



# ALLOTMENT & GARDENS ASSOCIATION SALISBURY

## NEWSLETTER - JANUARY/FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021

### A Bumper Edition of 6 pages to help with those long cold winter nights

The Committee would like to take this opportunity to wish you a Happy New Year and enjoyable gardening in 2021.

Let us all hope that 2021 sees the Covid-19 pandemic brought under control so we can all get back to some sort of normality.  
Harry Theobald Editor.

The 14<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of A&GAS took place on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October using Zoom.

The Chairman, Harry Theobald, thanked everyone for attending.

He thanked all Committee members and Associate members for their hard work and support throughout 2020 which has been a very difficult year.

Unfortunately Jon Allnutt has resigned from the Committee, but will remain as the Horticultural Show Organiser. He was thanked for his time on the Committee.

There were 296 members in 2020

The Trading Hut remains the main source of income for the Association. Luckily we managed to do some trading from January to March before lockdown started. We reopened at the beginning of June to coincide with Garden Centres opening. We decided to only open on a Saturday to start with and this worked well so we continued it to the end of October. Keith Lawrence also did a delivery service during lockdown which helped to boost our revenues. Well done Keith. I would like to thank the members who supported the Trading Hut and for showing respect to the staff and other members whilst there. We will be reopening on the 4<sup>th</sup> weekend of January 2021. The Committee have agreed to drop the 2021 membership subscription down to £5 as a gesture of thanks to recognise your continued support during lockdown when you were also unable to use your card for obtaining discounts at local businesses.

The Horticultural Show had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, but Jon Allnutt and his Team managed to organize the photographic class to be judged and results and photos put onto our website.

All the outings we had organised had to be cancelled. We also had to cancel the Autumn talks.

The Auditors were re-elected. The following Officers were re-elected: Chairman Harry Theobald, Secretary David Spaven Treasurer Jenny Coleman. The following Committee Members who stood were re-elected. Kevin Huntley, Jo Tapper, Anna McBride and Lindsey Bellringer. The 15<sup>th</sup> AGM is scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

### Talks

We have moved our Spring talks to the Autumn of 2021 due to Covid-19

### SAA Annual Outings

We hope that the same outings we planned for last year can go ahead in 2021 subject to Government guidelines.

### Trading Hut

The Trading Hut will reopen on the fourth weekend in January (23/24) 09.30 to 12.30. The potatoes on sale will be **First Early**: Swift, Rocket, Foremost, Winston, Red Duke of York, International Kidney (Jersey Royals). **Second Early**: Wilja, Kestrel, Charlotte, Marfona, Estima, **Main Crop**: Sarpo Mira, Picasso, Sentanta, Pink Fir Apple, Desiree, King Edwards, Maris Piper, Cara, Harmony, Maxine, Amour. They are priced at 2kg £2.50, per 1kg, £1.50 and 500g £0.75p except Pink Fir Apple which is £3 per 2kg bag. We will be selling Violet Farm compost again at £4 70p per 60ltr bag and unfortunately we will not be able to offer the same deal as before on three bags at a discounted price due to the rise in cost to us.

We will again be supporting two local charities: Salisbury Hospice (£156.50 raised in 2020) and Alzheimers Support (£104.30 raised in 2020)

Sadly we have heard of the death of Arthur (John) Butt a colourful character who was a regular visitor to the Trading Hut.

### Membership 2021

To help follow social distancing rules and to keep members safe the Committee have looked at different ways to allow members to sign up for 2021. We are asking existing and potential new members who have an allotment to use the membership renewal form which arrives with your Council invoice documents. Please complete the form and bring it with you to our first weekend where there will be a gazebo erected outside the shop **JUST TO TAKE MEMBERSHIPS**. You can

also download the form from our website. We hope this will help stop long queues on the opening weekend. You can still post your membership form with a cheque (not cash) to the Membership Secretary Jenny Coleman. Just to remind members old and new that the fee for 2021 has been reduced to **£5** to thank members for staying with us in 2020 and not being able to use the Trading Hut during lockdown or get price reductions from businesses in Salisbury.

### **SNIPPETS**

More Shows on the way with covid-19 secure events placing exhibitor and visitor safety at top of agenda. Show arrangements for 2021 are as follows: 'Spring Essentials' April 22-25 Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. The numbers of visitors will be limited each day and tickets must be bought in advance. E-tickets with timed arrival slots must be purchased online. Visit: [www.flowershow.org.uk](http://www.flowershow.org.uk) Tickets: £15 until February 28 and £18 from March 1. RHS Malvern Spring Festival May 5-9. Three Counties Show Ground. Visit: [www.threecounties.co.uk/whats-on](http://www.threecounties.co.uk/whats-on). Tickets: Advanced booking only. Numbers will be restricted. RHS Chelsea Flower Show May 18-23 Royal Hospital Chelsea, London. Visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/shows](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows) Tel: 03443387501 Advanced booking only. RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival July 6-11 Hampton Court, Surrey. Visit: [rhs.org.uk/shows](http://rhs.org.uk/shows); Tel: 03443387501. RHS Tatton Park Flower Show July 21-25 Knutsford, Cheshire. Visit [rhs.org.uk/shows](http://rhs.org.uk/shows). Tel 03443887501. BBC Gardener's World Live June 17-20 NEC, Birmingham. Visitor numbers are restricted with arrival times pre-booked. Visit: [www.bbcgardenersworldlive](http://www.bbcgardenersworldlive) Tel: 08449959654. Shrewsbury Flower Show August 13-14 Shropshire. Visit: [www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk](http://www.shrewsburyflowershow.org.uk) Southport Flower Show August 19-22 Lancashire. Visit: [www.southportflowershow.co.uk](http://www.southportflowershow.co.uk) Tel: 01704 547147.

A fascinating new book '**Witch's Garden**' from Sandra Lawrence looks at more than 50 plants that have a special place in folklore.

Charles Dowding has written a new book called '**No dig gardening**' which takes readers through the process of converting new ground into a successful no-dig veg plot. Priced at £22.50, it's available from Charles at [www.charlesdowding.co.uk](http://www.charlesdowding.co.uk)

Research by the Association of Public Services Excellence has revealed that 90% of councils saw a rise in requests for allotments as a result of the pandemic. Its State of the Market on Allotments survey also found that 20% had more than 1,000 people on their waiting lists and a third said that their Councils planned to increase allotment provision.

From 1 January 2021 Garden Centres and Nurseries could face delays and extra expenses as the plants they import from mainland Europe will be subject to new checks after the UK leaves the EU. The Horticultural Trades Association said a recent survey of its members highlighted that costs to bring plants into the UK might increase by between 15% and 20% because of the extra payments. The lockdown in Spring 2020 had already damaged the horticultural industry and these further costs could put more businesses in jeopardy as well as forcing up prices for consumers. UK importers must pay to ensure plants coming from the EU are disease-free, although Defra has said only plants that present a particular risk will be inspected until July 2021. The importers will also have to pay customs agents on both sides of the border and admin fees to the UK government.

Young gardeners across the UK are being encouraged to design their own secret garden as part of a collaboration announced by the RHS to mark the release of the film of the same name. Inspired by the film, the Campaign for School Gardening and Sky Cinema have launched a competition to give junior gardeners a chance to explore the many ways in which gardens and gardening can help and improve our physical and mental wellbeing. The competition is open to all children aged 16 and under in the UK. For more info visit: [www.schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/thesecretgarden](http://www.schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/thesecretgarden)

### **Gardens**

In the heart of the City of London and nearby at Canary Wharf are three gardens: one long established, the others relative newcomers. Constructed at least in part under cover and open to the public, all are remarkable in rather different ways.

**Crossrail Place Roof Garden:** Description: contemporary garden constructed on the roof of Crossrail Place complex. Features considered planting and secluded seating areas either side of a serpentine central path, all below a tunnel-like, largely timber lattice structure. Mostly open to the elements in the centre, but enclosed at the sides with transparent 'air cushions'. Opened in 2015. **Size of garden:** 310m (1,020ft) long. **Points of interest:** Planting at the eastern end with plants from Asia, including bamboos and at the western end are plants from the Americas such as *Magnolia* and *Liquidambar*. **Visiting:** Crossrail Place, Canary Wharf, E15 5AB. Open daily until 9pm or sunset (subject to Covid-19 measures). Nearest tube is Canary Wharf, a five minute walk away. Good wheelchair access with lifts to garden.

**Sky Garden:** Description: subtropical garden surrounding three restaurants/bars within a three-storey rooftop atrium atop one of London's tallest skyscrapers, offering city views. Opened 2015. **Size of garden:** 2,250sq m (24,220 sq. ft.). **Points of interest:** the planted slopes, impressive cycads and panorama of London. **Visiting:** 1 Sky Garden Walk, London EC3M 8AF. Nearest tube station is Monument: visits must be booked in advance and are subject to Covid-19 measures: visit [www.skygarden.london](http://www.skygarden.london)

**Barbican Conservatory:** Description: well established, lush subtropical paradise at heart of the Barbican planted on different levels, and with three distinct areas. Opened in 1984. **Size of garden:** 2,140sq m (23,000 sq. ft.). **Points of**

**interest:** impressive scale, brutalist architecture and superb range of plants including some of the largest leaved, tallest Monstera in the UK. Arid area with its cactus collection is also good. **Visiting:** Barbican Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS. Free entry on select days of the week: availability, Covid-19 measures and booking can be found at [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk) nearest tubes are Barbican and Moorgate, both a 10 minute walk. Limited wheelchair access.

A new plan to support the Wildlife Garden at the Natural History Museum in London was launched in April 2020 and is due for completion in 2023. It is now pivotal to the NHM's new Urban Nature Project transforming the grounds surrounding the museum into an 'exemplar of urban wildlife research, conservation and awareness. In addition, young people, families and schools will benefit from local, national and online learning programmes. Plans also include a traineeship, and two new apprenticeships. When completed, the gardens will take visitors on a journey starting with plants' evolution and the fossil record to invoke earth's early history through to the urban nature habitats of the Wildlife Garden and onto a living lab. Here scientific work will focus on species habitat observation, including trailing the use of innovative technologies such as acoustic monitoring. For more info visit: [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

Around 25 Gardens across England are jubilant at the news they are to collectively receive £6m from the Government under The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Culture Recovery Fund. Gardens in the South and South West who will receive grants are Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and Arboretum, Hampshire, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornwall, Tresco Estate, Scilly Isles, Hestercombe Gardens Trust, Somerset, Borde Hill Garden, West Sussex and Great Dixter Charitable Trust, East Sussex.

A noted garden in West Dorset has become the Historic Houses Association Garden of the Year. Mapperton House near Beaminster, the Jacobean family home of the Earl and Countess of Sandwich, claimed almost a quarter of 12,000 votes cast for eight shortlisted properties

The National Garden Scheme has launched its 2021 Snowdrop Festival with the proviso that all tickets must be pre-booked with the 95 gardens in England and Wales who are participating. The festival runs between February 1-28, however a few gardens are open for snowdrops in late January and early March. To see participating gardens and book advance tickets, visit [www.ngs.org.uk/snowdrops](http://www.ngs.org.uk/snowdrops) or download the NGS app.

An ambitious plan to transform Grosvenor Square into a garden has been unveiled. The garden would see the introduction of four interlocking gardens and a novel hidden water garden in the capital's second largest square. The 3,000 square metre expansion would also see the reinstatement of the original 300 year old oval design for the square, while also doubling the number of trees and boosting biodiversity. Project managers hope the communal and environmentally infused approach could form a blueprint for other similar spaces across the world. For more info visit: [www.grosvenorsquare.org](http://www.grosvenorsquare.org)

## **Products & Services**

**Which Best Buys: Best buy cordless grass trimmers:** Flymo Contour Cordless 20v grass trimmer, Ego ST1510E.

**Best buy and recommended Dwarf Irises:** 'Alida' (Sky Blue), 'Harmony' (Bright Blue), 'Pixie' (Blue Purple), I. reticulate (Purple), 'Clairette' (Sky blue/ white), 'George' (Purple), 'Katherine's Gold' (Creamy Yellow), 'Rhapsody' (Blue)

**Best buy Tough Garden Gloves:** 'Kew Gardens' (Gardening Gloves), 'Gold Leaf' (Tough Touch Gloves), 'Gold Leaf' (Dry Touch Gloves), 'Kent & Stove' (Premium Comfort Gloves)

**Best buy and recommended Roses for small spaces:** 'Ebb Tide' (Purple), 'Joe de Vivre' (Pink), 'Precious Amber' (Orange), 'Crimson Sweet Dream' (Red), 'Eyes For You' (Pink/purple), 'Nathalie Nypels' (Pink).

**Best buy and recommended Leeks:** 'Lyon Prizetaker', 'Malabar', 'Jaune de Poritou', 'Nipper', 'Oarsman' F1.

**Best buy Top 10 houseplants:** 'Moth Orchids', 'Cyclamen', 'Crassula' (money plant or jade plant), 'Spider plant', 'Yucca', 'African Violet' (saintpaulia), 'Hippeastrum' (amaryllis), 'Dracaena' (Dragon plant), 'Streptocarpus' (Cape primrose), 'Cacti and succulents.

Garden product manufacturers have announced their new lines for spring 2021 - and natural and sustainable gardening very much remains a key focus. Evergreen Garden Care is extending its Miracle-Gro-lawn-care range with two new natural products. Miracle-Gro Evergreen Natural 4 in 1 is claimed to be a 100% natural version of the popular Miracle-Gro Complete 4 in 1 lawn treatment. Meanwhile Miracle-Gro Think'R lawn is claimed to be made from 100% natural materials. Both are available in recyclable packaging. Vitax will be introducing two new plant feeds to meet growing consumer demand for organic products: Vitax Organic All Purpose Plant Food and Vitax Super Concentrated Organic Tomato Feed. Natural - gardening brand Empathy has also recently extended its product range with a new liquid feed and starter product featuring Rootgrow mycorrhizal fungi. Look out for plenty of new peat-free composts in 2021. Alongside Evergreen Garden Care's 13 peat-free launches under the Miracle-Gro and Levington brands, The Greener Gardening Company is doubling the size of its 100% peat free Happy Compost range. This is in response to significantly increased sales in 2020 with demand outstripping supply.

A new organisation that will help gardeners with their lawn care problems has been launched. The brainchild of professional turf consultant David Hedges-Gower, the Lawn Association is the first expert-led organisation dedicated equally to the needs of gardeners, lawn enthusiasts and professionals helping them with producing quality lawns through its educational programmes, product development and accurate information. The Lawn Association is free to join, with articles, podcasts and instructional videos available over the coming months and an online shop for recommended turf products. From January users will be able to subscribe to an advanced online learning course. For more info visit: [www.lawnassociation.org.uk](http://www.lawnassociation.org.uk)

A new online tutoring service for home gardeners is set to launch. A collaboration between the founders of the much-respected London College of Garden Design and ground-breaking environmental podcast *Roots and All* is launching on December 1. The site will initially offer three courses, with more to follow each month and is aimed at learners, providing an in-depth and reflective journey into the world of gardens and their role as gardeners. To meet the needs of an environmentally aware audience, the venture will draw on the latest information and techniques from the world of horticulture and have a strong focus on sustainability and eco-friendly gardening techniques. For more info visit: [www.gardencourses.com](http://www.gardencourses.com) or Tel: 07834 451729

A Living Collections Portal listing 14,000 plants growing at Cambridge University Botanical Garden has been completed and can be accessed by all at [www.botanic.cam.ac.uk](http://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk)

### **Science and Research**

Researchers believe they have found the reason why plants stop flowering. The work, undertaken in collaboration between the universities of Leeds and Nottingham, found that auxin, a plant hormone, is released by ripe fruits in thale cress. This hormone seems to prevent more flowers from forming and opening. It's hoped that this knowledge can be used to lengthen the flowering period of commercially imported crops such as oil seed rape, leading to heavier crops.

Danish Scientist Dr Sophie Lund Rasmussen has launched the first scientific investigation into reports that running robot mowers at night could injure or kill hedgehogs. She will collect dead hedgehogs from rehabilitation centres and investigate how a range of robot mowers react towards them. Do the mowers detect the hedgehogs and stop and change direction as they're supposed to? Dr Rasmussen says: 'It's important to discover and document what is causing the horrific injuries we see on hedgehogs every year so that we can improve the conservation initiatives directed at this declining species.'

### **Plant Pests and Diseases**

Defra will ban metaldehyde from 22 March 2021. The slug and snail control was first banned from sale in June 2019, but this was overturned by a legal action taken by a manufacturer of the pesticide. The UK Farming Minister said the risks posed to the environment and to wildlife are too great.

New research from the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board has shown that wildflowers such as vetch and phacelia (purple tansy), grown along tractor lines or field edges in potato fields can help to reduce potato virus. The wildflowers encourage ladybirds, hoverflies and other insects that eat virus spreading aphids.

The UK's first knotweed detection dogs, Mick and Mack have begun work sniffing out the weed every homeowner fears. Japanese Knotweed which can knock 10 per cent off of property values, so Knotweed specialists Environet asked specialist dog trainers (who normally train for drug and bomb detection) to teach Mick and Mack to find underground rhizomes: "They get the scent and their heads go up - it takes minutes to pinpoint the exact area" says managing director Nick Seal. For tips on tackling Japanese knotweed, go to [www.gardenersworld.com/knotweed](http://www.gardenersworld.com/knotweed)

Invasive plants are being targeted across National Trust for Scotland sites as part of Project Wipeout, the Trust's biggest effort to eradicate non-native plants. Removing plants such as Rhododendron ponticum, Japanese knotweed and American skunk cabbage allows native flora to flourish. For more info visit: [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)

A shield bug, known in the USA and Europe for damaging fruit crops and ornamentals, has been found for the first time in Essex. An adult brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha halys*) was captured in a special pheromone trap at Rainham by scientists studying what could enter the UK due to accidental importation or climate change. They are now looking for signs of a breeding colony. Originally from Asia, the bug was first recorded in the USA in the mid-1990s. Now established in 41 states, it breeds in such numbers it can prove a real nuisance by overwintering in houses. Found in most European countries, and with a host range of at least 51 edible and ornamental plant species, it is of concern for UK gardeners and commercial growers. These shield bugs are sap feeders; they can make fruit unsalable by injecting saliva into fruitlets that cause distortion and stains fruit. If you think you have found a brown marmorated stink bug, email a photograph to: [BMSB@emr.ac.uk](mailto:BMSB@emr.ac.uk). The stink bug is characterised by its distinctly rectangular head and banded pale patterns on its antennae and around the edges of its body. To help with identification, select the 'Shield bug' option at [www.britishbugs.org.uk/gallery](http://www.britishbugs.org.uk/gallery)

Lovers of box plants, formal and topiary gardens now have hope they can again grow box without fear of plants getting blight. After decades of breeding, research and trials, highly resistant cultivars are making their way to the UK market. Herplant BVBA, Belgium, has introduced four cultivars scientifically shown to have improved resistance to box blight. They report that plants have remained free of disease in extensive field tests. At the same time, Saunders Genetics of Virginia in the US has been selecting seedlings with useful levels of resistance and has two new cultivars now being trialled in European nurseries. The four Belgium box sold as BetterBuxus are *Buxus Renaissance*, *B. Babylon Beauty*, *B. Heritage* and *B. Skylight*. The American boxes are NewGen Freedom and NewGen Independence. It is hoped BetterBuxus may be available to UK gardeners in Spring 2021 and NewGen cultivars in 2023-2024. For more info visit [www.betterbuxus.com](http://www.betterbuxus.com) and [www.newgenboxwood.com](http://www.newgenboxwood.com)

### **Environment**

The government has just finished consulting on a planned strategy for peat in England - but some are already questioning whether the plan is ambitious enough to protect our climate, environment and wildlife habitats. The draft strategy is questioned by several organisations, including the RSPB, CPRE, the countryside charity, National Parks England and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. The government's 25 year Environment Plan commits to restoring 75% of sites of scientific interest to a good condition, but this only covers around 10% of upland peat land in England. Upland areas are often privately owned and many non-governmental organisations point to a lack of data and mapping to uncover a clear picture of the condition of these areas. In lowland areas, notably the Fens, the soil is largely exposed to farming, leading to significant erosion. Once an area of peat is drained it erodes quickly, releasing huge amounts of greenhouse gases. The Committee on Climate Change estimates that around 18.5 to 23 million tonnes of carbon dioxide are released from peatlands in the UK every year. It urgently needs Defra to set out a clear policy on peat soils, with targets, timescales and actions. Only measures for peat bogs in England are being considered at the moment but Defra says it's in discussion with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The final England Peat Strategy should be published later this year, which, Defra says, will give more detail on how it intends to protect, restore and reduce damage to peatlands. It claims the strategy will set out a 'holistic' plan to manage, protect and restore 'all our peatlands' so they deliver benefits to climate and nature.

One in five maple species are at high risk of extinction and in urgent need of conservation says a global plant conservation body. The Red List of *Acer* report published by Botanic Garden Conservation International reveals that 36 out of 158 known species of maple or acer are at high risk with 75 per cent of those threatened geographically restricted in their native habitats. Urban development is the primary cause of habitat loss, along with forestry, agriculture and mining. For more info visit: [www.globaltreeassessment.org](http://www.globaltreeassessment.org)

Fruit and veg grown on city rooftops, road verges, gardens and allotments could feed almost 15 per cent of the local population, reveals a new study. Scientists mapped spaces with potential for growing fresh produce in Sheffield and found that even if only 10 per cent was converted to growing food it would still be enough to supply up to 90,000 people.

Schools throughout the UK are being given the opportunity to plant their own orchards or fruiting hedgerow. Launched by The Tree Council, the free packs of bare-root plants are aimed to inspire teachers and pupils to get outdoors and plant and care for trees. Nurseries, primary schools and secondary schools, both dependent and independent, are all eligible to apply, with teachers receiving a resource pack linked to the national curriculum. For more info visit: [www.treecouncil.org.uk/schools-and-education/orchards-for-schools/](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk/schools-and-education/orchards-for-schools/).

An underground movement creating local food by grafting fruit varieties onto suitable street trees has reached its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Guerrilla Grafters started in San Francisco in 2010 as a consequence of the recession and the rising interest in urban farming. At the beginning we grafted in daylight but as the project gained notoriety, we increasingly chose dusk. Teams of three are ideal and we recommend finding stewards in the neighbourhood who can care for the tree and its grafts. The network organises local workshops and scion exchanges in late winter when growers bring fruit tree branches to trade or give away to other enthusiasts. The movement has spread throughout the world and communicates via its website, providing advice and help. For more info visit: [www.guerrillagrafters.org](http://www.guerrillagrafters.org)

Hundreds of potted plants will clothe an office and residential building in Sint-Michielsgestel, near Eindhoven in the Netherlands. Dutch architects MVRDV and Van Boven Architecten have developed growing systems for the 'three-dimensional arboretum'. Climbers, shrubs and trees such as pine and birch will be included, all watered with stored rainwater.

Trees in Towns and Cities will be critical in helping us withstand the huge environmental challenges of the future say experts from Kew Gardens, but the range of species currently used is woefully inadequate. In Kew's fourth State of the World's Plants and Fungi report, the institution's scientists are worried the trees we currently have are likely to fall short of requirements and that a far wider range of tree types are needed to help bolster resistance to the combined effects of climate change and invasive pests and diseases. The report authors suggest that a starting point for city planting schemes

should be to assess the various purposes and needs trees are required to deliver and then choose a diversity of species to deliver those services, ensuring trees are sufficiently genetically diverse. This could mean wider planting of rare and less traditional species. For more info visit: [www.kew.org](http://www.kew.org)

### **Wildlife**

Cornwall's Eden Project is to use its National Wildlife Centre (NWC) facilities to create heathland habitat on a busy stretch of road in the County. Cornwall Council has worked extensively with Eden to develop ambitious plans for landscaping a 3.9 mile stretch of the A30, creating over 18 hectares of new wildflower, woodland and heathland habitat. NWC has partnered with French multinational mineral company Imerys on the heathland creation project. Work will begin in earnest on the road in 2021 and the new stretches will provide stepping stones for wildlife between existing areas of heath.

The Wildlife Trusts across England, Scotland and Wales are to receive almost £2m to fund nature restoration projects across the nation. The money from the Peoples Postcode Lottery will be used to help stabilise CO2 emissions from degraded land and maximise carbon storage through natural processes by locking up carbon in our peatlands, meadows, wetlands and at sea.

The reintroduction of the large blue butterfly, once extinct in Britain has been heralded as a success. They were reintroduced to a site in Gloucester in 2019 and breed successfully. The butterfly feeds on wild thyme and marjoram, and depends on a species of red ant to complete its lifecycle. It took five years for conservationists to create the right conditions for successful reintroduction.

A recent study from the Royal Society suggests that droplets that form on the leaf edges of blueberry bushes are an important nutrient-rich source of food for insects. Many insects such as bees, wasps and flies drink the small droplets, which arise on nights with high levels of moisture in the soil.

You can boost your lawn's value to bees by cutting monthly and leaving an area un-mown. A Plantlife survey found that lawns mown every four weeks had most flowers, while those cut annually had the widest range of wildflowers. Get your lawn's 'nectar score' at [www.bit.ly/plantlife-lawn](http://www.bit.ly/plantlife-lawn)

Chronic bee paralysis virus, which causes honey bees to stop flying, has now spread to most counties of England and Wales. Newcastle University scientists are investigating this upsurge. For more info visit: [www.bit.ly/bee-virus](http://www.bit.ly/bee-virus)

### **Health**

New evidence further strengthens the link between gardening and better health and wellbeing. Research by the University of Exeter and the RHS, which analysed data from nearly 8,000 people, is thought to be one of the largest to specifically compare the behaviour of people with access to a garden to those without. The research found that people who spend time in the garden, whether gardening or relaxing, are significantly more likely to report general good health, higher psychological wellbeing and greater physical activity levels than those who do not. The new evidence and the current Covid-19 pandemic have demonstrated there's an urgent need to include the provision of private gardens in the planning process to better support the UK's preventative health agenda and to ensure their benefit is available more equally to help with the wellbeing of the nation. For more info visit: [www.rhs.org.uk/wellbeing](http://www.rhs.org.uk/wellbeing)

A Welsh charity that offers gardening therapy is forecasting a wave of mental health problems as the nation continues to grapple with the Covid-19 pandemic. Growing Space is a recovery based organisation and is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund which awarded them a grant of £230,494 in 2017 for a three year project. Working with hospitals right across Gwent the charity encourages those who are struggling with their mental health to try horticultural therapy. Across Gwent the hospitals have great grounds so the space is there to grow produce, flowers and build polytunnels so that even on the wettest day indoor work can be continued. Normal activity sessions have been stopped but the charity have been giving out windowboxes and art and craft packs so their participants could build a bird box or grow something. Growing Space also helps manage The Orchard Garden at the National Trust's Tredegar House, providing horticultural therapy to 50 to 60 people every week.

Gardening and connecting people to nature are the subjects of a large-scale 'green social prescribing' project in England next spring. The Government is investing £4.27 million to examine how to scale-up and embed green social prescribing into communities to 'prevent and tackle' mental ill health suffered by up to one in three people. Health and wellbeing should be improved through activities such as walking, farming, community gardening and food growing projects, resulting in reduced demands on health and social care services. In the New Year, four 'test and learn' sites will be announced, from where the project will run for two years from April 2021. Experimental work at a national level will aim to understand the potential for the rapid growth of social prescribing. It is hoped that by 2023-2024 at least 900,000 people will be referred in this way to improve both their physical and mental health. The Government wants 1,000 social prescribing link workers in place by the end of 2021 and 'significantly more after that'. They will be the link between GPs, patients and local activities.