoides* (Caucasian spinach) have simply fallen out of favor in a world that favors quick, uniform harvests. Yet their longevity is unmatched. Caucasian spinach, for instance, can flourish for decades. Others, like *Brassica oleracea* var. *ramosa*—better known as Daubenton's kale—can live for 15 years or more, resisting common pests like cabbage white caterpillars.

What these plants lack in instant gratification (some take two or three years to establish), they make up for in enduring abundance. Once settled, they offer a near-constant supply of food, especially in the leaner months. While annual crops deliver a bounty in summer and autumn, perennials step in to bridge the "hungry gap" of winter and spring.

Soil-Smart and Pollinator-Friendly

One of the key advantages of perennial vegetables is their rooted reliability. Unlike annuals that require seasonal digging, perennials stay put—allowing soil ecosystems to flourish undisturbed. This undisturbed soil is a haven for beneficial organisms like worms, beetles, and fungi.

And it's not just the soil that benefits. Perennial vegetables are often superb pollinator plants. The blossoms of *Dystaenia takeshimana* (Korean perennial celery), *Rudbeckia laciniata* (cut-leaf coneflower), *Sium sisarum* (skirret), *Crambe maritima*, and *Apios americana* (Potato bean) all draw in bees and other beneficial insects in droves.

Their mature root systems also make them climate resilient. Take *Blitum bonus-henricus* (Good King Henry), a spinach alternative whose roots can delve over a metre deep—reaching water and nutrients that other plants can't.

Space Savers with Style

Perennial vegetables can make the most of difficult spaces. Where annual spinach might sulk, Caucasian spinach thrives in moist, shady spots. And many perennials multitask: *Reichardia picroides* (French scorzonera) can be harvested even while in flower, while other leafy crops yield both a spring and autumn harvest.

Their diversity makes them ideal for mixing and matching in a cottage garden-style layout, where edibles blend seamlessly with ornamentals. The twining vines of the Potato bean are not just productive—they're visually stunning. Likewise, the rich purple leaves of some perennial kale cultivars lend dramatic flair to beds and borders.



A Basket That Never Empties

So, why aren't more of us growing these botanical treasures? Perhaps it's the wait for that first meaningful harvest. But gardening is the art of patience and reward. And with perennial vegetables, the reward is perennial, too—a harvest basket that keeps on filling itself.

For gardeners looking to create sustainable, biodiverse, and beautiful growing spaces, perennial vegetables are not just an option—they're an invitation. One that says: plant once, and eat forever.

Featured Perennial Heroes

Sea Kale (**Crambe maritima**)

A salty, succulent leaf crop with showy white flowers. Attracts pollinators and thrives in poor soils.

Daubenton's Kale (**Brassica oleracea* var. *ramosa**)

Pest-resistant and highly nutritious. Can live 15+ years and keeps producing leafy greens.

Good King Henry (**Blitum bonus-henricus**)

Edible leaves and shoots, rich in iron. Deep roots mine nutrients and water from over a metre down.

Skirret (**Sium sisarum**)

A sweet, starchy root crop with delicate white blooms. An elegant addition to perennial beds, and pollinator friendly.

Cut-leaf Coneflower (**Rudbeckia laciniata**)

Striking yellow blooms with edible young shoots. Supports bees and butterflies.

Companion Planting Ideas

Perennial	Good Companions	Why it Works
Daubenton's Kale	Garlic chives, comfrey	Pest control & soil enrichment
Good King Henry	Rhubarb, strawberries	Similar soil and sun needs
Potato Bean (* <i>Apios</i> *)	Corn, sunflowers	Uses tall stems as natural supports
Caucasian Spinach	Hostas, ferns	Thrives in similar moist, shady environments
Skirret	Calendula, chamomile	Attracts beneficial insects

Nettles in the Garden: A Gardener's Guide to Nature's Green Gold

By Gosia Jedlina-Bialek

Nettles might seem like nothing more than a stinging nuisance to many gardeners. But if you take a closer look, you'll find that nettles (*Urtica dioica*) are one of the most valuable and underrated plants you can grow, or let grow, in your garden. From enriching your compost to supporting biodiversity and even offering medicinal and edible benefits, nettles are a true gardener's ally.

Though often pulled up or avoided, nettles deserve a place in every eco-conscious garden. Here's why:

- **Soil Enrichment:** nettles thrive in nitrogen-rich soil, making them a natural indicator of fertile ground.
- **Biodiversity Booster:** they provide habitat and food for beneficial insects, including butterflies such as Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, whose caterpillars feed exclusively on nettles.
- **Compost Accelerator:** nettles break down quickly and are high in nitrogen, making them a fantastic addition to compost piles.
- **Natural Fertilizer:** nettle 'tea' (a liquid feed made from fermented nettle leaves) is a powerful organic fertilizer and pest deterrent.

If you're ready to embrace nettles, it's best to give them a dedicated spot. They can spread aggressively via rhizomes and self-seeding, so consider planting them in a contained bed, corner, or even a large pot.

Nettles prefer part-shade to full sun and rich, moist soil. You can grow them from seed or transplant a root division from an established patch. Cut them back periodically to encourage fresh growth and prevent excessive spreading. Always wear gloves and long sleeves when handling.

The best time to harvest nettles is in spring and early summer, when the leaves are young and tender. Use gloves and scissors to snip the top few inches of each stem. This encourages regrowth and gives you the most flavoursome, nutritious leaves. Do not harvest after the plant has flowered, as older nettle leaves can develop gritty particles that may irritate the kidneys.



Using Nettles on the Allotment

Urticaceae

1. Nettle 'Tea' Fertilizer:

Steep fresh nettle leaves in a bucket of water (weighed down with a stone) for 1–2 weeks until the mixture becomes dark and smelly. Dilute it (1 part 'tea' to 10 parts water) and use as a liquid feed on tomatoes, leafy greens, or any nitrogen-hungry plants.

2. Mulch and Compost:

Chop up nettles and add them to your compost pile to speed up decomposition. You can also layer them around plants as a nutrient-rich mulch.

3. Insect Habitat:

Leave a patch of nettles unharvested to support pollinators and predatory insects like ladybirds, which help keep pests under control.

Many gardeners also enjoy the edible and herbal benefits of nettles. Blanch or cook young nettle leaves to neutralise the sting, then use them in soups, pesto, or teas. Dried nettles make a mineral-rich tea that is beneficial for those who suffer from low energy levels, allergies and inflammation. In folk medicine nettles have long been used to treat arthritis, allergies, and more.

Always wear gloves when harvesting or handling nettles and avoid harvesting from roadsides or polluted areas. Once dried or cooked, nettles lose their sting and are completely safe to handle and consume.

Rather than waging a war on nettles, savvy gardeners are learning to work with them. Whether you're improving your soil, attracting wildlife, brewing up a batch of natural fertilizer, or making your own herbal remedies, nettles are a powerhouse plant with much to offer. So next time you spot that familiar weed in your garden—think twice before pulling it out. It might just be one of the most useful plants growing on your plot.



Recipes

1. Lemon & Nettle Cake (surprisingly delicious!)

A moist, zesty green cake made with fresh nettle leaves. Great as a tea cake or light dessert.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh young nettle leaves (about 60g), washed
- ½ cup (120ml) milk (dairy or plant-based)
- 1 stick (115g) unsalted butter, softened
- ¾ cup (150g) sugar
- 2 eggs
- zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1½ cups (180g) all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Optional Lemon Glaze:

- ½ cup icing sugar
- 1–2 tablespoons lemon juice

Instructions:

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Drop in the nettle leaves and boil for 1–2 minutes to remove the sting. Drain and rinse under cold water, then squeeze out excess moisture. Blend the nettles with the milk until smooth and vibrantly green. Set aside.

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease and line a loaf tin or 8-inch round cake pan.

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the eggs one at a time. Add the lemon zest and juice. Stir in the nettle-milk purée. Don't worry—it'll look very green, but that's the magic.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt. Gradually fold into the wet mixture until just combined. Pour the batter into your prepared pan and smooth the top. Bake for 35–45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean.

Optional glaze:

Mix powdered sugar with lemon juice until smooth. Drizzle over the cooled cake for a sweet-tart finish.

2. Nettle Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1–2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or butter
- 1 medium potato, peeled and diced (for creaminess)
- 1 litre (about 4 cups) vegetable or chicken stock
- 4 large handfuls of fresh young nettle tops (use gloves when handling)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: cream or a dollop of sour cream for serving
- Optional garnish: chives, parsley, or croutons

Instructions:

Wearing gloves, rinse the nettle tops thoroughly. Remove any tough stems. You only want the tender top leaves. Set aside.

In a large pot, heat the oil or butter over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook for another minute.

Add the diced potato and stock to the pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 10–15 minutes until the potato is soft.

Carefully add the nettles to the pot (no gloves needed now, they'll lose their sting when cooked). Simmer for another 5 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat and blend the soup until smooth.

Season with salt and pepper to taste. For extra richness, stir in a little cream before serving or top each bowl with a swirl of sour cream.

Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*)

by Sylvia Berente

The forager's calendar year truly kicks off in March when many edible wild plants start to emerge, such as Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and of course one of my favourite woodland plants, the fragrant **Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*)** or 'bear onion' as we call it in Hungarian.



The first small shoots start to appear along woodland paths in early March, sometimes as early as February. Even though the six-petaled, star shaped, white flowers and young, green seed pods are edible, the leaves are the tastiest when still tender and not fully grown. I like to collect wild garlic before it flowers from late April to June, as the leaves tend to become slightly bitter then.

Wild garlic can be found in abundance along Dollis Brook behind the Gordon Road allotment site; you just have to follow the fresh garlic scent to find the sea of fragrant leaves. Its strong scent distinguishes it from the similar looking, but poisonous Lily of the Valley (*Covallaria majalis*).

I would like to share my **Wild Garlic Pesto** recipe that I usually pair with gnocchi and grated Parmigiano or vegan hard cheese alternative.

Ingredients:

- a good handful of fresh wild garlic (approx. 100-150 g)
- a good handful of fresh basil (approx 100-150 g)
- pine nuts (approx. 50-100 g)
- a generous sprinkling of olive oil (I like to use truffle infused olive oil)
- the juice of half a lemon
- salt and pepper to taste



Preparation:

1. Wash the wild garlic leaves and basil leaves. I use the stalks as well.
2. Using either a food processor or a mortar and pestle, blitz/grind the wild garlic, basil and pine nuts to a rough paste. Slowly add the oil and the lemon juice, continuing to gently blitz/grind until the pesto is smooth and at your preferred thickness.
3. Taste and season with the salt and pepper. You may wish to add additional oil if you prefer a thinner pesto.
4. Store in a jar in the fridge. Drizzle the top of the pesto with an extra layer of oil to keep it fresh.
5. Enjoy!

Our Beautiful Corvidae

By Guy Cook

Four members of the Corvidae (Crow Family) can be seen on our allotments: Carrion Crow, Western Jackdaw, Eurasian Magpie, and Eurasian Jay.

Magpies and jays land on our plots, crows are more often in the trees, while the jackdaws pass noisily overhead, sometimes on their way between the Dollis Hill viaduct and the Arts Centre in North Finchley. (They like high perches and nest sites.)



Superficially there are reasons to dislike the Corvidae, and many people do. These noisy, violent, omnivorous and opportunistic predators gobble up everything they can, including the eggs and chicks of smaller birds, and some of our seedlings.

Their unpopularity is reflected in folklore and poems. Crows are harbingers of death and disaster, jackdaws and magpies are thieves, and jays are gaudy show offs!



Given their constant predation, it would be easy to blame them for the decline of smaller and more popular bird species. But the damage is our doing, not theirs. Bird decline is the result of diseases, climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Without us, the Corvidae would just be part of a balanced and healthy ecosystem.

There are also plenty of reasons to admire them. The crow family are now known to be among the most intelligent creatures on earth, more intelligent than many mammals. And it is well worth looking at their plumage more closely. What appears on a dull day to be just black on crows, jackdaws and magpies is—in sunlight—a rich iridescent mixture of greens, blues and purples, while the beauty of a jay, with its pinkish plumage, white rump, and exquisite azure filigree wing patch, is obvious to all.



So, let's not fall prey to prejudice against the crow family or begrudge them a few seedlings. Let's see them for the intelligent and beautiful birds that they are.

(Illustrations by the author, #birds_by_guy)

Balcony vs Allotment: A Growing Journey

By Sam Duffy

Two years ago, armed with curiosity and a handful of seeds from a seed subscription service called Pot Gang, I embarked on my growing journey in the small but mighty space of my balcony. Pot Gang's ingenious seed subscription sent me monthly selections tailored for compact areas, making it easy to sow and nurture vegetables and herbs that thrived in pots and containers. What started as a modest experiment quickly turned into an obsession, and with each successful harvest, my confidence grew—as did my desire to expand my growing ambitions beyond the limits of my balcony.

Fast forward to today, and I've transitioned from container gardening to an allotment plot, where brassicas and melons will now claim their rightful space. This shift has been both exciting and eye-opening, highlighting the key differences between growing on a balcony vs an allotment.



Space & Variety

A balcony teaches you the art of efficiency—every inch counts. Vertical gardening, hanging baskets, and stackable planters become your best friends, helping you maximize limited space. While this setup excels for herbs, salad leaves, and compact root vegetables like radishes, it does pose constraints when it comes to larger crops.



An allotment, on the other hand, offers freedom. You can grow sprawling pumpkins, towering Brussels sprouts, and deep-rooted potatoes without worrying about space restrictions. The added room also allows for companion planting strategies, biodiversity, and even wildlife-friendly areas, enriching both your harvest and local ecosystem.

Challenges & Rewards

Balcony growing often means controlling microclimates, shielding plants from harsh winds, and dealing with limited sunlight depending on your orientation. While container gardening provides flexibility, it also demands frequent watering, as pots dry out faster than open soil.

An allotment introduces new challenges: soil management, pest control, and weeds all require more attention than a tidy balcony setup. However, the rewards far outweigh the effort—plants benefit from natural rainfall, deeper root systems, and better access to nutrients, making for healthier and more productive crops.

Community & Connection

One of the biggest joys of moving to an allotment is the community spirit. While balcony growing is often a solitary venture, an allotment introduces you to like-minded growers who share advice, trade surplus produce, and provide motivation on days when the weeds seem endless.

Transitioning from a small-space grower to an allotment gardener has been an incredible learning curve, and it's one I owe to those first packets of seeds from Pot Gang. They sparked a passion that took root, flourished, and I hope will expand into a thriving allotment plot. Whether you're planting in pots or digging into open soil, the journey is as rewarding as the harvest itself.

Happy growing!

Thanks,
Sam



The Printing Workshop Event At Gordon Road

by Felicity Nock

Let's start with a quiz question: what have the Swedish millionaire Lisbet Rausing and the ecologically minded FHS got in common?

In 1995 billionaire Swedish heiress Lisbet Rausing bought Corrou estate with 57,000 acres on Rannoch Moor. Later, for management purposes, she merged it with the consortium-held Loch Abar Mor to set in motion the re-wilding of a massive 80,000 acres of Highland Scotland.

Well, there is a Wildlife Plot that is going very wild on the site at Gordon Road. That's one point in common, however perhaps not on the same scale. OK, so a bit of a red herring.



It is Sunday afternoon on 23 March and fed by a generous multi-national community lunch we're ready to go. You may have noticed more activities taking place in the Log Cabin/Summerhouse hidden at the bottom of the site behind the raised beds. On that particular Sunday the cabin provided a welcome haven from a rather cool drizzly March afternoon. Inside Sophie Dahl and her friend Sheila Mcaffrey had set up a kitchen table scattered with art papers, leaves and inks. It looked invitingly muddled.

Raised bedder Sheila Armstrong was admiring the clarity of veins in a printed leaf she had just impressed. Later she gave a taut WhatsApp description of the process:

"Choose a leaf and choose your colour of ink first
Roller ink onto a flat surface big enough to fit your leaf
Place leaf on ink and press down on it using stone or spoon."
Have done printing before so I liked it. Enthusiastic teachers, well prepared with materials."

These succinct instructions really can't describe the glowing smile and Sheila's delight at completing a new print to take home!

Around her, children from the Home School group were jostling to finish their prints and hang them to dry on pegged lines...

Which is when Sophie handed out sheets of faintly silvered card. Out of context it was undecipherable – a specialist printing material? Made of paperboard, plastic film and aluminium, to be handled with care, was it precious, would it bite? With dextrous ease Sheila M. took a fine pointed awl and started to draw pattern outlines, in some areas the silver was picked out exposing the card underneath. An assured and coherent design followed. There's such a self-conscious barrier to leap when you're asked to 'doodle' in public on a material you've never handled before. This is where the gift of these professional teachers lies. Their encouragement to give it a try was led by example and praise given at the first tentative marks. True professionals with messages: enjoy, experiment, don't panic. It matters but it doesn't matter.



When you've filled the card with design, next you paint the silvery etched surface with ink and roll it through a pasta maker onto art paper creating a negative print of your doodle pattern.

Simple! Delighted, who wouldn't be?

Up in the Highlands a billionaire's daughter is dancing a Scottish reel at the thought of an allotment society Tetra printing creatively with natural materials. For that is the connection, Lisbet Rausing, Tetrapak heiress turned her father's billions into land to save in its natural state for the future, and if you check her name it is associated with many community initiatives in the Western Highlands like Mull & Iona Community Trust's advice on how to pulp Tetrapak to make into furniture, purses and other saleable goods.

Save your Tetrapak, it's everywhere, to recycle and create something new!

Announcements

JACKIE HURST LEGACY

Jackie Hurst, a long-time member of Finchley Horticultural Society, has made a most generous donation of £10,000 to the Society. We are most grateful for this amazing gift. The money will go towards new roofs on the Gordon Road and Nethercourt Avenue garages to replace the current ones which contain a small amount of asbestos, and towards extra water taps at Brent Way.

Jackie was a very active member of the Society, instrumental in organising the Plant Sale for many years. She and Liz Thompson moved to North Wales to be nearer to family and they are greatly missed at Gordon Road.

Thank you so much, Jackie, for your benevolence.

PLANT HERITAGE SPRING FAIR

The London Group of Plant Heritage will be holding their Spring Plant Fair on Saturday 26th April 2025 from 9.30am - 2pm at the usual venue: St Michael's C of E primary school on North Road, Highgate, N6 4BG. Entry charge is still £2.50, cash and card accepted. All money goes to www.plantheritage.org.uk. All the familiar nurseries will be represented, including Culinary Herbs, Dyson's Salvias, Daisy Roots, Monksilver, Rotherview, Edulis, Hedgehog Garden, Rose Cottage Plants and more.

Please come and please encourage any family and friends to come along too, no one leaves empty handed! The banner with information will be on the railings outside the school from early April.

SUMMER VISITS OF INTEREST

On Friday 20th June the Finchley Horticultural Society will be organising a visit to two gardens in West Sussex: West Dean and Woolbeding. We still have some places left on our coach trip to these beautiful gardens in West Sussex. West Dean is one of the greatest restored gardens open to the public today. An impressive collection of working Victorian glasshouses, a 300-foot pergola, a spring garden with flint bridges and the occasional surreal fibreglass tree offering year-round interest to garden visitors. A short drive away we will visit Woolbeding. A horticultural haven bursting with colourful planting, a contemporary glasshouse and countryside views.

Cost varies depending on whether you are a member of FHS and/or the National Trust but details can be found on the website: <http://www.finchleyhs.org>. Or email mail@finchleyhs.org for the attention of Judy Woollett.

TOTTERIDGE GARDENING CLUB VISITS

Totteridge Gardening Club have invited FHS members to join them on four visits they are organising this year. Each one will feature a visit to an interesting town/area followed by a nearby garden.

- Wednesday 25 June: Henley on Thames and Greys Court, Oxfordshire
- Saturday 19 July: Horsham and Wakehurst Place, Sussex. (Wakehurst is home to the Millennium seed bank)
- Wednesday 20 August: Layer Marney Tower and Maldon, Essex
- Thursday 18 September: Market Harborough and Kelmarsh Hall, Leicestershire

For information and prices please contact Pauline Delius: 0208 883 7041 (no email) and mention you are a member of FHS.

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- Our annual Plant Sale is on 18 May 2025.
- Our popular Summer BBQ will take place in mid-July 2025.

The Finchley Horticultural Society 34 Elm
Park Road, Finchley, N3 1EB
finchleyhs.org.uk
twitter.com/finchleyhort
www.facebook.com/FinchleyHS

For all Finchley gardeners and for plot holders
at Gordon Road, Nethercourt Avenue and
Brent Way

President
Catherine Schmitt

Chairperson and FHS Enquiries
Jo Cuttell 020 8922 0241

Allotments Secretaries
Gordon Road: Rosa Tormo
gordonroad@finchleyhs.org
Nethercourt Avenue: Janine Limberg and
Derry Sharkey
nethercourt@finchleyhs.org
Brent Way: Elain Wright
brentway@finchleyhs.org

Treasurer
John Staub: john@staub.com

Membership
Christine Williams: 07984 935668

Trading Hut
Julie Datta and Erika Mansnerus:
fhstradinghut@gmail.com

Allotments Security & Break-ins
Tony Ingram
020 8349 1265 or 07967 274739

Communications
Website and Twitter
Marcos Scriven: 07446 881600

Newsletter Editor
Elena Cook: 07931140817

Newsletter Design
Toby Cook

To contact any committee member by email
please use this address and mark it for the
attention of the person you want to contact:

finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com

Member of the Barnet Federation of
Allotment and Horticultural Societies
Affiliated to the
Royal Horticultural Society

Events Diary

RHS and partners Spring 2025 events

Celebrate the best of the season at the RHS
Gardens and shows

Wisley:

Cactus and Succulent Show
26 April, 10am-5pm

Spring Craft and Design Fair
1-5 May

Hyde Hall:

Seasonal Walk
22 April, 11am-noon
Take a guided wander with a volunteer

Harlow Carr:

Japanese Shop
Until 5 May
*Treasures of Japan await, from silk kimonos to
traditional wooden kokeshi dolls*

RHS Chelsea Flower Show

20-24 May

Look out for on-sale dates in the members' e-
newsletter or visit rhs.org.uk/shows



Newsletter

If you received a paper copy of this newsletter
and are now able to receive it by e-mail, please
inform Christine Williams,
finchleyhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com
This saves us time and money.

**This issue of the Grapevine has been
generously sponsored by Winkworth Estate
Agents**

Winkworth

T: 020 8349 3388
www.winkworth.co.uk