

# WESTFIELD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

## April 2026 Newsletter

Email : [westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com)

Website: [www.westfieldhorticulturalsociety.co.uk](http://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,

**The trip to Wisley**, we still have a few seats available for Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> of April. 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. To book please Email [westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:westfieldhorticulturalsociety@gmail.com) or [daveatwhs@gmail.com](mailto:daveatwhs@gmail.com) or phone 07455 944849

**Sophie Leathart** gave us a talk at the Bowls club on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March on ‘Setting up a Cutting Garden’. She started by saying she has been a free-lance florist for 30 years, trained at Hadlow and various other gardens. She has also been a judge at Chelsea. She spoke about the origins of cut flowers from those in hedge rows and their medicinal properties followed by the general history of the way the progress of buying plants from the time of the Industrial revolution to the present day, where in 1949 we spent £40 million and today over one billion. The idea behind a Cutting garden was a separate section of the garden being dedicated to just flowers required instead of taking them from the main garden.

What do you need to consider when setting up a cutting garden. Position (in sunshine), access to water, what colours are needed to match room colour and are fragrant flowers wanted? Grow plants that are not always readily available or difficult to get hold of. Best time to gather flowers is first thing in the morning and put them in water for 4 hours to give them a good drink, they can also be picked late in the day and left in a bucket of water overnight. Use succession planting, i.e. every 4/5 weeks to give flowers availability throughout the season.

Sophie continued to talk about her experience of growing and using various plants/flowers in arrangements. Many ideas were shared which were very interesting and hopefully some of us attending may adopt. The afternoon concluded with a flower demonstration as below.



## Visit to Elaine's and Malcolms Garden.

17 members visited our members garden of Elaine and Malcolm's in Brede on Tuesday 31st March for an afternoon of viewing their garden with colour supplied by daffodils and tulips mainly in pots. Malcolm gave a tour of the garden explaining what they had done in the 15 year they had been there. It was just an empty space in the beginning and now with 60 or so trees, hedging all around the boundary, a large pond and lawns etc. The views over the countryside stretch out as far as Heathfield and surrounding district. After the tour we all returned to the conservatory for good conversation and tea with a wonderful pink coloured sponge, cheese scones and fruit cake all baked by Elaine. Thank you once again Elaine and Malcolm for allowing us to visit your garden and your hospitality.



Dawn and I (Dave) will be opening our garden on Tuesday 16th June in Westfield Lane and Susan Fletcher will be opening her garden between Westfield and Three Oaks on Tuesday 25th. August. If you are free and would like an entertaining afternoon with Tea and Cake do come along, please put the date in your diary and let us know you are coming, we don't want to run out of cake.

**Would you like to open your Garden next year to members only? If so, please get in touch.**

**Spring Show**, our Spring show held on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> of April and again, even though I say it again, was possibly one of the best WHS Spring shows for many a year considering the very wet conditions we encountered, and it's all down to you, our members. Without you the shows would not exist, those that entered the various classes did themselves proud with the quality of flowers to house plants and vegetables. Home produce to the crafts and art to photography well done, the floral arrangements would not have gone amiss in any of the prestigious shows, well done everyone. Many favourable comments on the show and organisation have been received for which we are grateful, which is the result of much planning and hard work by the committee, and we must not forget the cakes and all the goodies that were organised by Nicky and her ladies.

Our Plant Sale again proved a great success. It's a big thank you to Eileen for growing numerous types of plants and vegetables and the members that contributed. Many thanks go to Juni also for organising the seed swap. Again this year we involved the local Cubs who grew a tomato from a seedling and the Beavers who grew cress in half a potato.

This year's awards were well deserved in the various classes:-

**Rose Bowl** awarded to the entrant with the most points in flower, foliage and plant classes

**Winner:- Eileen Hurton**

**Easter Cup** awarded to the entrant with the most points in Vegetable and Cuttings classes.

**Winner:- Eileen Hurton**

**Alice Button Cup** awarded to the entrant with the most points in the Home Produce classes.

**Winner:- Chloe Loake**

**Lilian Skinner Trophy** for best exhibit in Home Produce.

**Winner:- Katie Parrett**

**The Berry Goblet** best exhibit in Handicrafts.

**Winner:- Nick Wiggins**

**Spring Goblet** for outstanding Floral Art arrangement

**Winner:- Dawn Miles**

**Miniature Cup** for best miniature arrangement

**Winner:- Lette-Rose Loake**

**Junior Cup** best Junior exhibit in Show.

**Winner:- Lette-Rose Loake**

**Spring Achievement Cup** most points in show by a new exhibitor

**Winner:- Margaret Grimes**

**Spring Cup** for most points in Show

**Winner:- Eileen Hurton**

**The Spring Vase** best vase of mixed Spring flowers.

**Winner:- Shelia Payne**

**The Margaret Crouch Cup** along with the RHS Recognition Award Certificate that can be awarded to one of our members or someone in our local community who has gone the extra mile. This year there is a couple who deserves the award for their help that's been given in several areas which has been a great benefit to the committee and the society in general.

**This year the award goes to Sue and John Brooker.**

**Congratulations to you all.**

I was pleased to receive an Email from Mary Boorman, Chair of Crowhurst & District Horticultural Society that contained the following words:- Congrats Dave and all - It was a super show. There is so much talent in Westfield! The standards seen in all classes and especially the wood and crafts/art exhibits were exceptional alongside the lovely flowers, plants and displays. Well done.

## 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.

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

Weeds grow faster in May than at any other time of the year. This is particularly true of annual weeds that have evolved to get their growing in quick, to flower, be pollinated and set seed by the end of June so they can shed their seeds before they are crowded out by other plants. The solution is twofold. First never let them seed and, if necessary, cut off the flower heads to buy yourself time later. But the best way of keeping on top of weeds-particularly in the cut-flower beds is to use a hoe and cut off the weed seedlings before they have a chance to develop. Hoe lightly and often, and weeds will not become a problem and importantly won't set seed. Hoeing is best done on dry days and ideally in the morning. The cut weeds will dry out on the surface and because the soil is dry there is less risk of the roots remaining viable in damp soil. If there is a lot of them, they can then be raked up at the end of the day and added to the compost heap.

Prune lilac now that the flowers are over. Lilac trees and bushes should only be lightly pruned so keep the 'no more than a third' rule in mind. Less than a third is more realistic if you prune regularly. Start by cutting back all the spent flowers. Now look through the foliage to the framework and check for cross branches and any dieback, then trim that out as well. Finally cut out suckers from the base and keep doing that through the season. A dressing of general fertiliser and some mulch now will keep it in healthy growth.

Sow squash seeds in 7cm pots now so that you will have the plants ready for planting out by early to mid-June or sowing directly into the soil. You need reliably warm conditions for germination.

Take fuchsia cuttings by using strong shoots, about 10cm long to make softwood cuttings. Trim off the base of the cutting just below a bud then remove all the leaves except the pair just below the growing tip. Remove the tip with your fingers. Insert into a pot of firmed compost, water, then put into a covered propagator to root.

You can plant out tomatoes and peppers into their containers ready for cropping now. The larger the pots, the greater the potential for a bumper harvest, as they make it easier to water and feed the plants well. These plants are hungry feeders so make sure the compost you use is as rich as possible. Adding some manure to the mix would be an excellent strategy but don't allow the young roots to be in direct contact with it, so mix it well into the compost before filling the pot. Add stakes and tie the main stems into the supports, water thoroughly and look forward to some rapid growth.

Don't forget to open doors and windows on warm days to increase ventilation and prevent plants from overheating but close them at night.

Plant out your dahlia plants into rich, well-prepared soil when the risk of frost has passed.

## House Plant of the month is The Swiss Cheese Plant



This is the quintessential tropical houseplant – big and bold with lots of large glossy leaves that are irregularly holed. Plants can easily grow to several metres tall, and almost as wide, overtime. Younger plants are more compact, but the leaves don't usually contain the characteristic holes. Being tropical forest plants, they like warmth (18–24°C/64–75°F), humid air and bright but indirect light. They prefer slightly acid to neutral compost, which should be left to almost dry out before being watered thoroughly, ideally with rainwater rather than tap water whenever possible. Take care not to overwater or to leave the pot standing in water for long periods, as the roots can rot. Tap water in hard water areas can make the compost too alkaline. The leaves can get scorched if exposed to direct summer sun and very dry air or being too close to a radiator can turn the leaf edges brown.

Swiss cheese plants are famed for their holey leaves – a characteristic known as fenestration – which evolved to allow light to reach the lower leaves of these potentially tall plants. Younger plants and those growing in poor light often don't have many holes, so ensure they get bright but filtered light, and be patient.

**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.

**March answers to the quiz are:-** Question **1** - Coppicing. Question **2** - Helen of Troy. Question **3** *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' RHS or Corkscrew hazel. Question **4** - *Muscari armeniacum*. Question **5** - Spines are modified leaves, thorns are modified stems and prickles are outgrowths from the epidermis. Question **6** - *Pulmonaria*. Question **7** - very early (for example, flowering) Question **8** - Ernest Wilson. Question **9** - Raphides.

This month's questions are:-

Question 1 The goddess of the rainbow in Greek mythology shares her name with which flower?

Question 2 Which shade-loving houseplant has the common names cast-iron plant or bar room plant?

Question 3 What would be characteristic in plants with species names 'prostratus, procumbens or repens'?

Question 4 'Spectabilis, Fiesta and Lynwood Variety' AGM are cultivars belonging to which spring-flowering shrub?

Question 5 Which flower's name comes from the ancient Greek word for stars?

- Question 6 What is the name of the fruit cultivated from crossing a blackberry and a raspberry?
- Question 7 Name the spring-flowering bulb with species including ‘meleagris, uva-vulpis and imperialis’?
- Question 8 Which 30-acre sculpture garden, created by Charles Jencks, is located near Dumfries in Scotland?
- Question 9 What would be the characteristic of a stem that’s described as geniculate?

## Answers will be in the May Newsletter

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

**Question 1 :** What should I plant in my garden to help bees?

**Answer :** To support a healthy population of bees plant a variety of flowers that will bloom from late winter to late autumn. Please avoid pesticides, just don’t use any pesticides on any plant as it can kill bees or disorientate the bees. Choose single flowered varieties as this makes it easier for bees to access the nectar and pollen. Double flowers have far less pollen.

Early Spring bulbs for example snow drops, crocus, daffodils, aconite, fritillaries, and bluebell can be grown along with wood anemones, forget me nots. Helleborus, primrose, bugle and pulmonaria. There are flowering shrubs and trees too, for example fruit trees, flowering cherries, willow, holly, winter flowering honeysuckle, mahonia, hawthorn and forsythia.

It is believed that bees see the colour purple more clearly, so in summer season grow lavender, catmint, alliums, geranium, verbena bonariensis and salvias. Also single flowering roses, dahlias and clematis. Tubular shaped flowers are an important source of food for the long tongue bee, for example foxglove, honeysuckle, penstemon and snapdragons.

I never put feed on my grass so I have daisies, buttercups, selfheal and clover growing. On a summers day my lawn is alive with many buzzing bees. As we go into autumn asters, cornflowers, sedums, heleniums, rudbeckias and ivy are good examples. These flowers provide essential nectar and pollen for late flying honeybees and queen bumblebees preparing for winter.

Herbs and flowering vegetables are a good source of pollen for example as are rosemary, thyme, comfrey, peas, all types of beans and squashes. These are just a few examples of flowers and vegetables to grow. There are many more, the most important information I can give is not to use any type of pesticides and to grow as many different varieties of single flowering plants throughout the seasons as you can.

## 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](http://www.theoldrosenursery.co.uk) Open 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](mailto: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 one or two gardens. This month its Lullingstone Castle, Eynsford, Kent

Set within 120 acres of beautiful Kent countryside, Lullingstone Castle is one of England's oldest family estates, Mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, the manor of Lullingstone was acquired in 1279 by Gregory de Rokesley, who served eight terms as Lord Mayor of London. It passed down in the Rokesley family for several generations before being sold to the Peche family. The present manor house was started in 1497 by Sir John Peche, High Sheriff of Kent for 1494-95 and later (1509) joint Lord Deputy of Calais. Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn were regular visitors to the house. In 1543 the estate passed by marriage to his nephew, Sir Percyvall Hart, chief steward and knight harbinger to King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary I, and Queen Elizabeth I. He died in 1580 and the estate passed to his grandson, Sir Percival Hart. In May 1603 he sent fish and poultry from the Lullingstone estate to King James at Theobalds. The house passed to his great-grandson, yet another Percival Hart, who was High Sheriff of Kent in 1706. He remodelled the house and renamed it Lullingstone Castle. He left one daughter, Anne, who in turn married John Bluet and Sir Thomas Dyke. Today the castle is open from 2<sup>nd</sup> April until Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October. The World Garden is open every Thursday until Sunday. The Manor House is open on selected days only, please check the Web site.

We were planning a talk in May which we have had to postpone due to not being able to match a date with a speaker and availability of a venue.

## Future Events

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| <b>Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April</b>   | Trip to Wisley  |
| <b>Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June</b>      | Open Garden at Dave and Dawn's. 2:00pm to 4:00pm                        |
| <b>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July</b>     | Cream Tea. Westfield Bowls Club 2:00pm                                  |
| <b>Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> August</b>    | Open Garden Susan Fletcher (WHS Member)                                 |
| <b>Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September</b> | Autumn show 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Westfield Community Hall            |
| <b>Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> October</b>   | Talk by Graham Blunt from Plant Base UK. 2:00pm at Westfield Bowls Club |
| <b>Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November</b> | Beetle Drive 7:00pm. Westfield Community Hall                           |
| <b>Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December</b>  | Seasonal Lunch 1:00pm at the New Inn Westfield                          |
- Sedlescombe & District Garden Society** talks we are invited to at Sedlescombe Village Hall free of charge.
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| <b>Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June</b>    | Christine - Subject - Bohemia Walled Garden At 7:00pm                             |
| <b>Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September</b> | Ian Currie – Subject - Weatherman Gales, Greenhouses and global Warming At 2:00pm |

## 2027 WHS Events

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| <b>Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February</b>  | Valentines Quiz at the Community Centre Starting at 7:00pm   |
| <b>Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March</b>     | Spring show 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Westfield Community Hall |
| <b>Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September</b> | Autumn show 2:30pm to 4:30pm at the Westfield Community Hall |