



November 2025

Newsletter

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Dear Members,

Welcome to our November newsletter and some rain at last!

As the nights draw in, the autumn leaves fall and the garden goes into its rest period we start to plan for next year. It's a time to sharpen tools, organise seeds and planting rotations, and think about what grew well and what didn't. As the last few sunny days linger and we **tidy up and prepare to put our gardens to bed** it's easy to forget that fallen leaves support overwintering pollinators, soil health and bird foraging. The changing climate means perhaps we need to consider how to make our gardens more resilient diverse and wildlife friendly

I think you will all agree that our guest speaker at the October meeting, **Dawn Fisher** from **Lincolnshire Pond Plants**, gave a very interesting and informative talk on ponds and the different types of plants to put in them. With her husband David they have turned a small home-based business into one of the UK's most successful aquatic plant specialist suppliers. Hopefully you managed to take away one of their brochures which are full of wonderful advice and information to assist with any pond installations or improvements you may be undertaking.

Angela Shaw wishes to remind members that she has a B&DHS **RHS card for use by members** if visiting RHS gardens. This card offers **free entrance to any RHS garden** on a 'BOGOF' basis - i.e. you pay for one entrance and gain the second free with the members card. If you do wish to borrow the card, please email Angela on: ange_shaw@hotmail.co.uk Once you have visited a garden of choice please do remember to return the card so that other members may also take advantage of it.

a few tickets remain for the upcoming **AGM and buffet on 27th November**, at 7.30pm in the Village Hall, Balsall Common. Tickets cost £6.00 each. Guests are very welcome but will not be able to cast votes unless members. If you wish to purchase tickets, please contact Helen Jones via email at: helen@manorfarmknowle.co.uk - BACS payment is preferred.

And Finally, don't forget to get ahead with your gardening relating **Christmas shopping**. Which? Gardening have a "Top Picks" list full of lovely gifting selections for all budgets – see the link below: <https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/gifts/article/gift-ideas-for-gardeners>

Sharon and Michelle

This month we applaud The Chrysanthemum: Queen of the Late Garden

As much of the garden begins to fade, one flower boldly takes centre stage — the chrysanthemum. With its vibrant blooms and rich cultural history, the “mum” provides a final burst of colour just as we prepare for winter. Whether grown in borders, containers, or as cut flowers, chrysanthemums are a staple of the autumn garden and a timely highlight for November.

A Brief History of the Chrysanthemum

Native to Asia, particularly China and Japan, chrysanthemums have been cultivated for over 2,000 years. Chrysanthemums hold a variety of symbolic meanings across different cultures. In China they symbolise a long and happy life and considered one of the four gentlemen in Chinese art. The chrysanthemum is the national flower of Japan and the imperial family's crest. White mums are often associated with funerals. In Western horticulture, chrysanthemums gained popularity in the 18th century and are now a beloved feature of late-season gardens across temperate climates.

Types & Forms

Chrysanthemums come in a dazzling array of forms — from tight pompoms and spidery quills to elegant daisy-like singles. They range in size, structure, and colour, including deep burgundies, rich golds, soft pinks, and snowy whites.

Some popular categories

- Hardy garden mums – reliable perennials for borders.
- Florist mums – grown under controlled conditions for large, showy blooms.
- Exhibition mums – trained and disbudded for dramatic forms.

Growing Tips

Location: Chrysanthemums prefer a sunny, sheltered spot with well-drained soil.

Plant hardy varieties in spring for strong root systems by autumn. Space well to encourage air circulation and prevent mildew.

Pinch back stems in early summer (up to mid-July) to encourage bushy growth and more flowers. Regular feeding with a balanced fertilizer supports flowering, especially in containers.

- Hardy mums may overwinter if mulched and planted early in the year.
- In colder areas, cut back and mulch deeply, or lift and store indoors.
- Container mums can be moved to a sheltered area or cold frame.

Chrysanthemums in the Garden

These late bloomers pair beautifully with:

- Ornamental grasses
- Asters
- Sedums
- Autumn foliage from shrubs like dogwood or euonymus

They're also excellent in cut flower arrangements, often lasting up to two weeks in a vase.

Recipe of the Month – Beef casserole with horseradish and mustard

Mary Berry

This is a big, hearty casserole for chilly autumnal evenings. Serve the finished dish with hot vegetables and a mash of your choice.

Ingredients

- 3 tbsp sunflower oil
- 1.5kg/3lb 5oz braising steak, diced
- 3 large onions, roughly chopped
- 6 garlic cloves, crushed or finely chopped
- 300ml/10fl oz beef stock
- 50g/1¾oz plain flour
- 300ml/10fl oz dry white wine
- 3 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp light muscovado sugar
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 500g/1lb 2oz chestnut mushrooms, halved
- 3 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 3 tbsp creamed horseradish sauce
- 3-4 tbsp double cream
- Chopped parsley to garnish

Method

- Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a deep, heavy-based, flameproof, lidded casserole over a high heat. Add the beef, in batches if necessary, and fry for 4-5 minutes, or until browned all over. Remove the meat from the casserole using a slotted spoon and set aside.
- Heat the remaining oil in the pan, add the onions and garlic and fry, stirring well, for 4-5 minutes, or until softened, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the casserole using a wooden spoon. Stir in the beef stock.
- In a large bowl, whisk the flour with a little of the wine until smooth, then gradually pour in the remaining wine, whisking until combined to a smooth batter with the consistency of double cream.
- Return the browned beef to the casserole, then pour over the wine and flour mixture. Bring to the boil, stirring until thickened, then add the Worcestershire sauce and sugar and season, to taste, with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Cover the casserole with the lid, reduce the heat until the mixture is simmering, and simmer very gently for 2 hours, stirring from time to time (alternatively, cook the casserole in a low oven).
- After 2 hours, add the mushrooms, return the mixture to the boil, then cover again, reduce the heat until the mixture is simmering, and simmer for a further ½ hour, or until the meat is tender.
- Mix the mustard, horseradish and double cream (if using) in a bowl until well combined. Just before serving, stir it into the beef casserole and garnish with chopped parsley. Serve with mashed potatoes and steamed vegetables.

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.

Pot Plant



1st Schlumbergera
Carolyn Travis



2nd Sedum
Celia Davis



3rd Nerine
Mark Gregory

Flower Spike



1st Dahlia
Edward Cotterrell



2nd Dahlia
Mary Cotterrell



2nd Dahlia
Wendy Jenkinson

The competition was judged by our guest speaker, Dawn Fisher of Lincolnshire Pond Plants , who had a small but beautiful selection to choose from.



NOTICE BOARD

BDHS Meetings:

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.

Other BDHS dates 2025:

27th Nov AGM & Buffet – 7:30pm. Village Hall, Balsall Common

2026

Guest Speakers

29th January	Nigel Hope	A year in the life of John's garden
26th February	Pip Smith	What life is like for a garden designer
26th March	Liam Beddall	David Austin Roses
30th April	Josh Egan	Classy plants for classy people – part 2
28th May	Carol & John Mathews	Vintage garden tools
25th June	Philippa Cooper	Sweet peas
24th September	Jack Wilgoss	Planting for a late summer garden
29th October	Dr Alison Foster	The garden chemist - wicked weeds, toxic trees and poisonous plants

Other BDHS dates 2026:

19th March	Annual Dinner - Village Hall Balsall Common
9th May	Plant Sale - 10am to 11:30am. Front of Village Hall, Balsall Common
18th July	77th Annual Show - St Peter's Hall, Balsall Common
30 th July	Summer Social Evening (location tbc)
26th Nov	AGM & Buffet – 7:30pm. Village Hall, Balsall Common

Further events/details will be announced once they are finalised

Some jobs for the next few weeks...

November's To Do List

- Feed the birds – seeds and fruit are scarce now and they will appreciate your help
- Keep deadheading – you will get flowers through until the first frost
- Lift remaining carrots and parsnips for storing
- Finish planting out winter vegetables (cabbage, onions, shallots, garlic)
- Sow broad beans and early peas
- Tidy up and tie in trained fruit (but not stoned fruit such as plum/apricot – leave these until the spring)
- Prune fruit bushes once dormant, including blackcurrants, redcurrants, whitecurrants and gooseberries
- Plant bare-root fruit trees, bushes and canes, as long as the ground isn't too wet
- Bring potted herbs, such as parley and chives, indoors to continue cropping into winter
- Keep moving the tender plants under shelter as space frees up in the greenhouse or shed, otherwise apply a mulch to give some protection from frosts
- Finish planting tulips, the later you plant them the later they will flower, so you have until the first week of December. They make a great display with wallflowers as they flower at the same time
- Get ready to protect your dahlias – after the first frosts blacken the leaves, either lift them or give them a heavy mulch
- Continue collecting those fallen leaves to make leaf mould, but leave a few for the insect life
- Finish any digging before the soil becomes waterlogged so that the winter frosts help break down the clods
- Fertilise and mulch the soil