



December 2024



NEWSLETTER

Egham Gardens & Allotments Association



WINTER 2024



WELCOME TO THE WINTER NEWSLETTER



I hope everyone is looking forward to the Christmas festivities and the start of 2025.

As this is the last newsletter for the year I am including the Speaker List for 2025 which Heather has worked hard to put together to get new speakers on varied and interesting subjects. Early next year she will begin working on the list for 2026 so if anyone has knowledge of a good speaker do let her know. Alternatively, should you wish to volunteer to give a talk yourself, speak to Heather.

MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2025

Membership fees for 2025 will shortly be due and remain unchanged at £15 per person. Anyone wishing to pay by bank transfer should contact Janet on 07958 130513 and she will provide you with relevant bank details.



CHRISTMAS RAFFLE



Tickets for the Christmas Hamper Raffle will be on sale at the December meeting when the raffle will be drawn. These are £2.50 each and the Committee thank all those who have contributed items to make it a lovely prize. In addition, Jean will still have the usual raffle.

THANK YOU TO GWYNETH & JANE



Thank you to Gwyneth and Jane who have provided delicious cakes throughout the year and to all those who have helped serve the teas. As you know, Jane has been in hospital for some time and we all pray for her recovery and return home soon.



PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2024



The Photographic Competition will be held at the meeting on the 12th December and we are grateful to Charles Coleman LLP Solicitors of Virginia Water for their continued sponsorship thus enabling us to obtain the services of an experienced judge and also to offer a small amount of prize money. The judge will be Dr Peter Walmsley who is an obsessively keen amateur photographer and member of Windlesham and Camberley Camera Club. He is a level 2 competition judge for the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain (PAGB – the umbrella organisation for UK camera clubs) and has been judging local and interclub photography competitions since 2015. He has attained the LRPS, CPAGB and EFIAP photographic accreditations and in 2021 won one of the categories of the international Travel Photographer of the Year competition. From 2021-23, he was a Trustee of the Royal Photographic Society and regularly gives talks on photographic subjects to camera clubs, local community and cruise ship audiences.





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THE TOWN CLOCK



The new town clock will soon be installed now that I have had the go ahead from the freeholders' management company. The original clock having been put up in 1991 hasn't worked for some time so it will be good to have it replaced courtesy of the freeholder company Alice Liverpool Ltd. A short while ago I approached Cllr Marissa Heath and she has kindly agreed to contribute towards the cost of installation. Hopefully, we will soon have a nice new clock that works and as it comes with a remote facility it can be changed effortlessly when British Summertime begins and ends. You may recall that David Abbey was amongst those responsible for having it installed originally to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Club and because there wasn't a clock in Egham at that time.

'POOR MANS' CAPERS



Everyone should try something new and if you have grown nasturtiums you will now have lots of seeds to turn into Poor Man's Capers. You will need : a jar of nasturtium seeds; 2/3 cup of water; 2/3 cup of cider vinegar; 2 tablespoons of cider vinegar; 2 tablespoons of sea salt; 1 teaspoon of sugar; 1 bay leaf.

Rinse seeds in water and sterilise the jar and when it has cooled place the washed nasturtium seeds and the bay leaf in the jar. In another pan, add the cider vinegar, water, salt and sugar. Bring to the boil and pour the hot pickling juice into the jar, leaving a gap at the top but making sure all the seeds are submerged. Screw on lid and leave to cool. When it has cooled tighten

the lid if necessary and store in a cool, dark space for two weeks before eating. Once opened store in the fridge and eat within three months.

FRIENDS OF HYTHE PARK



Gregg Thomson is Chair of the Friends of Hythe Park volunteers who are a small group meeting on the last Saturday of each month at 10.30am at the park. The group have been running since 2009. The park is part of Runnymede Borough Council's Open spaces resources and includes children's play facilities and a pond.

The group maintain the 6 ornamental beds and the orchard near the entrance off the service road leading to Field View, Egham. In 2019 the council supplied and fitted a picnic table in the orchard to commemorate 10 years of volunteers' service in the park.

Over the years they have planted new perennials, shrubs, trees and spring bulbs and also enter the park beds into the Runnymede in Bloom competition for which they have won prizes. Last year they won a third place award for the wildlife friendly category.

If anyone wants to get involved with the work at Hythe Park please contact Gregg on 07758 502661 or email g55thomson@gmail.com. See also <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofhythepark/>



SUMMER & AUTUMN VISITS



In August we visited a modest in size but rather impressive garden in Manningtree Road (a member of the National Garden Scheme).

It was astonishing to see how many and how variable plants can grow in such a small space. The owners worked hard for a number of years to transform a rather dull garden into an oasis of harmony and peace. A winding path and well stocked borders lure you to walk to the end of the garden.





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SUMMER & AUTUMN VISITS Cont.....

As you walk you discover some perfect small enclosures furnished with tables and chairs where you can sit and talk to a friend. And at the end of the garden, a multi-stem Himalayan birch impresses and also hides the utility area.



In October we took part in the Green Forum at Talking Tree Staines. It was great to keep in touch with all these brilliant local endeavors to promote biodiversity, grow vegetables for the community, litter picking etc. Following up from that evening, we visited the community growing space in Gresham Road and supported the teachers and parents of Laleham School in creating a rewarding outdoor space for the children.



This November we visited the Christmas Market in Winchester. There was plenty of seasonal colour, plenty to peruse and plenty to eat. A great day



SUPPORTING WILDLIFE IN WINTER



For hundreds of years holly and ivy have brought the spirit of Christmas alive being classic festive plants; both with a rich history of folklore. We decorate our homes with trailing ivy and the prickly stems of holly but we should remember that they are both wonderful plants for wildlife. Holly produces tiny little flowers in spring which are attractive to bees and other pollinators. Robins, finches, thrushes and goldcrests use the prickly dense foliage for shelter and protection, with the berries providing essential food during the winter. The leaf litter is ideal for hibernating hedgehogs and toads, while the foliage is a good source of food for the caterpillars of many butterflies, such as the Holly Blue, as well as the Angle Shades moths.

However, Ivy is the go-to plant for wildlife. *Hedera helix* tends to ripen later than most other berries, sometimes not ready until near the end of winter

when food for wildlife is scarce which makes it an invaluable lifeline for them. Flowering from September to November it feeds the likes of hoverflies, bees and late-flying butterflies, such as Red Admirals. From November to January the berries ripen and they are high in fat, sustaining thrushes, blackbirds and blackcaps among others. On trees and walls the overlapping leaves provide protection for spiders and insects all year round and this, in turn encourages birds, such as sparrows and wrens, and maybe even bats.

A CITRUS TREE AS A GIFT



A citrus tree makes a great Christmas gift. Imagine picking a lemon off a tree and popping a slice into your gin and tonic. They are quite easy to look after and in summer do best in a large pot placed in a sheltered sunny spot with a south or west aspect. They need a slightly acidic soil so best to use a peat-free ericaceous compost rather than a multipurpose type. Citrus plants hate wet feet, especially in winter so make sure the compost is free draining by adding some horticultural grit and raise the pot off the ground to encourage drainage. Citrus are hungry plants and need regular feeding, especially during the summer months and if the leaves turn yellow it could be a sign that the plant needs feeding. You can buy specialist citrus feeds which give the right balance of nutrients.

Winter is a critical time for citrus plants and, although some are hardy to a few degrees below freezing, they cannot be left outside but do not bring them into your centrally heated home.



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A CITRUS TREE AS A GIFT CONT.....



They need humid air and cooler conditions as they are naturally dormant over winter so do best in a garage with windows, a well lit shed or unheated greenhouse. Some varieties may drop their leaves in winter, especially if they have too much heat so they must be kept under 10 °C.

Buying a citrus plant and having a few homegrown fruits is a real talking point for visitors and you can't beat the fragrance of their flowers.

Good varieties to start with are "Four Season" lemon; "Tahiti" lime and "Calamondin" orange.

Central heating is one of the biggest triggers of dry skin and irritation over the winter months, so it's worth considering incorporating humidifying houseplants into your living space. Best houseplant recommendations to prevent dry winter skin are:

WINTER HOUSEPLANT BENEFITS



Peace Lily : They absorb and release a high volume of moisture through transpiration.

Spider Plant : Good air purifiers. Low maintenance and can thrive in a variety of conditions.

Rubber Plant : Great for boosting humidity. Also known for their air purifying qualities as their large, thick leaves are great at absorbing airborne chemicals and improving air quality.

Areca Palm : Help to reduce indoor pollution and their large leaves help produce more fresh oxygen.

Boston Fern : Great natural humidifiers and air filters.

Snake Plant : aka Mother-in-law's Tongue. Effective in eliminating some of those invisible nasties from the air that can clog our pores. Place them in your bedroom to aid in the skin regenerating process whilst you sleep.

Aloe Vera : Adds moisture to the air which strengthens your skin barrier and also gives the benefit of its soothing gel which can be used to alleviate dry skin.

A BIT OF CHRISTMAS TRIVIA



A bit of Christmas trivia.....25th December 1800 – the first Christmas tree in Britain was erected at Queens Lodge, Windsor, by Queen Charlotte (wife of King George III)

LECTURE PROGRAM FOR 2025



DATE	TALK	SPEAKER
12th January	Interesting Things About Trees	Jonathan Newell
13th February	Vegetable Growing & Its Wider Significance	Liz Mooney
13th March	Soil, A World Under Our Feet	Irina George
29th March	Daffodil Day	Outside The United Church
10th April	Spring Show & Quiz	-
8th May	TBD	Sheila Das
10th May	Plant Sale	Outside The United Church
12th June	Beekeeping	Richard Emmett
14th June	Magna Carta Day	High Street
11th September	Late Summer Show & Quiz	-
13th September	St John's Eco Fair	St John's Church (TBC)
9th October	Sweet Peas	Gemma Burr
13th November	Fruit Growing For A Small Garden	Jim Artbury
11th December	AGM, Photographic Competition and Social Evening	-

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