

ASH PARISH GARDEN CLUB OFFICERS

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EDITORS NOTES

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R.H.S. LONDON AND WISLEY

We are affiliated to the RHS who's benefits include competitive insurance cover, free gardening advice, a free group visit to an RHS garden, (54 members to visit Wisley *club trip in Summer*) access to medals (*Banksian medal*) and show stationery and a free monthly copy of The Garden magazine (*see Brenda Winton if you wish to view*). Our membership number is 10564709.

FUNGUS AS BIG AS 250 CARS COULD DATE FROM ICE AGE

A HUGE fungus that is one of the largest living things on the planet is bigger and older than first thought -and could date back to the last ice age.

The honey fungus *Armillaria gallica* was discovered in the late 1980, spreading through the soil of the US state of Michigan.

Now a team led by Prof James B Anderson, of the University of Toronto, has revisited their discovery. They collected 245 samples, far more than before, and got a better sense of its shape below ground.

They estimate it weighs at least 400,000kg - equivalent to 250 cars -which is four times greater than they first thought. The fungus grew from a single individual, so its great size implies it is also older than thought.

'We're now saying 2,500 years based on our estimates of growth rate, and that's a lower bound,' said Mr Anderson. But it could be much older. The upper limit is the end of the last ice age, about 11,000 years ago, when Michigan's forests began to grow.

'It may go all the way back to post-glaciation, when the forest was reestablishing on that site,' said Mr Anderson. The fungus was discovered during a study of other fungi that were killing red pines. The team also found it has had an 'almost impossibly low' number of genetic mutations in its long life - suggesting it is unusually good at repairing DNA damage or has a slow rate of cell division.



THIS MONTHS RECIPE

Paprika pork & mushroom tagliatelle

Serves 4 Prepare 10 minutes Cook 20 minutes

You will need

- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 2 small onions, thinly sliced
- 300g pack cup mushrooms, sliced
- 400g pork fillet, trimmed, cut into 1cm slices
- 1 tbsp paprika
- 150ml Cooks' Ingredients Beef Stock
- 100ml half fat French creme fraiche
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- 300g fresh tagliatelle
- 250g pack kale

To do

- 1 Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Meanwhile, heat 2 tsp oil in a frying pan .and add the onions. Season, then cover and cook gently for 8 minutes. Turn up the heat, then add the mushrooms and fry for 3 minutes, uncovered, until a little coloured. Tip onto a plate and set aside.
 - 2 Season the pork, then sear in the used frying pan with 1 tsp oil for 1 minute each side. Stir in the paprika, then add the stock, creme fraiche and reserved mushrooms and onions. Simmer for 1 minutes, ensure that the pork is thoroughly cooked, then remove from the heat. Add a dash of Worcestershire sauce and set aside to let the pork rest in the sauce.
 - 3 Cook the pasta and kale for 3 minutes. Drain, then serve topped with the pork, veg and sauce.
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GARDENING CALENDAR DECEMBER

Top 10 jobs this month

- 1 Check your winter protection structures are still securely in place
- 2 Check that greenhouse heaters are working
- 3 Insulate outdoor taps and prevent ponds from freezing
- 4 Prune open-grown apples and pears (but not those trained against walls)
- 5 Prune acers, birches and vines before Christmas to avoid bleeding
- 6 Harvest leeks, parsnips, winter cabbage, sprouts and remaining root crops
- 7 Deciduous trees and shrubs can still be planted and transplanted

- 8 Take hardwood cuttings
- 9 Keep mice away from stored produce
- 10 Reduce watering of houseplants

Flowers

Sowing and planting

Alpines can be sown from seed this month. They need a period of cold to break the seed dormancy. A sheet of glass can be positioned over the sown area to protect it from excessive wet. Alternatively, the seeds can be stratified in the fridge, for sowing next spring.

Cutting back, pruning and dividing

Continue to cut back faded herbaceous perennials and add them to the compost heap or alternatively leave these until spring so that they can be used as winter homes for insects.

In mild areas, and during dry spells, you can still lift and divide herbaceous perennials. This will increase stocks, and revive tired or poorly flowering clumps.

Propagation

Root cuttings can be taken from now. *Papaver* (perennial poppies), *Verbascum* (mullein) and *Phlox* are suitable examples.

General maintenance

Helleborus niger (Christmas rose) blooms can look unsightly when splashed with muddy raindrops. Bark chip mulch will reduce this splashing effect, and cloches can always be used where practical.

Clear up weedy beds ready for spring mulching. Order bulky organic matter (e.g. well-rotted farmyard manure or mushroom compost) for use as a soil improver or mulch.

Protect for the winter

Check on tender plants outdoors to ensure winter protection is still in place, especially after storms. Raise patio containers onto feet or bricks to avoid them sitting in the winter wet.

Large tubs that are at risk of cracking in the frost should be covered with bubblewrap, hessian or fleece, to insulate them over the winter. Tender plants and pots can be brought into the greenhouse or conservatory if not done so already. Even in mild areas, the winter usually gets much harder after December.

Apply a mulch to protect plants that are borderline hardy.

Tidying up

Finish the autumn tidy-up of leaves from beds and borders if you have not already done so. It is especially important to clear leaves and debris from alpines, as they will die off if covered in damp for any length of time. Bare patches can be covered with gritty compost to encourage the re-growth of surrounding clumps into that area. Keep tubs and containers tidy too, cutting back and removing debris regularly. They can be mulched with compost.

Planning ahead

Improve the drainage of heavy clay soils by working in plenty of bulky organic matter, such as composted bark.

Order seed catalogues, if you have not done so already, to select next year's bedding and perennial choices. You will have more chance of finding all your choices in stock if you order well before the spring.

Pest and disease watch

Look out for *Botrytis* (grey mould) on spent herbaceous plants, and remove affected growth. Otherwise there is a risk that fungal problems could spread to healthy plants. Hellebores can be at risk of diseases such as hellebore leaf spot.

Watch out for downy mildew and leaf spot on winter pansies.

Sometimes daffodils can come up very early, even before Christmas. Enjoy them, but be aware that they too can succumb to fungal problems, such as narcissus leaf scorch.

Look out for crown rot and brown rots (*sclerotinia*) on died down perennials, especially if you are on a clay or poorly drained soil.

Antirrhinum rust and delphinium black blotch, as well as *sclerotinia*, will lay dormant and re-infect plants when they come up the following year. It may be necessary to replant new specimens in another place if the problem is severe.

Be aware that many diseases will overwinter in the soil, or on plant debris.

Lawns

Winter repair and maintenance

Avoid walking on lawns on frosty mornings. It can damage the grass and often leads to brown footprint-shaped marks. Continue to remove fallen leaves from lawns before they block out light and moisture to the grass.

Grass will continue to grow in temperatures above 5°C (41°F), so if the weather remains mild it may be necessary to use the mower to keep the lawn in trim. Ensure the cut is 3-5mm higher than during the summer to prevent turf stress. On average, this means a cutting height of around 2-4cm (1-1.5in) for a utility lawn.

Repair damaged lawn edges or patches with turves cut from other areas of the garden. Re-cut all lawn edges to crisp up the appearance of the garden, and save work next season.

Too much water

Watch your lawn for signs of waterlogging, as the weather gets wetter. You may be able to remedy this with some maintenance - either now, next spring, or the following autumn.

If your lawn suffers dieback from treading during the wet, muddy season, then you may wish to lay stepping-stones through it to allow easy access across it without causing damage. Stones can be laid at a low enough level to avoid interference with

mowing. *Fusarium* patch (snow mould) may be a problem in wet weather, particularly on overfed and lush lawns that have been left a bit too long. Algae can be a problem on lawns where there is poor drainage, excessive shade, or under the drip-line of trees.

CLUB EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES –

Please contact secretaries direct for further details.

4th Jacobs Well Encouraging wildlife in your garden, with Andrew Halstead
Pam Lomax 01483-767225

4th Lightwater Christmas, something different.
Lynn Bull 01276-502497

5th Banstead Coffee Morning/Christmas Decorations URC 10-12
Diane Beck 01737-271243

7th Dunsfold/Hascombe What it takes to be a Judge, Tessa Langmead. Party.
Sue Simper 01483-200286

10th Elstead Festive Decorations, with Pat Pearce.
Alison Gravett 01252 703318

10th Epsom Christmas Floral Designs. Demo by Elaine Middleton
Sue Anderson 0208-393-0892

12th Ascot DECEMBER SHOW and social evening
Peter Cleare 01344-622086

12th Grayshott In the not too bleak midwinter, with Tim Walker. Tickets only!
Ros. Henshall 01428-607879

SURREY WILDLIFE TRUST

SWT held its annual Wildlife Garden of the Year Awards ceremony at Nower Wood, near Leatherhead, on 21st September to celebrate the many wonderful and innovative ways Surrey schools and residents are looking after wildlife in their gardens. With gardens in Surrey making up more than 12% of the entire county, the awards are to encourage people to include wildlife friendly features into their gardens.

Bee hives, wildlife ponds, compost heaps, ladybird and bug houses and planting native hedgerows were just some of the wildlife-friendly features that impressed the judges. There were 134 entries, with double the number of schools entering this year, and more people achieving the top gold award standard.

Sue Edwards, education and engagement manager at Surrey Wildlife Trust, said: 'It is wonderful to see conservation in action, not just in nature reserves, but in people's back gardens. Everyone needs to be responsible for taking action for wildlife so we can reconnect wildlife populations across the landscape. It is also fantastic that school grounds are being used more for outdoor learning, with wildlife gardening and vegetable growing.'

Lesley Hadcroft, winner of the medium garden award, involved all her neighbours in making her road hedgehog friendly and Zygie Davies, winner of the large private garden, among many other features left her lawn uncut to attract many more butterflies and insects. Susan Renaud, winner of the small garden award, introduced a wildlife pond and fountain which also helped to minimise nearby road noise.

Frimley Church of England Junior School celebrated its 150 year anniversary by creating a new wildlife pond in May, which is already full of damselflies and dragonflies. Backing onto the pond is a large wildflower bank and the school is planning to plant a native hedgerow this winter.

Trish Everett, gardener at Frimley Church of England Junior School, Frimley said: 'We run a lunchtime gardening club once a week and a few of the children are eco councillors. It's fantastic to see the children's enthusiasm since we introduced the wildlife pond. They can't wait to see the new wildlife which appears in the pond every day and we now have up to 20 children in our gardening club. We have also installed nest boxes and bat boxes donated by Blackwater Valley Trust and planted trees donated by the Woodland Trust.'

The judges were looking for a range of habitats to attract a greater diversity of wildlife. Ponds, fruit trees, herbs, flowers throughout the seasons, hedges and trees, long grass and log piles – variety is definitely the spice of life for wildlife.

The eight over-all winners in each category are:

Schools	Frimley Church of England Junior School, Frimley St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Epsom Warren Mead Junior School, Banstead
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Private Gardens	(Large) Zygie Davies, Lightwater (Medium) Lesley Hadcroft, Frimley (Small) Susan Renaud, Ripley
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Business	ExxonMobil, Leatherhead
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Community Garden	Patchworking Garden Project, Dorking
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All entrants whose garden qualified received a bronze, silver or gold certificate declaring their garden to be officially a wildlife haven. Gold award winners were also presented with a special commemorative plaque and the best gardens won a £50 Squire's Garden Centres voucher. Sarah Squire, Deputy Chairman of Squire's Garden Centres, which sponsored the competition said: "We are keen to encourage people to attract more wildlife into their gardens, so it was great to be able to work closely with Surrey Wildlife Trust and discover the diverse and interesting ways that people are doing this. The competition winners included some really great wildlife-friendly features such as ponds, bug houses, hedgerows, and of course beautiful

plants that will attract wildlife throughout the year. Congratulations to the winners and to everyone who entered this fantastic competition.”

The Wildlife Garden Award 2018 is part of the Trust’s ‘Wild About Gardens’ campaign, working with the RHS to encourage wildlife friendly gardening. It forms part the Trust’s vision for a ‘Living Landscape’, which aims to provide a network of natural habitats so that wildlife can thrive and move across our landscape.

12 TIPS TO GROWING HEALTHY ROSES

1. Always purchase plants from a good, specialist rose nursery or reputable garden centre - Rose of the Year and Gold Standard winning varieties are a good place to start .
2. Prepare ground well, ensuring plenty of humus. Change soil if replanting in existing beds or use mycorrhizal fungi
3. Plant container grown roses with care; water and feed regularly for several weeks afterwards, particularly if plants are in leaf or flower
4. When purchasing bare root bushes, it is important to keep the roots damp at all times and store in a cool draft free environment before planting. If necessary, cut back to three or four buds (leaf joints) in Spring after planting.
5. When purchasing potted roses make sure they are kept well fed and watered even if you plant them into the ground.
6. Feed roses twice per season with balanced granular Rose Fertilizer (ensuring the ground is damp). Continue feeding with liquid fertilizer every two weeks
7. Always irrigate or water roses during dry spells. Carry this out early in the day. Concentrate on watering around the roots avoid watering the leaves in bright sunshine
8. Dead head bushes and climbers regularly during flowering
9. Mulch beds with 4 inches of compost or manure to improve soil structure and assist moisture retention and keep weed free.
10. Tie in new growth of climbers or ramblers whilst young and pliable, training horizontally whenever practical to improve flowering
11. Spray regularly, alternating sprays containing different ingredients every 2 weeks during active growth, spraying early before you see problems is highly beneficial. Also the use of a proprietary brand of foliar spray or drench is very effective.
12. Depending upon your locality, cut back or prune the bushes to an outward facing bud

