



July 2025

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

Welcome to our July Newsletter

It was lovely to see everyone at the June meeting when Nigel Briggs captivated us with his illuminating talk on how best to photograph plants and gardens. He also sold a number of his gorgeous gift cards after his talk. Members bought £80 worth of cards and as Nigel kindly donated his fee, Save the Children will benefit by a total of £130 which will be used in places it is needed. Nigel sends his thanks to all who bought cards on the night.

Nigel has provided us with his judging criteria for the Annual Show photo sections which we are sharing below:

Impact/ interest/ emotion

- Does it grab your attention, intrigue, calm, upset or otherwise affect you. Does it make you feel something?

Viewpoint

- Does the angle/ direction from which the photograph is taken enhance the impact? Is it clear what the main subject is? Are there any distractions?

Composition

- Does the arrangement within the photograph enhance or detract from the impact? Are there areas of the photograph which add little or which confuse the image?

Technical

- Is the photograph sharp where it needs to be?
- Is the exposure right for the subject? Are there areas which are overexposed or underexposed which affect the image's impact?

The Balsall & District Horticultural Society 76th Annual Show preparations are well under way and we're sure our members have many entries now perfected and ready to be judged (don't forget the final date for entries is the 17th July). Submissions should be at St Peters Church Hall, ready to be judged, by no later than 11.00am on the morning of the show. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there - the show opens to the public from 2pm on Saturday, 19th July.

We are now heading into the height of summer and therefore a little reminder that there will be no meetings in July or August, as holiday season is upon us.

After a break during August our next meeting will be on Thursday, 25th September at 8pm when Val Bourne will present A Year at Spring Cottage. We look forward to seeing you there.

Sharon and Michelle

Plants for Pollinators

By Michelle Sutcliffe

As a novice beekeeper I am interested in gardening for pollinators (especially honeybees).

Pollination by bees and other insects is the first step in the fruiting process, resulting in the production of many vegetables and fruits. It is estimated 35% of the human diet is made up of plant material pollinated in this way.

Our bees are facing an unprecedented crisis. They've lost much of their natural habitat in the past 60 years – including 97% of wildflower-rich meadows. And they're under assault from pesticides, intensive farming and climate change. But by creating bee-friendly spaces where we live, we can start to replace and restore some of this lost habitat and help Britain bloom for bees.

Foraging is a crucial activity for honeybees to feed the colony. The months of April and May are a key time for foraging because the acceleration of brood rearing coincides with the flush of spring flowers and availability of floral resources. During the active season, there are times when availability of forage is relatively low. In some areas of the UK there is a time of low availability called 'the June gap.' June gaps do not occur every year as gaps vary each year due to the UK climate. However, there are general trends in the relative abundance of floral resources throughout the year.

When there is low forage availability or during periods of poor weather, bees may not survive into winter.

In summer, worker bees live for about six weeks, but in winter, they can live for up to six months. It is vital that winter bees survive the long period over winter because the queen produces no, or very little, replacement brood to forage. The winter bees need to survive long enough to oversee the handover of the colony operations to the spring bees. A large, healthy population of worker bees is needed in autumn to ensure the colony survives through the winter. They will need abundant food stores to sustain them as there is limited forage over winter.

During summer and autumn having a supply of lavender, buddleia, and salvia - known for their long flowering periods and ability to attract pollinators is valuable. Echinacea, sedum, and aster are also great additions for later in the season. Cosmos, borage, and calendula are annuals that are easy to grow from seed and provide a good source of nectar, for production of the honey which is a vital source of sustenance for the honeybee to store to both produce young bees and to over winter.

Some of the most valuable plants for pollinators are listed below:

- Pussy Willow
- Lavender
- Abelia (bee bush)
- Mahonia
- Apple or crab apple
- Hawthorn

Plants for Pollinators - continued

- Honeysuckle
- Ivy
- Lungwort
- Monarda (bee balm)
- Sedum
- Winter Aconite
- Crocus
- Phacelia
- Perennial Wallflower
- Snowdrop
- Marjoram
- Chives
- Sage
- Rosemary
- Kale
- Strawberry
- Runner/Broad bean
- Raspberry

Some other tips for creating a pollinator-friendly garden:

- Plant a mix of flowers with different shapes, sizes, and colours to attract a wide range of pollinators.
- Provide a water source – even a shallow dish of water with pebbles for bees to land on can be very helpful.
- Avoid pesticides - Pesticides can harm pollinators, so it's best to avoid using them in your garden.
- Consider native plants - Native plants are often better adapted to local conditions and can provide a more reliable food source for local pollinators.
- Provide nesting sites - Leave some areas of your garden undisturbed to provide nesting sites for bees and other pollinators, or build a bee hotel.



Bumblebee on
Eryngium



Honeybee on
Lavandula



Knitted bees and
flowers on post box!



Aglais io, European
Peacock on Bergenia

Recipe of the Month – Lavender Shortbread

From Mary Berry



Ingredients

- Plain flour – 175g
- Butter – 100g, softened
- Caster sugar – 50g
- Lavender – 1–2 teaspoons, finely chopped
- Vanilla extract – 1 teaspoon (optional)
- Icing sugar – For dusting (optional)

Instructions

Step 1:

- Preheat the oven to 160°C (325°F).
- In a mixing bowl, cream the butter and caster sugar together until light and fluffy.
- Add the finely chopped lavender and mix well.
- Gradually fold in the flour and vanilla extract (if using) until the dough comes together.
- Lightly flour a clean surface and roll out the dough to about 1cm thickness.
- Use a pastry cutter to cut out shapes and transfer them to a baking tray lined with parchment paper.

Step 2: Chill

- Place the baking tray in the fridge for 15 minutes to help the biscuits retain their shape during baking.

Step 3: Bake

- Bake in the preheated oven for 15–18 minutes, or until the edges are lightly golden.
- Remove from the oven and allow the biscuits to cool on the tray for 5 minutes before transferring to a wire rack.

Step 4: Dust and Serve

- Once completely cool, dust the shortbread with icing sugar if desired.
- Serve and enjoy with tea or as a light dessert.

Monthly Flower Spike and Pot Plant Competition

Points are awarded for first, second and third positions (First – 5 points, Second – 3 points and Third – 2 points).

Prizes are awarded for the highest aggregate points at the end of the competition period (March to February). Multiple entries are allowed, **though only one award will be made per entrant.**



1st Rhodohypoxis
Alison Watson



2nd Diascia
Felicity Hill



1st Alstromeria
Felicity Hill



2nd Aстранtia
Derek Hill



3rd Hebe
Alison Watson

Thank you to everyone who entered, the photos of the winners are also on our website.

The June competition winners were kindly judged by our guest speaker, Nigel Briggs



NOTICE BOARD

BDHS Meetings:

2025 Monthly Meeting Dates

Members welcomed from 7:30pm - Tea/Coffee and cake/biscuits available. Please remember to bring a mug with you if possible, it helps the environment and the clearing up after the meeting.

Please register on entry to the hall . A sales table is present featuring various items such as plants and sundries. We also hold a monthly raffle with tickets available for sale at £1.00 per ticket for wonderful garden related prizes.

The meetings start at 8pm

Guests are welcome - there is a small charge of £3 for entry which includes refreshments.



Sue and Margaret our wonderful raffle ticket sales ladies

Guest Speakers

25 th Sept.	Val Bourne	A year at Spring Cottage
30 th October	Dawn Fisher	Pond Plants (Lincolnshire Pond Plants)

Other BDHS dates:

31 st July	Summer Social – from 6:30pm: The Garden, Oldwych Farmhouse, Oldwych Lane East, Fen End. Please remember to bring your own chair.
27 th Nov	AGM & Buffet – 7:30pm. Village Hall, Balsall Common

Further events/details will be announced once they are finalised

Other Dates for your diary:

From 6 th April	Temple Balsall Sunday Teas 2:30pm - 4:30pm. Recurs the 1st Sunday each month from April to September.
From 30th March	Wren Hall Sunday teas served between 2pm and 5pm. Funds are raised for a different charity each week. Last Sunday Tea for 2025 is Sunday 26 th October.
4 th to 6 th July	1pm to 5pm - Warwickshire Open Studios-John Beaman Retrospective at The Oldwych Gallery, Oldwych House Farm, Oldwych Lane East, Fen End CV8 1NR
6 th July	11am to 6pm Meriden Open Gardens. Entry fee £5 (Children Free)

Some jobs for the next few weeks...

July and August

- Continue to apply tomato feed regularly to fruiting veg crops, including tomatoes, courgettes, pumpkins and chillies – also good for annual flowering plants in tubs and baskets. Water greenhouse tomatoes regularly to prevent split fruits and blossom end rot
- Increase greenhouse shading and ventilation to keep temperatures down on hot days, damp down the floor when you can
- Give dahlias a liquid feed, keep them well watered and tie the shoots of tall varieties to sturdy stakes as they grow
- Feed and deadhead roses to keep them flowering strongly
- Water and feed sweet peas regularly, pick the flowers every few days, and remove seed pods to prolong flowering
- Cut back early summer perennials, such as hardy geraniums and delphiniums, after flowering for a second flush
- Pick courgettes regularly so they don't turn into marrows
- Cut down broad beans after harvesting, but leave the roots in the soil to release nitrogen as they decompose
- Take softwood cuttings from shrubs such as pyracantha, cotinus, hydrangeas and spiraea
- Make the last pickings of rhubarb and remove any flower spikes that start to form, cutting right down at the base
- Thin out heavy crops of apples, pears and plums, and remove any malformed, damaged or undersized fruits
- Prune plum (and any “stoned”) trees in dry weather, once you have harvested the fruits, when silver leaf fungal disease is less prevalent
- Shorten side shoots growing from the framework of trained fruit trees, reducing to about five leaves from their base
- Strawberries only give a good crop for 3-4 years, so make your own new plants by pegging down strawberry runners into pots of compost to root new plants
- Sow small batches of fast-maturing salad leaves, rocket and radishes every few weeks for continuous pickings
- Sow a last batch of pak choi, peas, dwarf beans and carrots for an autumn crop
- Sow winter crops such as turnips (you can eat the leaves as well) & cabbage
- Sow biennials, such as foxgloves, honesty, forget-me-nots and wallflowers, for blooms next year
- Give your lawn a quick acting summer feed, especially if it didn't have a spring feed
- Prepare for the summer glut, when everything is ready at once, and make room in your freezers

