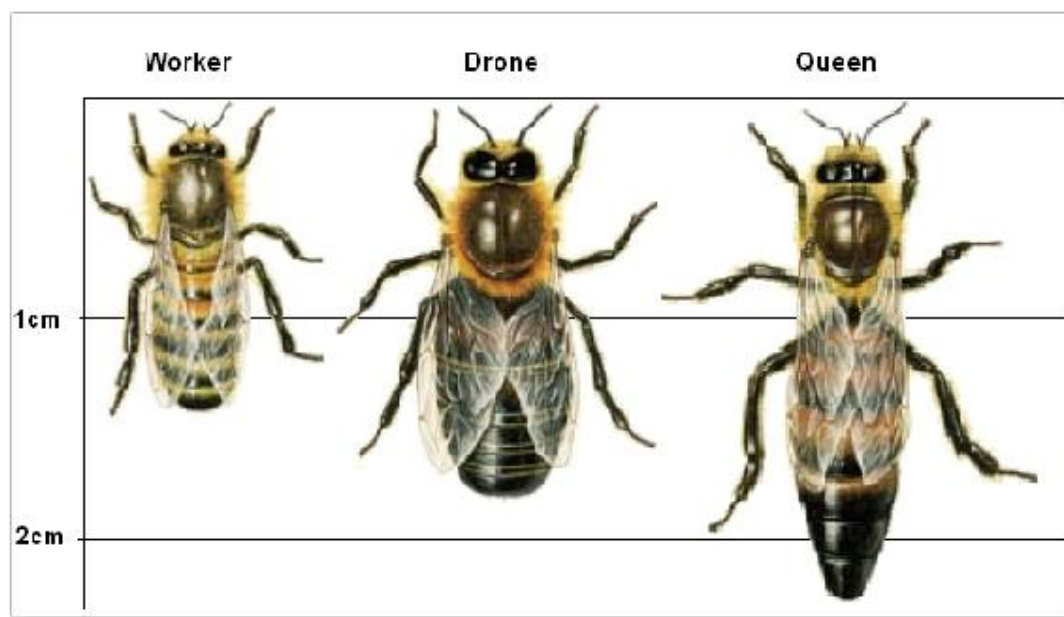


COTTAGE GARDEN SOCIETY COTSWOLD GROUP FEBRUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



Our January talk was on the honey bee and bee keeping with Brian Miller-Hall. Brian has been keeping bees for 16 years and currently manages 12 hives. From that extensive experience, he gave us a fascinating insight into the extraordinary life of honey bees, prompting lots of questions from his audience. Brian showed us a typical hive and explained its structure and the function of its parts. He talked us through the development of a queen, the laying and fertilising of eggs, and the production of honey.



Bees are active from very early spring to late autumn, longer when temperatures allow, and need nectar plants across all that period. To support bees and other

insects, gardeners should plan to grow a range of plants including those which flower very early and very late in the day and the season. (Brian has sent through a calendar of bee-friendly plants which we will copy for you shortly.)

We heard how bees seem to predict weather and how they can heat the hive when necessary by vibrating their diaphragms. The same heating process can also be used to kill - by bees surrounding their victim in a ball. While a queen will live for several years, other bees only live for months. "Nasty, brutish and short" was how Thomas Hobbes described life in nature and that certainly seemed to apply to much of the life of bees!



The blue spot marks the queen.

Drones are male and there only to mate with a queen. Those who mate with a queen have to break off their endophallus to disengage from her, causing the drone's death. This process leaves a part of the drone inside the queen, who can then expel it and mate with others This ensures good genetic variety for a hive.

All the worker bees are female, no surprise to female members of the audience. They gather food and water for the hive and some guard the entrance to the hive when necessary.

A great lover of bees, Brian confessed that he did not like the taste of honey, but that view was not shared by his audience who eagerly bought up the jars of Brian's honey. We hope to see Brian back talking to the Winchcombe Gardening Club sometime in 2027. If you missed this talk, you should look out for that!

OUR WINTER PROGRAMME

This continues with monthly talks in the Abbeyfield Community Centre in Winchcombe on Thursdays between 3.15 and 5pm. There is free onsite parking;

refreshments are provided; and there are always plants for sale, free gardening information leaflets and free seeds available.

12TH FEBRUARY 2026 AURICULAS AND PRIMULAS INGRID AND JOHN MILLINGTON



Ingrid and John run Hillview Hardy Plants near Bridgnorth, their specialisms including auriculas and primulas. In 2022 they won their first RHS Gold Medal at Malvern Spring Fair and in 2023 they were the Master Growers at the show. Their talk will look at just a few of the 100's of primulas available, followed by a foray into the lovely world of auriculas.

THURSDAY 19TH MARCH THE STORY OF GOTHERINGTON NURSERIES

Mark will talk to us about his local family business, Gotherington Nurseries, and about his experience of growing and providing plants for both local customers and many shows including Hampton Court.

An online review of Gloucestershire nurseries described Gotherington as “one of those hidden gems that locals love to keep to themselves ...where the focus is firmly on healthy plants and friendly faces.” The Nurseries stock a wide range of plants and horticultural products and online you will also find a store of very useful fact sheets to help you.

NATURE IN ART, WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR EXHIBITION

3rd February to 12th April, closed Mondays.

This annual treat returns, fresh from its launch at the Natural History Museum. Enjoy the 100 winning and commended images from the very latest competition. Selected from over 60,000 entries from 113 countries, this is always an amazing show.

<https://natureinart.org.uk/>

Nature in Art hosts many exhibitions and provides art and craft courses throughout the year, some with a botanic focus. For full details of the new programme and to book go to www.natureinart.org.uk A38 Twigworth Gloucester GL2 9PA **2 miles north of Gloucester on A38.SatNav Postcode: GL2 9PG.** Tel. 01452 731422

DON'T FORGET!

NGS GARDENS OPEN THIS MONTH FOR SNOWDROPS - AND MUCH MORE

HOME FARM, Newent Lane, Huntley, GL19 3HQ (Adult, £4.50, child, free) **Sunday 8th February** (11am-4pm).

CAMPDEN HOUSE, Dyer's Lane, Chipping Campden, GL55 6UP, open on **Sunday 8 February** (10am-3pm; adult, £10, child, £5).

COTSWOLD FARM, Duntisbourne Abbots, Cirencester, GL7 7JS, open on **Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th February** (11am-3pm; adult, £7.50, child, free).

ALGARS MANOR, Station Road, Iron Acton, BS37 9TB opens with the adjacent **Algars Mill** on **Sunday 22 February** (1-4pm; combined admission, adult, £7, child, free).

WINCHCOMBE GARDENING CLUB at Abbeyfield:

February 18th - Adrian James - 'Four Seasons and a Festival', a talk by this talented garden photographer about four gardens, one showcasing each season and a festival too. 7pm for tea, coffee and socialising, with the meeting starting at 7.30pm. Non-members are welcome for £3 a visit.

THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY'S PERSHORE SPRING FLOWER SHOW AND PLANT FAIR

Saturday 21st February from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm (show hall from 11am)



If last year's show is anything to go by, you are guaranteed a great display of alpine plants on the show benches along with 7 plant nurseries, members' plants, and books plus a tombola, hot and cold food and free parking.

Pershore High School, Station Road, Pershore, WR10 2BX
Admission: £4.00 AGS Members: Free

For more information, visit <https://visitworcestershire.org/events/pershore-alpine-flower-show>

COMMON FARM FLOWERS

If it is still too inclement to venture out, you can always try an online gardening experience. Flower farmer and florist Georgie Newbery's Common Farm Flowers offers a range of actual and online activities, including demonstrations and workshops.

Online Demonstrations at 5pm, each at £45:

- **Wednesday 11th February Sowing Hardy Annuals**
- **Monday 23rd February Dahlia Growing**
- **Wednesday 4th March Shrubs and Perennials for Cut Flower Arrangements**
- **Tuesday 24th March Spring Propagating Plants**

Online Workshop: Design A Cut Flower Patch £115:

Available on Tuesday 24th February 2026 5pm (GMT) and Wednesday 14th October 2026 5pm (BST)

Georgie will explore all the points to consider when creating a cut flower patch, explaining how to adapt your size of plot as an area for this. This will give precise detail for cultivation, layout, soil and the best varieties for you.

Common Farm Flowers, Barrow Lane, Charlton Musgrove, Somerset, BA9 8HN

Email: georgie@commonfarmflowers.com or call 0196332883.

COMING SOON

IN BLOOM: HOW PLANTS CHANGED OUR WORLD

This major exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford opens on 19th March and runs until 16th August. Tickets will be available to book shortly.

FAMOUS GARDENERS APPEARING NEARBY IN 2026:

FERGUS GARRETT: 'SUCCESSION PLANTING (LAYERED PLANTING) FOR A LONG SEASON

Fergus is the influential Head Gardener and Chief Executive of Great Dixter, the internationally acclaimed garden in East Sussex, UK, known for its pioneering naturalistic planting inspired by its late owner, Christopher Lloyd. Fergus champions biodiversity, layered planting and ecological approaches.

He will talk about the principles of long season gardening, touching on long-season plants, shape, texture, underplanting and interplanting with bulbs and other plants which are happy to share the same space, as well as the use of self sowers and temporary fillers to prolong the seasons.

The main part of the talk will concentrate on how to use bulbs and woodland plants to provide another layer in perennial and mixed borders. From snowdrops through to alliums, these play a vital role in filling the gaps and giving you colour for many months.

Saturday 28th February 2026 at the Village Hall, Naunton GL54 3AS.

Talk at 6.30 pm followed by canapés. Doors open at 6.00 pm. Bar and Raffle.

Tickets £20. Proceeds in aid of St. Andrew's church, Naunton.

This is likely to be a sell-out event. Please apply for tickets by **Saturday 31st January 2026**. *If possible, please confirm at the same time whether you would be happy to collect your tickets on the door at the event.*

Email: Barbara@markets-international.com or rickandcla123@gmail.com
Tel: 07710 387069

SUE KENT : CREATING BEAUTIFUL BORDERS

Sue is an English gardening expert and garden designer, probably best known for her work on BBC Two's Gardeners' World and Garden Rescue programmes. Her border designs have featured at shows including Gardeners' World Live and RHS Hampton Court. She has impressed viewers not just by her expertise and tireless enthusiasm, but by the way she shows how physical handicaps can be overcome. Sue was born with an upper limb disability caused by Thalidomide and has gone on to become a qualified sports masseuse using her feet and working with Paralympians across a range of sports.

Thursday 8th October 7.30pm Alderton Gardening Club

Both members and non-members are very welcome.

Email: aldertongc@gmail.com or contact the Chairman [Tom Cullimore](#) by clicking the link or by texting him on 07772965124.

Raffle and refreshments available.

RACHEL DE THAME: POLLINATORS AND PLANTS FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE

Rachel is a garden writer, television gardening presenter and vice-president of the wildflower charity Plantlife.

As well as gardening books, she writes a regular horticultural column for The Sunday Times and has also contributed to the gardening pages of The Daily Telegraph, Gardeners' World Magazine, Woman's Own Magazine, and Eden Magazine.

Wednesday 28th October 7.30pm – 10pm Cidermill Theatre, Chipping Campden, GL55 6HX

This is a joint ticketed event between Blockley & District Horticultural Society, Ebrington and Mickleton Gardening Clubs. £20 for MGC members, £25 for non-members.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **The world's smallest bee is the mini fairy bee, only 2 millimetres long.** (Just one of the fascinating facts in 'Think Big: The Secrets of Bees' by Ben Hoare, the winner of the 2025 Children's Wainwright Prize for non-fiction.)
- **This month sees Wakefield celebrate its Rhubarb Festival.** From 20th to 22nd February it offers a range of entertainment, chefs' demonstrations, live music and regional treats featuring rhubarb and much more.
www.experiencewakefield.co.uk

- **You can go on a guided tour of the Millennium Seed Bank.** The tour in the Atrium traces the path of a seed from its arrival at Wakehurst to its storage in the sub-zero vaults there. Kew Gardens' Wakehurst facility has just celebrated 25 years of seed saving working with 275 partners in almost 100 countries. <https://www.kew.org/wakehurst/whats-at-wakehurst/millennium-seed-bank>
- **You can still get free trees from the Woodland Trust for schools and community groups.** Contact <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/schools-and-communities/>



TO SEND ITEMS FOR THE NEWSLETTER, OR WITH ANY QUERIES, CONTACT:

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Sue: sueatwillowbank@btinternet.com

01242 602384

Text 07796 106579 to join our **WhatsApp** group.