

WESTFIELD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

March 2026 Newsletter

Email : westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com

Website: www.westfieldhorticulturalsociety.co.uk

Your committee:- Chair:- Dave Miles, also Membership Secretary, Event Organiser & Newsletter Editor
Secretary :- Linda Baker, also Treasurer

Committee members:- Eileen Hurton, Plants -

Juni Parkhurst, Seeds – Jackie Fellows, Patricia Oakland and Malcolm Shirley

Dear members,

Wednesday 18th March We have a talk by Sophie Leathart on 'Setting up a cutting garden' with slides and demonstration on flower arranging at the Westfield Bowls Club Pavilion starting at 2:00pm. Refreshments will be available. **If you can let us know if you are coming, we can make sure we have enough cake to go around.**

Sophie Leathart has been a freelance florist for 30 years and as well as growing her own cut flowers, runs a cutting garden for a client. Her talk will be about the best flowers to grow for cutting, planning for successional cropping, perennial cut flowers and how to condition the flowers once cut. In the summer months, she is happy to demonstrate how to tie a bouquet as a gift or create a table arrangement for the home without using floral foam. Sophie loves all things floral and has begun to work with Sue Marshall at Iris of Sissinghurst, helping around the nursery and with the staging of the Cayeux Iris display at the Chelsea Flower Show

Tuesday 31st March – Visit to Elaine & Malcolm Shirley's garden Elaine and Malcolm will open their garden to our members between, **2:00 to 4:00pm** at 'Moorside', [Near. 'Moorsholm Farm'], King Wood Hill [A28], Cackle Street, Brede.

Directions from Westfield. Proceed through Brede from the South passing St. Georges Church on the LHS with The Red Lion Pub. on the RHS. After 0.8 miles you will pass Brede Village Hall on your RHS. After a further 450 yards you will see sign on LHS grass verge marked 'Moorsholm Farm'. Turn left immediately after the sign onto the farm lane and 'Moorside' is the 3rd property on the LHS. [If you get to the Broad Oak X roads (B2089/A28 ~ with the 'One Stop' corner shop) you have gone too far. In which case turn around. Proceed past two bungalows on the LHS and on the RHS turn right at sign on grass verge marked 'Moorsholm Farm' and 'Moorside' is the 3rd property on the LHS. Transport can easily be arranged for those members who would like a lift, just contact us.

Refreshments will be available. **Please let us know if you would like to visit by emailing our address or contact me on daveatwhs@gmail.com or 07455 944849 so that we ensure we have enough Cake**

Spring Show - Saturday 11th April 2:30 to 4:30pm at Westfield Community Hall

We should all now have planned what we are going to enter the show this year, there are plenty of classes to choose from. **CAN YOU HELP PLEASE** If you are dividing plants or sowing seeds, please think about doing a few extra to add into our plant sale. We don't want to leave it just to one or two members. They can be delivered to the hall on the morning of the show or at 102 Westfield Lane. Any spare seeds that you may have left over after your sowing are welcome into our Seed Swop at the show, also any gardening books you no longer need.

Here is a list of seeds that will be available at the Spring Show to Swap or make a donation. This is a small selection of what will be available.

Flowers

Salvia Nemerosa Wood Sage, Cosmos Polidor mixed, Foxtail Amaranthus, Ginger Lily, Ammi Cleome hassleriana white queen, Campanula white, Camelina sativa, Larkspur white,

Salvia viridis oxford blue, Mixed Ox eye sunflower, Poppy Mauve, Poppy Red, Sicilian honey garlic, Jamaican Forget me not, Large flowered Mallow Wort, Love in the Mist, Larkspur Blue, Calendula, Cucubalus baccifer, Chiltern Seeds Roof Mix, Sweet Williams white, Flowering flax Bright Eyes, Campanula blue, Oxalis Lemon clover, Honesty, Veronica pink, Amaranthus cruentus, Linaria Maroccana sweeties, Sunflower vanilla ice.

Vegetables and Herbs and Fruits.

Lettuce Cerbiatta, Red Cherry Tomato, Kale Nero di toscanna, Chicory Mirabelle, Basis Mrs Burns Lemon, Chantenay Carrot, Cucumber Lautoma, French Bean dwarf purple queen, Raspberry Fall Gold, Tomato Tumbling Tom, Sweet Basil, Celery blush, Sweetcorn Golden Bantam, Wild Strawberries, Onion Spring White Lisbon, Sweet Basil Climbing French Bean, Spinach Rubino F1, Cavola Cappuccio Rosso, Lettuce salad bowl mix.

The trip to Wisley on Wednesday 29th of April is booking fast, so please book as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. The cost is the same as last year, £22 for members and £25 for guests. Same times, 9:00am from Moor Lane and returning about 6:00pm. Email westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com or daveatwhs@gmail.com or phone 07455 944849

Membership

This was due in January, if you have already renewed, we thank you. Details of how to pay can be found in the Schedule and Handbook that was delivered to your door. Email copy was also sent to those members with access to email. Membership cards will be available at our Spring show.

Saturday 14th February our Valentine quiz attracted 32 members and guests which was held at the Community centre. With 8 rounds of questions of varying subjects and a good mixture of complexity. During the evening there was a relaxed and fun element giving a pleasant atmosphere, plenty of audience participation which everyone enjoyed. The winners of the evening walked away with a selection of Gladioli and the team that worked hard to come last had a small prize for their efforts. The evening concluded with a raffle and good choice of prizes.

Our next scheduled quiz will be on Valentine's Day eve 13th February 2027.

AGM

27 members attended our AGM on 7th March at the Westfield Bowls Club Pavilion. Minutes will be distributed soon. Some of the main points were that Maria Wells and Tonia Munns stood down from the committee after serving for five years. We thank them for all they have done in helping to keep the Society going following the return from Covid.

PLEASE NOTE: This is an observation and not an Advert. A few weeks ago Dawn and I (Dave) decided to visit Tunbridge Wells with the intension of browsing through the shops to see if we could spend some money. A few miles before TW we met a closed road sign which we ignored (which happens most of the time) and then ignored the next 3, then we met the actual road closed. Taking the suggested diversion we came across the Tunbridge Wells Garden Centre, which is not far from the Pantiles, we did not know it existed so decided to go in. Yes, it was like most medium sized garden centres with everything you would normally expect to find except we found a few differences.

As well as the normal seed potatoes there were about half a dozen varieties we have never heard of. This also applied to onion sets as well as a few garden tools never seen before. There was a very large plant area outside that looked interesting but as it was raining, we gave it a miss this time. The café was also a welcome diversion from looking around.

If you are in the area anytime and have an hour to spare, we would certainly recommend a visit.

There are many garden centres and garden nurseries within a reasonable distance that may be of special interest to our members, so if you have a recommendation we would love to hear from you.

Here are a few suggestions of what we could be doing in the garden during APRIL

If you are a keeper of fuchsias, then you now need to cut back hard at the first sign of new shoots to encourage the new growth that will produce this year's flowers. Fuchsias are very forgiving of clumsy pruning so you can be bold, although the overall aim is to remove any damaged or crossing and thin out any crowded growth before reducing everything by at least half – and more if the shape will allow it. This can feel rather drastic, but with April's light and heat and regular watering, some feed and a fresh dressing of garden compost, your fuchsias will soon spring into growth.

Plant exotic bulbs and tubers now, for their dramatic flowers later in the summer. Dahlias, cannas, agapanthus and gladioli can all be planted now.

Select several sturdy young shoots from the outside of your chrysanthemum clumps to make cuttings. These will root easily and can be grown on to boost your stocks and refresh your flower displays later this summer. Take 10cm long cuttings that have a bud at the base. Trim away the lower leaves. Pinch out the soft tip to stop it rotting. Push the cuttings into multi-purpose compost around the edge of a 13cm pot. Make sure they are firmly held in the compost before watering. Cutting will root in just a few weeks in a propagator or cold frame, or if you don't have these, put a plastic bag over the pot and place it on a windowsill.

Plants in pots dry out much faster than plants in the ground. The roots in pots can't grow further in search of water and only a fraction of rainwater will penetrate the compost as the canopy of foliage acts like an umbrella. Thoroughly soak the compost in pots come rain or shine to keep plants in the best condition. Water in the morning or evening when the plant is least stressed and add a weekly liquid feed to the water at this time of the year to boost the nutrient supply from the compost.

Sow annuals successionally and you'll be able to get a continual show of blooms in the garden this summer and early flowers next Spring. Annual flowers like cornflowers and pot marigolds sown in pots now will be ready to flower by June or July and if you sow some more directly into the border in a couple of weeks' time, they will take over flowering when this batch has finished. Take the time to sow more hardy annuals outside at the end of summer and these will overwinter as young plants and be the first to flower next year.

Plant up your hanging baskets this month and let them establish under protection before being hung outside once the risk of frosts is over. Part fill the basket with potting compost, then position a single focal plant, such as a geranium in the middle. Add a selection of trailing plants round the edge and some free flowering fillers in the gaps. Water the basket well, then hang it up in a light but frost-free spot to establish.

House Plant of the month is The Spider Plant



The spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*) is considered one of the most adaptable houseplants. In fact, few indoor plants are easier to care for. Though these leafy beauties are most commonly raised as houseplants, you can grow them as perennials outdoors in warmer growing zones as well. Spider plants produce clusters of ribbony leaves – in solid green or variegated with stripes of white or yellow – that emerge from a crown of fleshy roots. Their flowers are tiny and white. The spider plant is so named because of its spider-like offsets, or spiderettes, which dangle down from the mother plant like spiders on a web once blooming is finished. You can use these to propagate plants to share with friends.

Spider plants can grow in a wide range of conditions and suffer few problems, other than the occasional brown tips. Their care needs are basic enough for even the greenest beginners to raise thriving plants. Height can reach 24 inches (61cm), Spread can be up to 36 inches (91cm), they like part/full shade. Ideal soil being well drained loamy soil.

The RHS monthly magazine ‘The Garden’ has a monthly Horty quiz consisting of nine questions. Questions 1 to 3 are for the new gardeners amongst us, questions 4 to 6 are for the more experienced and questions 7 to 9 are for the experienced gardeners.

February answers to the quiz are:- Question **1** - An ericaceous or acid soil in partial shade.
Question **2** - Chitting. Question **3** -5-7.5cm but keep a 10cm mulch-free circle around any stems.
Question **4** - Prunus. Question **5** - Wisteria. Question **6** - Cyclamen coum.
Question **7** - Bougainvillea. Question **8** - Iris (Reticulata).
Question **9** - covered in dense short, woolly hairs.

This month’s questions are:-

- Question 1 What pruning technique involves cutting back all stems of a shrub close to the ground?
- Question 2 The genus *Helenium* is thought to be named after which Greek mythological figure?
- Question 3 What shrub is known for its twisted stems and catkins in late Winter and early Spring?
- Question 4 What spring bulb is commonly known as grape hyacinth?
- Question 5 What is the difference between spines, thorns and prickles?
- Question 6 What spring-flowering perennial has RHS Recommended: Award of Garden Merit cultivars that include ‘Cotton Cool’, Trevi Fountain’ and ‘Blue Ensign’?
- Question 7 What does the word ‘praecox’ mean when used as part of a species name?
- Question 8 Which botanist and explorer introduced into cultivation plants including ‘*Acer griseum*’ and ‘*Clematis armandi*’?
- Question 9 What is the name for the needle-like crystals of calcium oxalate that can help repel animals from eating plants?

Answers will be in the April Newsletter,

Advice Corner:- This month's questions for our Gardening Wizard

Question 1 : Some of my seed potatoes have very long shoots, are they still okay to plant?

Answer: Yes, they will be fine but be careful when planting as shoots of seed potatoes with long shoots are prone to damage

Question 2 : How can I control moss growing in my borders, it has been bad this winter after all the wet weather.

Answer: Your garden naturally has the conditions that make moss thrive e.g. shaded areas with poor draining soil. If possible, try reducing shade by cutting back overhanging trees and shrubs. To tackle the existing moss fork over the bare soil and gather the moss up then fork in some grit to help improve drainage and then mulch any bare soil.

PLEASE STILL KEEP YOUR QUESTIONS COMING IN.

WHS members can receive a 10% discount applicable to plants only from the following nurseries on showing a valid membership card:-

Ed's Nursery, Cripps Corner Road, Staplecross TN32 5QA 01580 830701

Oak Cottage Plants.

Carol and Steve have moved all the plants from their previous nursery at Kent Street on the A21 to their garden at Oak Cottage. They are busy renovating their garden now and will welcome visitors going to see what they are doing, and plants are still available to purchase. Please contact them on 01424 754666 to make arrangements. (Checkout their Facebook page [#OakCottagePlants](#) [#Gardening](#) [#NurseryLife](#) [#CustomerService](#))

Rotherview Nursery, Three Oaks, Ivy House Lane, Hastings TN35 4NP 01424 756228
(Checkout their Facebook page [rotherview nursery](#))

The Old Rose Nursery, Quickbourne Lane, (off Beales Lane) Northiam, TN31 6QY 01797 252680.

WEB site www.theoldrosenursery.co.uk **Is now open for the new season 10:00am to 4:00 pm Tuesday to Saturday**
(Closed Sunday and Monday)

As our society is affiliated to the RHS we have been issued with a 50% RHS Garden Entry discount card for use by our members on a one-off entry to any RHS garden (Bridgewater, Harlow Carr, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor and Wisley) except for flower shows and Glow illuminations events. If you would like to use the card, please contact our secretary Linda Baker via our email address westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com

RHS Partner Gardens. There are 17 being reachable in Kent and Sussex. Full list can be found in the January Newsletter

Every month I will include details of a couple of gardens. This month is Doddington Place Gardens and Goodnestone Park Gardens.

Doddington Place is surrounded by wooded countryside in an area of outstanding natural beauty on the North Downs. The lovely, landscaped gardens, recognised of being of historical importance by Historic England, are set in the grounds of an imposing Victorian mansion and covers ten acres. There is a notable woodland garden – spectacular in May and June- which includes many different varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas; also a large Edwardian rock garden with pools; a formal sunk garden with herbaceous borders, and a flint and brick folly. Extensive lawns and avenues are framed by impressive, clipped yew hedges and many fine trees. Visitors can also see the new wobbly tower.

Goodnestone Park Gardens the former home of Margaret, Lady FitzWalter. Goodnestone Park Gardens cover approximately 14 acres. The formal area with fine old specimen trees leads to a small arboretum with an avenue of limes. This adjoins a mature woodland area, with a 1920's rockery. The walled garden (with walls dating back to the 17th century) has been redesigned over the last 30 years with new plantings continuing all the time, including a new tropical garden area. Jane Austen was a frequent visitor, as her brother Edward married a daughter of the house, Elizabeth Bridges. Refreshments are available at the Old Dairy Café.

Crowhurst & District Horticultural Society have a talk on Friday 10th April 7pm for 7:15 start at Crowhurst Village Hall, titled 'Nature Under Your Nose' with local gardener Jay Ashworth. Non members welcome. £4 entry including light refreshments. Contact Alan on 07870525441 for tickets.

Jay will share her photograph of the birds, insects, reptiles, fungi, plants and trees that she has come across in her gardening and walking. Discover what you can see 'under your nose' and learn some new things about the amazing flora and fauna that we all live alongside. Jay was the Ornamental Gardens Manager at Ashburnham Place for over 10 years and now works at Penhurst Retreat Centre. She lives in Ashburnham village and loves to observe and identify all that she sees around her on walks.

FUTURE EVENTS: 2026

- Wednesday 18th March** Talk by Sophie Leathart on 'Setting up a Cutting Garden' with slides and demonstration on flower arranging. 2:00pm
- Tuesday 31st March** Open Garden. Malcolm and Elaine Shirley (WHS Members)
- Saturday 11th April** Spring Show 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Westfield Community Hall.
- Wednesday 29th April** Trip to Wisley
- May Date to be arranged** Talk
- Tuesday 16th June** Open Garden at Dave and Dawn's. 2:00pm to 4:00pm
- July Date to be arranged** Cream Tea
- August Date to be arranged** Open Garden Susan Fletcher (WHS Member)
- Saturday 5th September** Autumn show 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Westfield Community Hall
- Tuesday 27th October** Talk by Graham Blunt from Plant Base UK. 2:00pm at Westfield Bowls Club
- Saturday 14th November** Beetle Drive 7:00pm. Westfield Community Hall
- Thursday 3rd December** Seasonal Lunch 1:00pm at the New Inn Westfield

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- Saturday 13th February** Valentines Quiz at the Community Centre Starting at 7:00pm