

THE SPADE

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THE WORSHIPFUL
COMPANY OF GARDENERS
UPCOMING DAIRY DATES

DATE	EVENT	VENUE AND INFORMATION
Wednesday 14 January 2026	Company Catch-up	An online meeting, hosted by the Master. Featuring a talk on The Snowdrops of Old Court Nurseries by guest speaker, Helen Picton, plus Company updates and Q&A.
Friday 6 February 2026	Annual Banquet	The centrepiece of the Company year: our Mansion House Banquet, joined by guests from the civic City and the horticulture industry. White tie preferred / black tie acceptable.
Wednesday 11 February 2026	Colesbourne Park	A tour of these extraordinary private gardens, featuring Britain’s premier collection of snowdrops. Followed by lunch and a visit to another nearby garden.
Monday 23 February 2026	Online talk	Perennial, an update, with the charity’s CEO Jamie Gault.
Monday 9 March 2026	Online talk	Fuchsias, with Liveryman Kristopher Harper-Allison.
Friday 20 March 2026	United Guilds Service	We join the other Livery companies and guilds for a service at St Paul’s Cathedral. Followed by an optional lunch.
Tuesday 21 April 2026	Spring Lunch	Held at Stationers’ Hall. Pre-lunch drinks in their garden (weather permitting). Business attire.
Monday 27 April 2026	Company Catch-Up	An online meeting, hosted by the Master. Featuring a guest speaker, Company updates and Q&A.
Monday 13 April 2026	Big Curry Lunch (Garden at Guildhall)	Early evening drinks at Guildhall in the City of London.
Thursday 16 April 2026	Rupert Tyler’s Garden	An afternoon visit to Liveryman Rupert Tyler’s garden in Clapham, south London.
Thursday 14 May 2026	Company Golf Day	A full day of golf, followed by an informal dinner. Venue TBC.
Tuesday 26 May 2026	Fairchild Service and Lecture	Our annual guild service, featuring music, prayers and readings. Followed by the Fairchild Lecture and a drinks reception. St Giles’ Cripplegate. Business attire.
27 to 29 May 2026	Gardens of the South West	A three-day, two-night tour exploring a selection of outstanding gardens in Somerset and on the Somerset–Wiltshire border.
Wednesday 24 June 2026	Common Hall – Election of Sheriffs	Eligible Liverymen only. Guildhall. Business attire.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

With the festive season well underway, I am delighted to send you my warmest Season’s Greetings, wishing you and your family a joyful Christmas and a prosperous New Year. As we put up Christmas decorations and wrap our presents, it seems an ideal moment to look back on recent achievements in 2025, and to reflect on what 2026 holds in store.

A busy Autumn...

After the summer recess following the Installation Court and Dinner in early July, Autumn is always a hive of busy activity for our Company. This year was no exception, as this latest action-packed edition of The Spade shows. In September we visited Dublin and County Wicklow, led by expert tour guide and Liveryman, Trevor Edwards. A trip to remember, and I am forever grateful to Trevor, both for the trip itself and for his generous and fascinating subsequent online talk.

We also visited Marble Hill House and Pembroke Lodge in Twickenham, including a trip to Richmond Park’s Holly Lodge Centre, which provides workshops for schools and delivers bespoke sensory sessions for children and adults with special educational needs and disabilities. In October we enjoyed our traditional Harvest Festival service at St Giles Cripplegate, as well as the Autumn Court dinner at Vintners’ Hall, where we were entertained and educated by the erudite Sir Roderick Newton, the new chair of Plant Heritage. Around the time this issue of The Spade goes to print, on Friday 12th December we will enjoy our Christmas Carol service at St Giles Cripplegate.

... and an exciting 2026

As ever, details of all forthcoming events are on the website and in this edition of The Spade. Our first major function of the new year is the annual Mansion House Banquet, on Friday 6th February. This is a key event in our calendar, and I look forward to seeing you and your guests there. Former Environment Secretary (Lord) Michael Gove will be our guest speaker.

For the Galanthophiles amongst us, in February we will visit the Snowdrops at Colesbourne Park, home of Liveryman Sir Henry Elwes. Helen Picton will whet our appetites with an earlier January online talk on the Snowdrops of Old Court Nurseries.

Great depth of knowledge

The passion, skill and knowledge of our fellow Liverymen never ceases to amaze me. I am delighted that in the coming year we can look forward to online talks from Liverymen Kristopher Harper-Allison and Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance, on Fuchsias and the Eden Project respectively. In April we will have the pleasure of visiting the gardens of Liverymen Rupert Tyler, chair of both the National Garden Scheme and the Garden Museum. And our newest Liveryman, Alex Wigley, Head of Gardens and Parks with Historic Royal Palaces, is kindly arranging an early evening tour of the Tower of London’s new Moat Biodiverse Landscape in late June.

Company news

Visits and trips are enjoyable and an important part of the life of our Company. They are only one part, however. As you can read in these pages, the other core aspects - Charity and Education – continue to go from strength to strength. We have in this edition a report on the Company’s involvement with the Red Cross Guildhall Christmas Market, where (although I am probably biased!) our Livery is ever the standout participant. You will read here about our involvement in the Royal Parks Discovery Day, the work of Schools Outreach to promote an understanding of horticulture in all its forms amongst Schoolchildren (and critically, their teachers). We have four pages on the work of our Charity in this issue.

Thank you

With so much positive activity in our Company, the Wardens and I are grateful for all the hard work and effort of members across the Company; whether it is sitting on Court or on our Committees, or volunteering at events. It goes without saying that none of the above would happen without the work of our Learned Clerk, Dr Christine Rigden, supported by our outstanding Events Officer Helen Colebrook and Finance Officer Georgina Faulkner. I know you will join me in thanking them for all they do.

We have so much to look forward to in 2026, and I thank each and every one of you for the very considerable contribution that you make to every aspect of our Company, its good works and its extraordinary vibrancy. Our Company continues to thrive in root and branch. I hope you have the truly wonderful Christmas that you deserve, and a Happy New Year filled with peace, joy and success.

Robert Howard
Master



ANNUAL BANQUET - 6TH FEBRUARY
Centrepiece of the Company year, our Mansion House banquet is a glittering occasion. White tie preferred/Black tie acceptable

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER AT VINTERS' HALL

The Gardeners' Autumn Dinner is a special occasion in our social calendar when we award horticultural students for their outstanding academic and practical achievements

This celebration was held at The Vintners' Hall, the spiritual home of the International Wine Trade. The Livery Hall was rebuilt in 1671 following the Great Fire of London but retains many of its original carvings. The delightful flower arrangements provided by Chris and Jon Adams complemented this impressive hall, writes Gillian Taylor.

Tribute to Stephen Bernhard

The Master's opening address included a tribute to the late Stephen Bernhard, recognising his great contribution to the work of our Company. Two new Liverymen were clothed at Autumn Court, Michelle Pollard and Alex Wigley, the assembly welcomed them.

Student awards

The highlight of the event is the introduction to the guests of the Company award winners. The Student Awards recognise outstanding academic and practical achievements; the recipients are selected by their tutors. Team building and leadership skills are also considered.

Appreciation of the tutors

The Master explained that these achievements are only made possible by the tutors, supervisors and managers whose commitment to horticultural education and the passing of critical skills to the next generation is vital. This can often go unrecognised, so he asked those present to stand and accept a warm round of applause.

Our distinguished guests

Court Assistant Garry Coward-Williams welcomed the distinguished guests to the Autumn Dinner. Personal guests of the Master were: Helen Field, the Master of the Honourable Company of Freeman of the City of

London of North America; Dame Devilla Mitchell DBE, a Trustee of RBGK and a governor of the City of London School for Girls. The WCOG has been assisting with their sustainability curriculum. Raoul Curtis-Machin, the Director of Gardens at RBGK, will be overseeing an ambitious project to convert the iconic Palm and Waterlily houses into the first net-zero Victorian glasshouses.

Fellow Masters and their clerks

Capt. Chris Groves, Master of the Worshipful Company of Tin Plate Workers and Clerk, Neil Lyon; Sandra Raine, Master of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers and Clerk, Debbie Abergil; Ian Appleton, Master of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers and Clerk Richard Moule; Randall Boddy, Master of the Worshipful Company of Ironmongers and Clerk, Col. Charlie Knaggs OBE.

Sir Roderick's Speech

The principal guest Sir Roderick Newton is the newly appointed Chair of Plant Heritage. This organisation plays a key role in safeguarding plant genetic material for the future and is approaching its 50th Anniversary. Sir Roderick responded on behalf of the guests and told us about his lifelong passion for horticulture. It is part of his DNA, and he believes gardening is the only art form accessible to everyone. This love of plants has resulted in him having large collections of Irises and Historic daffodils or as his wife calls them 'accumulations'.

New members

The Master introduced us to our new Clerk Dr Christine Rigden and announced that Ollie Finn had been given Honorary Freedom of the Company after his tenure as Clerk.

Company activities

The Master gave an update on the Company's activities including Future Gardeners, now in its 10th year. He said it is a key delivery mechanism for the WCOG education objectives and 80% of participants go on to further training or employment in the horticultural sector. It is soon to be rebranded as 'Pathways' which gives a clearer indication of its mission statement. The Master also highlighted the work of The Worshipful Company of Gardeners of London Charity which supports a wide range of projects within horticulture. These range from a grant for the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh for glasshouse roof repairs, to provision of a green screen at a primary school. All this is achieved thanks to the hard work of the Trustees ably led by Richard Capewell.

And finally

The Master thanked the team at Vintners Hall and thanked members of the Company without whose hard work and generosity the invaluable support we provide to the world of horticulture could not be achieved.

PRIZE WINNERS:

Royal Botanic Garden Kew (RBGK): Josie Lane – gained top marks in Landscape Design. **John Houston** – excelled in Systematics and Ecology
Royal Horticultural Society (RHS): Rory Doyle – gained Level 2 Apprenticeship at RHS Garden Wisley. **Harvey Norman** – also Level 2 Apprenticeship at RHS Garden Hyde Hall.
Capel Manor: Michael Faulkner – established his own landscape company whilst gaining Advanced Technical Diplomas.
Laura White – showed commitment to her studies, balancing these with a demanding job.
ARU – Writtle: Luke Goff – completed his BSc (Hons) in Horticulture. **Rebecca Mote** – an exemplary student.
Royal Parks Guild: Larissa Young – received the George Cook Award
Commonwealth War Graves Commission.(CWGC): Mark Davis in his 35 year career his skills were tested in challenging environments.



The winners of our student awards proudly display their certificates. We wish them every success in their future careers.

THE CRIES OF LONDON

The earliest recorded mention of The Gardeners' was a complaint from the good Canons of Old St Paul's Cathedral

Members of The Gardeners' Company will know that we first received our Royal Charter from King James I in 1605. This was not, however, the first time that we entered the public record, though that was in rather more embarrassing circumstances as Lady Georgina Craufurd will explain.

Noisy neighbours

In 1345 the Canons of Old St Paul's Cathedral complained to the Court of Aldermen about members of the Gardeners' Company who were advertising their produce very loudly in their market just outside the precincts of St Paul's, to the annoyance of the cathedral staff.

Order to move

The writer of the Order (which survives from 26th August 1324) from the Court of Aldermen [sic] unfortunately did not seem to have a very clear idea of the geography of the area in question. He describes the existing marketplace as just outside the south gate of St Paul's churchyard opposite the church of St Austin's (which is not in doubt), and orders the Gardeners' to move to a new marketplace, between the south gate of the church of St Austin and the garden wall of the Friars Preachers at Baynard's Castle.

Geographical confusion

Now the problem with this is that the church of St Austin (St Augustine by St Paul, or St Augustine the Less, whose post-Fire tower survives on the corner

of Watling Street and New Change) was just south-east of the extreme south-east corner of the new choir of St Paul's. On the other hand, Baynard's Castle was several hundred yards away, south-west of the west façade of the cathedral. (The Friars Preachers were the Dominicans or Black Friars, who seem to have taken over part of the garden, or ward, of Baynard's Castle.) I think the clerk may have meant that the Gardeners' had to move from St Austin's to Blackfriars, rather than suggesting that they occupied the whole area between the two.

Relocation challenges

Interestingly, the writer refers to the Gardeners' selling "*pulse* [peas, beans etc], *cherries*, *vegetables*, and *other of their wares aforesaid*" (so not merely vegetables and herbs). These are perishable goods, and this area was suitable because they could land their produce either at the Westwatergate (later known as Puddle Dock, filled in in the 20th century) or at Paul's Wharf, south of the nave of the cathedral and a short walk away, after bringing it in by water. Later, in 1662, when the City tried to move them on again, to Aldersgate (at the extreme northern edge of the City), the Company pointed out that this was too far from the river, and that their produce would spoil as a result. (For reasons unknown, fruit, leeks, onions and garlic were sold elsewhere, in Cheapside and on Cornhill and may have been landed at Garlickhythe).

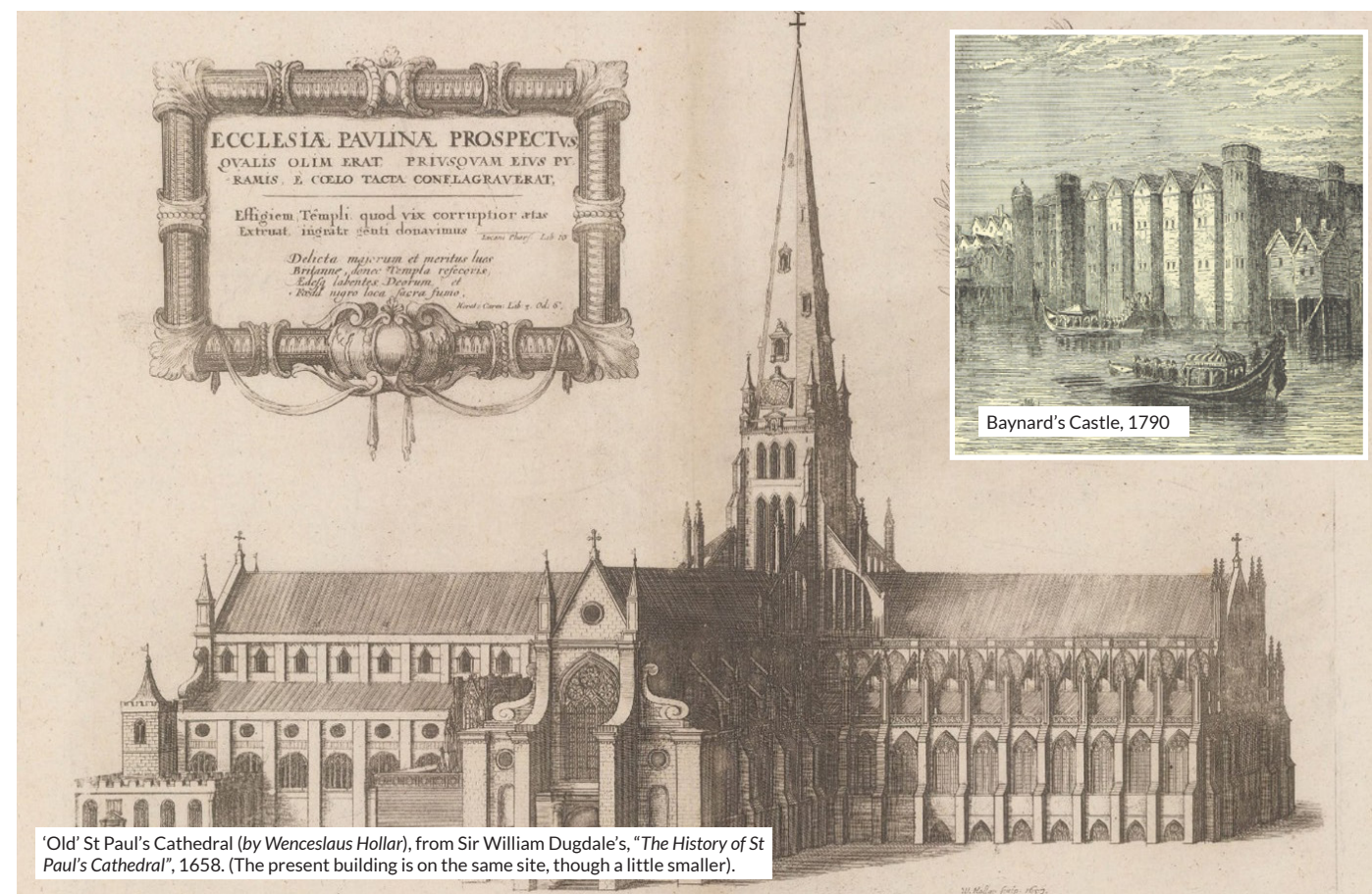
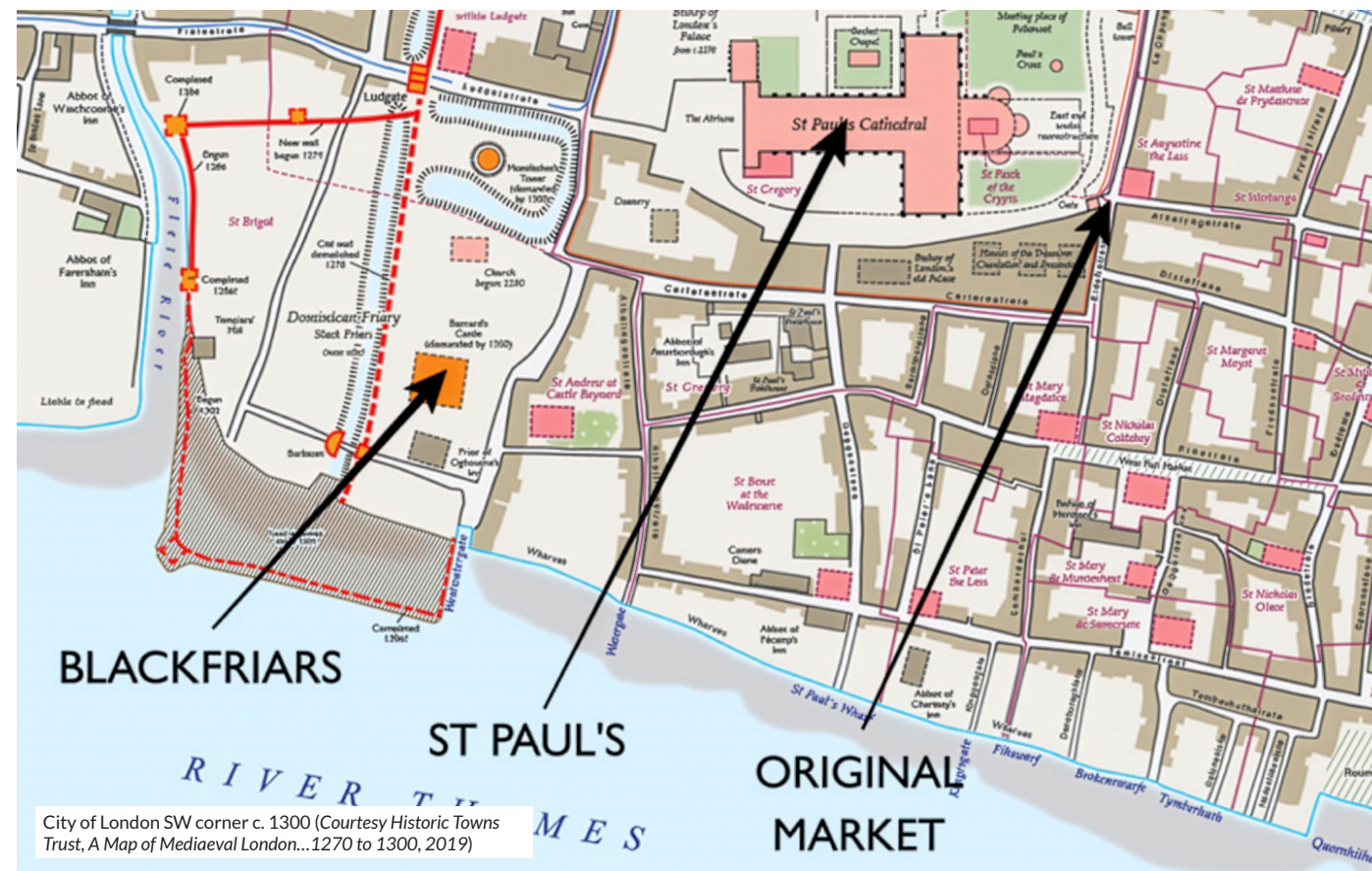
The City took more control of markets after the Great Fire, and in 1682 Spitalfields market was officially founded for the sale of fruit, vegetables and plants, though it had started functioning earlier.

Cries to entice purchase

The perishable (and in many cases luxurious) quality of the produce (such as the cherries, strawberries and flowers) meant that it had to be advertised out loud, and (if not too heavy) carried around the streets where the sellers, often using rhyming patter, could appeal to housewives to make an impulse buy. Somehow these cries have appealed down the centuries. Collections of Londonstreet cries have been published since the Stuart period at least, and romanticised portraits were created by Georgian artists such as Francis Wheatley (see illustration).

From necessity to art form

John Dowland's Renaissance madrigal, "*Fine knacks for ladies, cheap, choice, brave and new*", plays on the idea of an itinerant peddler of laces and ribbons, but of course it is a courtly love song, full of puns and wordplay. Similarly, Robert Herrick took what must have been a common street cry, "*Cherry-Ripe*" and turned it into a poem which when set to music has lasted till today. Street cries even figure in Lionel Bart's musical production of *Oliver* in the song "*Who will buy?*" One might say that the modern equivalent is the jingling tune of the ice-cream van...





VISIT TO COLEBROOK PARK - 11TH FEBRUARY

Tour of three extraordinary gardens featuring a premiere collection of snowdrops

THE MASTER'S IRISH ODYSSEY

Twenty one intrepid Gardeners' joined the Master for his tour of the gardens of Dublin and County Wicklow, writes Douglas King

This would not be a trip for the faint-hearted. We met our tour manager, Trevor Edwards, a veteran of two previous WCOG overseas trips and himself a liveryman of the Company.

Tyrrelstown House

The tone was set as we departed for our first visit to the lovely Tyrrelstown House and Gardens directly from the airport. Nine more gardens were to follow in the subsequent three days. The sign on the wall at the airport was prophetic: "*Rain or shine, Dublin's a good time*". How very true that turned out to be.

Eclectic mix

We were an eclectic mix of expert horticulturalists and enthusiastic amateurs. However, everyone got on well and enjoyed each other's company. For anyone who has never been on a multi-day WCOG trip, it is something to be very much recommended as an opportunity to get to know your fellow members.

Ireland's infamous weather

Any golfer will tell you it always rains in Ireland. It rained every day on this trip and indeed at every garden we visited. However, nothing would stop this group from enjoying the horticultural treats that lay in store!

Exceptional guides

Trevor explained to us on our first evening that the secret to a great garden visit was not just great architecture and great design but also great people. We had exceptional guides throughout. At the National Botanic gardens Kilmacurragh, we had the ever-enthusiastic head gardener, Seamus O'Brien and at Hunting Brook, the irrepressible Jimi Blake himself. There was a long queue for a signed copy of his book. At Powerscourt, we were lucky to bump into the wonderful Rosemary, in charge of the walled garden with its tremendous herbaceous borders. On our final visit to National Botanic Garden at Glasnevin, we had our tour with the inspirational Director Matthew Jebb and we were all enthralled as were others who couldn't resist 'tagging along' with our group. Which plant kills more humans than any other in the world? Not the highly toxic Ricin, which he was happy to touch, but the sugar-cane.

The Gardens

Ten gardens in three and a half days were an endurance challenge, but well worth it. Everyone had their favourite and we certainly got Trevor's promised great architecture and design. Of particular note were the unique trees, plants and scrubs at Kilmacurragh, the

woodland walk at Hunting Brook (who knew Scheffleras thrive in woodland!), the moving War Memorial Gardens in Dublin, the privilege of a private tour of the President's garden at Phoenix Park and the magnificent Powerscourt where the views of the house were as lovely as the views from it.

Royal hospitality

It wasn't all houses and gardens. We enjoyed comfortable hotels and excellent cuisine from beginning to end. One highlight was a private dinner at the Royal Irish Yacht Club with a talk by the RHSI Chairman, Philip Holloway. (Note: they chose to keep their 'Royal' title!)

Private island

For those that could stay an extra day, the Master had arranged a special treat: a visit to his wife's family's private 630-acre island with its castle, gardens and other buildings designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. A fitting end to a memorable week and for once it didn't rain!

Our legacy

Aside from the friends we made, the Master presented each guide with the Company's shield as a token of our gratitude for their time. If you go to any of the gardens we visited, you will hopefully see them proudly displayed!



Ireland's reputation for rain did not disappoint on the Mount Usher Tree Trail.



The table set for our splendid lunch at Tyrrelstown House.



The Master celebrates a break in the rain.



Are those elves at Powerscourt? No, it's Peter Waine and guide Trevor Edwards!



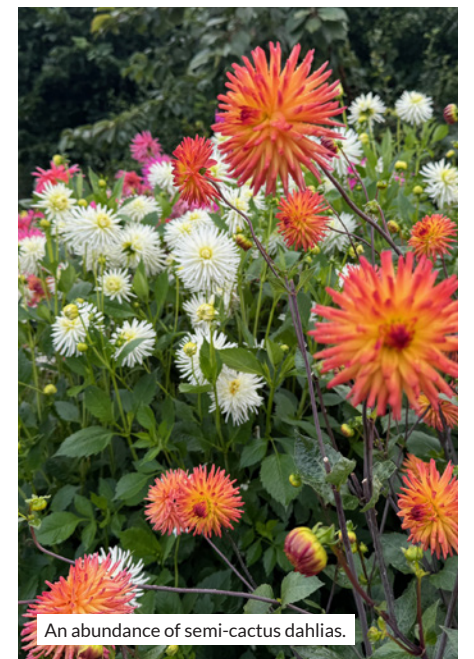
The magnificent Powerscourt.



The group admired this Fascicularia bicolor at Kilmacurragh - more commonly known as 'Monkey's Bum'!



The Master presents Matthew Jebb with the Company's shield at Glasnevin.



An abundance of semi-cactus dahlias.

VISITS TO MARBLE HILL AND HOLLY LODGE

Members enjoyed a very informative day out in July, visiting two very different locations in southwest London to learn about heritage horticulture and special needs learning

The venues were Marble Hill, an elegant Palladian villa cared for by English Heritage, and Holly Lodge, the education centre at the heart of Richmond Park, writes Robert Merrett.

Heritage horticulture

The visits were arranged to deepen our understanding of heritage horticulture and to see how hands-on learning about nature is shared with the younger generation and in particular those with special educational needs.

Restoration work

Marble Hill house and gardens reflects the story of its first owner, Henrietta Howard. We were welcomed by Corrine Price, head gardener, who outlined the extensive restoration work that has brought the 18th century gardens back to life.

Reinstated grotto

Highlights included the reinstated grotto, the newly planted groves and

the playful serpentine walks designed to delight Georgian visitors. Seeing how historic plans from 1749 informed the planting schemes, as well as hearing about modern day climate challenges, was particularly fascinating - an object lesson in marrying scholarship with horticultural flair. We concluded with an amusing tour of the house with our volunteer Andrew.

Pembroke Lodge

During lunch at Pembroke Lodge, we heard from Liveryman Mike Fitt and the Royal Parks team, who shared different aspects of their work. Interestingly, Mike informed us that Richmond Park, with its rare acid grasslands, was briefly owned - for 11 years following the execution of King Charles I - by the City of London!

Holly Lodge

We then moved on to Holly Lodge, where a behind-the-scenes tour of the education centre revealed how

thousands of schoolchildren each year are introduced to conservation and ecology. Just like the children, we enjoyed pond dipping for freshwater invertebrates and a strict lesson (as it might have been) in a Victorian classroom of 1869. It was striking to learn how beneficial these sessions are for modern day pupils with special needs and disabilities.

Much learnt

Overall, the day offered many fascinating takeaways: the power of evidence-based planting, the value of patient stewardship, and the importance of engaging future generations in caring for green spaces. Warm thanks are due to our hosts at English Heritage and the Royal Parks for their generosity of time and expertise. We left inspired, reminded that great gardens - whether grand or humble - thrive when history, horticulture and people come together to make them so.



OUR HARVEST FESTIVAL AT ST GILES

The festival is an opportunity to reflect on our stewardship of the planet and to give thanks for the environment, patience in cultivation and gratitude for nature's abundance

Members of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners were honoured guests at the annual Harvest Festival held at St Giles Cripplegate in the middle of the Barbican. The Gardeners' Company shares a long historical and horticultural connection through the legacy of Thomas Fairchild, the pioneering nurseryman who once lived and worked nearby, writes Lilidh Matthews.

Bringing people together

The occasion brought together members of the parish, local schools and visitors from across the City in a celebration of growth, generosity and to reflect on what it means to live with gratitude and care for the world around us in the season of harvest.

Mutual responsibility

The address spoke warmly of gratitude as a daily practice, not an occasional gesture, but a way of life that shapes how we see and respond to the world. The themes of the address reflected on qualities deeply familiar to gardeners: care for the environment, patience in cultivation and gratitude for nature's abundance. It drew parallels between the patient work of the gardener and the attitude of those who tend to communities and relationships with mutual responsibility; cultivating trust, care and generosity over time. True stewardship involves both the land and one another.

Link to Thomas Fairchild

St Giles' long association with horticulture, includes the legacy of Thomas Fairchild, the pioneering nurseryman who once worked nearby, providing a particular resonance to the gathering. The particularly touching mention of the local schools harvest celebrations also drew out the Schools Outreach work the Gardeners' Company does to highlight horticultural careers. The presence of the Gardeners' Company was therefore especially fitting, linking past and present in the shared tradition of tending and renewal. A reminder that growth and cooperation often flourish where people of different backgrounds come together for a shared purpose.

Meeting the community

After the service, members enjoyed

meeting the community, marking the day with good conversation and mutual appreciation for another season of growth and generosity within the life of the City.

Build, plant and garden

The reflections also encouraged all present to "build, plant and garden" within their own surroundings, to seek the wellbeing of their neighbourhoods

and contribute to the flourishing of the City as a whole. It was a message that felt especially resonant for the Gardeners' Company, whose members continue to support London's green spaces and promote the spirit of stewardship in both land and community. A reminder that the harvest is not only about what we gather and consume, but also about what we give and share.



RED CROSS CHRISTMAS MARKET SUCCESS

The Gardeners’ stall raises a staggering £4,200 for the British Red Cross at the Guildhall Christmas Market writes Gillian Taylor

Gothic splendor
Founded in 1961, the Guildhall Christmas Market is one of the largest fundraising events for the British Red Cross and one of London’s most successful Christmas Markets. The gothic splendour of the City’s most renowned medieval building, the Guildhall, provides a truly atmospheric and memorable venue for this special event.

Gardeners’ involvement
Traditionally the Company takes part in the biennial Red Cross Market, held at The Guildhall in early December. This event gives Livery Companies the opportunity to enhance their profile within the London community and to raise funds for a worthy cause.

Volunteers create the merchandise
Our Craft Day held in late November is a key part of the process: generating the bespoke goods we hope the public will flock to buy. This year twenty hardy Company Liverymen braved torrential rain to meet at Jon and Chris Adam’s wholesale floristry venue. Here they found preprepared blue pine wreaths awaiting completion, a stunning selection of decorations and delicious refreshments all kindly provided by the hosts.

40 fabulous wreaths
After a productive morning, and a lot of fun, forty beautiful wreaths were created, a worthy tribute to all the volunteers’ hard work. A professional demonstration on how to create a beautiful table decoration provided light relief, this was ‘heads and tails’ raffled, the lucky winner being Kaye Molloy. A big thank you to Paul Rochford who provided a huge amount of plant material for making the goods, as well as Danish trollies for delivery and transport to London.

Setting up the stall
The set up day on the Sunday before the market is again reliant on volunteers and this is a real team effort. Making display stands, setting out plants and constructing a wreath Christmas tree display is hard physical effort, but the results of our teamwork made it all worthwhile.

Upper Warden joins the Lady Mayor’s procession
The Market opened on Monday evening, with the Lady Mayor in attendance. On behalf of The Gardeners’, Upper Warden David Balfour presented a posy to the Lady Mayor and a buttonhole to her consort. David was the only representative of a Livery company to be part of the procession prior to the official opening. Another example of us punching above our weight! As usual the Gardeners’ stall looked magnificent and was the result of the hard work and generosity of many volunteers over several days.

Engaging the public
The fair continued on Tuesday with large crowds and brisk sales. David Balfour had organised a team of thirty volunteers on a shift system to cover the two days. Martin Panter was designated as ‘Stall Manager’ and all of the sales team proudly wore their

Gardeners’ aprons. Once we had got to grips with the selling App all went well. It was a delight to engage with the public, tell them about our work and, of course, sell them some plants.

Thank you to everyone
At the end of the two days the Gardners’ team had sold £4,200 worth of handmade goods! Special thanks must go to Jon, Chris and Paul but all the volunteers’ hard work is very much appreciated. Without their involvement this event would not take place or be the success that it is, so thank you on behalf of The Red Cross and The Worshipful Company of Gardeners.

- TOP 5 BEST SELLERS
1.

Poinsettias
2.

Cyclamen
3.

Wreaths
4.

Packs of bulbs
5.

Christmas cacti



Sarah Counter reports on another very successful event organised by the Gardeners' Company Schools Outreach team

Four Inner London Secondary Schools each brought ten students to enjoy a day at the Zoological Society of London. They shared the day and its themes with the apprentices, also run by the Guild, although they had a separate programme and venue. The schoolchildren were introduced to the world of horticulture in zoos and those that work within its gardens.

Botany and zoology is a partnership
Captivated from the start, one person from each school group was given a 'species' fact card. Then leaders from the Schools Zoo Team asked their peers to guess the animal and to consider the habitat needs from the perspective of this animal. It was explained that where animals were once lived in barren cages half a century ago, they now have planted enclosures to mimic their natural habitats and this is how botany shares an equal footing with zoology.

Creating the right environments

After a ZSL video, 'Why we care for our animals', there followed a discussion on careers that are involved with enclosure design. In school groups, the students headed out to four locations around the zoo to explore how the zoo provides animals with what they need. Visiting the Reptile House, the Mammals enclosure, the Rainforest zone and the 2022 award winning Giants of the Galapagos house, they were able to observe the variety of habitats for each animal grouping and how the zoo creates that habitat for them.

Seeding a career thought...

Returning to the education centre the students walked through woodland and, as I was walking alongside, one student stated: "I think I would like a career in horticulture. I had never thought of it before". Suppressing the desire to cheer loudly, I calmly discussed the options with this very bright and able girl!

Greening-up their school

After lunch each school group was provided with a large aerial map of their school. They were asked to consider what aspects of horticulture might enhance their school grounds and what would they need to do to make this happen. They were greatly cheered when told that a generous member of

the Gardeners' Company would, free of charge, provide them with any plants which they needed to implement this.

Thank you to all who helped

After a heart-warming feedback session from the students, they left absolutely delighted with a large 'goodie bag' stuffed with plants, pencils, seeds, specially designed fridge magnets, a gardening in zootopia article with

kind permission of the editor of the RHS's journal, *The Garden*, and a careers suggestion card.

It was a very worthwhile day thanks to a huge team effort by presenters from The Tree Council, Royal Parks facilitators, tour guides from the Zoological Society, and of course the volunteers within the Schools Outreach Team.



Simon Catford reports on six visits to special London gardens for a group of Years 8 and 9 schoolboys from the City of London School

As part of the Company's on-going Schools Outreach programme, a series of visits to some special London gardens were arranged with the City of London School for boys back in June this year. These events further the longstanding relationships the Gardeners' Company have built up – and continue to build – with a range of educational establishments across the capital with the objective of raising awareness of horticulture in all its forms.

This year's focus

Focusing this year on Years 8 and 9, each visit was hosted at a different garden complete with a speaker plus a member of the Schools Outreach team in attendance to ensure the event went smoothly. And we are pleased to report that is exactly what happened!

The Garden Museum

Taking each in turn, the first visit was to the Garden Museum at Lambeth Bridge on the 3rd of June. We were treated to a tour of the museum. Housed in the deconsecrated church of St Mary-at-Lambeth, the Garden Museum contains the burial place of John Tradescant. His tomb lies at the heart of the Museum in a sheltered courtyard garden designed by Dan Pearson as an 'Eden' of rare plants. And as an extra treat we walked across the road to the Museum's Healing Garden where the Head Gardener explained the community work done in engaging local residents by growing beneficial plants.

Kensington Gardens

The next day saw a visit to Kensington Gardens overseen by our own Adam Stoter. Here the children heard about the various tasks undertaken to keep this world-famous garden in top condition for the enjoyment of Londoners and tourists alike.

Barbican complex

On the 10th June Sarah Counter, Head of Schools Outreach led a group exploring the various planted areas within the Barbican complex, of which there are several. The challenges of gardening within a harsh urban environment were explained by Jake Tibbetts, City of London Garden Manager and the children saw a different side to horticulture.

Middle Temple

The following day saw a change of scene to Middle Temple off Victoria Embankment. Here a more traditional London garden was explored, ably chaperoned by Jonathan Matheson, Chair of the Education Committee. The garden team was on hand to answer the many searching questions from our young audience – and some good ones were posed.

Barber Surgeons' physic garden

Next was a visit to the wonderful Barber Surgeon's Hall on 17 June. There Dr Tim Cutler, Past Master Barber and member of the Gardeners' Company gave a fascinating tour of the small physic garden that surrounds the Hall. Not on the same scale as Chelsea perhaps but still full of various beneficial plants and herbs that really captured the imagination of 21st Century school kids. Dr Cutler was assisted once again by Jonathan.



Inner Temple

Finally, to finish this extensive tour of horticultural delights within London, Margaret Hanna led a group to Inner Temple gardens where the gardens team showed the children around the lovely spaces that almost reaches down to the River Thames below Blackfriars Bridge. A wonderful way to end this series of engaging visits.

More to come...

While these visits reached a small number of school children, it is pleasing to see the sense of wonder and interest that they generate. If we can touch only a few lives with the benefits of horticulture and turn just one or two into pursuing a career or forming a life-long passion for plants, we will have done a good job. More events are planned for 2026 so if you wish to play a part in our programme, please contact the Schools Outreach team – contact details are on our website.



CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Like all liveries, our Gardeners' Company has very deep roots in the City of London. But, perhaps more so than for many companies, it draws its members from far and wide, reflecting the fact that horticulturists work in so many settings: businesses, educational establishments and so on as well as gardens, spread relatively evenly throughout the country. Our Charity reflects this pattern, supporting good causes associated with the City as well as many charities outside the capital.

But it is relatively unusual for us to be asked for a grant for a garden in the City itself. So it was particularly pleasing that we gave a grant of £2,500 to St Michaels Church for their garden. Situated in Cornhill, just a few hundred yards from the Bank of England, this precious greenspace is much used by City workers. This grant is similar to the one to the Hoxton Trust, located just outside the City itself, where our funding helps provide the expert

gardening help to complement the work of volunteers and others involved in maintaining the garden.

Four hundred miles away to the north, we have supported the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, which was badly affected earlier in the year by storm Eowyn. My predecessor as your Chair reports on his recent visit to look at the alpine cold frames, which house an important collection of rare bulbs and alpinas, and are in need of restoration. Like a number of our grants, it is being staged over a number of years, and it will be interesting to hear how the work progresses.

We held our main autumn trustee meeting recently, considering no less than fourteen larger applications. We have to make choices on which to support. Although we have a presumption that our grants go to projects which engage with horticulture directly we don't set

rules; each application being judged on its merits. Ideally we like to support a project where our relatively small grant makes the difference between a project going ahead or not.

A final thought from our meeting: legacies. We again acknowledged the very welcome legacies we have received in the last few years and expressed the hope that members might consider leaving a gift in their will. It really does make a difference. I hope you enjoy reading about what we have been doing.



HELPING TO REPAIR STORM DAMAGE

David Aitchison-Tait reports on damage to the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh and the Gardeners' charity grant

On the 24th of January this year storm Elwyn hit Scotland wreaking havoc across the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh. The Gardeners' Company had made a visit to the gardens the year before and therefore we were known to them. So, they turned to the charity for help. We initially provided a small grant to help with the clean up from the storm. The trustees also said they would be willing to consider a larger grant to help repair some of the damage done to greenhouses and buildings.

Alpine frame repairs

Later in the year they submitted an application that was accepted to repair the damage done to the Alpine cold frames. The Alpine collection at the gardens is recognised as one of the most important collections of small bulbs and rare Alpines to be found anywhere on the planet. The charity provided a grant of £15,000 split into three payments over the next three years to rebuild the cold frames in the Alpine yard. You can see the extensive damage to these cold frames in the photograph.



The storm damaged cold frames.



Charity trustee David Aitchison-Tait visited the site earlier this year.

HORTICULTURE TO HOXTON

In 2024 the Gardeners' Charity granted £2,500 to the Hoxton Trust towards funding their community gardener

The Hoxton Trust was formed to make the area of Hoxton and Shoreditch a better place for everyone who lives or works there. It was established in 1983 as a community development to address the physical environment of the local area. At the time, Hoxton was very unfashionable, with high levels of poverty, deprivation and was a very poor quality urban area.

Organic principles

The project meets a need to educate local people in the importance of horticulture, particularly the organic principles of soil and composting, and the practical steps to reduce waste and grow their own food. Hoxton is in the middle of a densely populated area with very few gardens and residents little knowledge of how nature works or where food comes from.

Building skills

The Trust supports those who are most economically and socially disadvantaged with opportunities to build their levels of skills, knowledge and confidence; by providing advice and assistance to those without the means to otherwise obtain it; and by managing and maintaining a community garden for the health, wellbeing and general enjoyment of everyone.

Community garden

"This grant from the Worshipful Company of Gardeners went towards the salary of our Community Gardener", said Hoxton's Executive Director, Paul Fleming. "Our gardener has overseen the management and maintenance of our Community Garden, which is a rich bio-diversity of 150 different plants and over 20 different types of tree. In the last 12 months we have

planted more than half a dozen additional trees including 2 Acers, a Sweet Chestnut, Weeping Cherry, American Hornbeam and a beautiful Mimosa.

Residents become volunteers

"Our gardener has supported 4 regular volunteers and more than 150 one-off or occasional volunteers; the majority being local residents. He has also directly helped 10 residents who have come to us to take part in our Health and Wellbeing project that uses gardening as the vehicle toward better health and wellbeing, reduced isolation and a way to combat loneliness.

Thank you

"I would like to thank the Worshipful Company of Gardeners for their support of this much-needed project."



Hoxton Community Trust Garden.



Residents can learn how to grow their own produce.



The garden brings the community together.



They have ample facilities, but need expert horticultural guidance.

HELP FOR SPECIAL NEEDS FACILITY

In 2024 The Worshipful Company of Gardeners of London Charity granted £1,450 to the Multiple Intelligence Hub for a new polytunnel

The Multiple Intelligence Hub (MIH) is a day service provider, offering wellbeing activities, alternative learning interventions and out of term time activities for autistic and ADHD children and young people in Sevenoaks, Kent. The activities are set within a beautiful rural, natural environment where outdoor learning can be appreciated and gardening is one of their key activities.

Indoor planting facility

The aim of this grant was to install a polytunnel on their seven acre site for the benefit of the young persons that attend their day care service, so that they have an indoor planting capability.

Helping self sufficiency

All these young people have some special educational needs and mostly have one carer to each young person, although some needing two carers depending on their needs. Each one is encouraged to get involved in planting, tending to and harvesting the produce that is grown on the Hub's site. Multiple Intelligence Hub Director Bryan Hall said: "The polytunnel and its planters (funded by WCOG), are being well used by the majority of our young people."

The aim is to help them understand where food and horticultural products originate from and when is the best time to harvest the different crops grown. This is most important for those who will eventually be able to live independently or with some supervision."

Positive result

Bryan Hall continued: "Overall we are delighted with the polytunnel and will be using it extensively for the foreseeable future as we continue to develop our site. We have a number of outside planters which will be fed by seeds grown in the polytunnel. We have had success recently in developing a school 'refuser' (who was very likely to be expelled) into a well rounded young man who is just finishing his apprenticeship to become a carpenter/joiner and we expect some of our young people will go on to work within a gardening environment."

Thank you

"I would like to thank the Worshipful Company of Gardeners for their generous grant, it is much appreciated. If members of the WCOG would like to visit our site at Borough Green please do let us know and we will be happy to arrange a mutually convenient time."



All of these children and young people have special educational needs.



Multiple Intelligence Hub is a rural facility offering day care to children with special needs.

NEXT STEP AHEAD

In the spring of 2025 The Worshipful Company of Gardeners made a grant to help a new horticulture careers initiative

Liveryman Jeremy Storey-Walker explains: "We are a brand new 'not for profit' company, only recently formed, whose aim is to introduce first time career choosers, as well as career changers, to opportunities within the horticulture industry. To connect them with opportunities, people and organisations who are best able to help them progress to be their best selves. We provide benefits to the community by providing careers in gardens, landscapes and nature that are good for their health and well-being while making a positive contribution to the environment."

Diverse audience

"The Worshipful Company of Gardeners

kindly awarded a grant of £1000 to help support the early development and delivery of the programme. Our event reached a wide and diverse audience, secured expert speakers, and ensured the experience was accessible, practical and genuinely useful for participants.

Thanks to your support, we were able to welcome over 400 people to in-person sessions offering first-hand insight, mentorship and practical guidance from industry leaders and employers who included BALI, Perennial, The Garden Media Guild, the Landscape Institute, the London College of Garden Design, Veterans Growth and the British Florist Association.

Looking ahead

With growing interest and cross-Livery collaboration, we are now planning for a major careers showcase in September 2027, bringing together industries from across the Livery community to inspire the next generation and support those seeking a fresh start.

Thank you

Thank you to The Worshipful Company of Gardeners of London Charity for your generous support. Your contribution has helped lay the foundations for a programme that is already helping to change lives, open doors and create opportunities for many. We are deeply grateful for your help.

ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

CHARITY



The Gardeners' Charity granted £2,500 to support the funding of a part time gardener for the Cornhill church

The church of St. Michael's in Cornhill is known to have been in existence before the Norman Conquest, for it is recorded that in 1055 Alnothus the priest gave it to the Abbot of Evesham. In 1503 the patronage was transferred to the Drapers' Company, which still has the gift of the living.

Pauline Monro, garden consultant for the church explains the rationale for the grant: "For the past several years we have been endeavouring to upgrade our garden to become a lovely oasis for City workers and visitors alike to relax in and enjoy the beauty of the trees and plants."

Changes already made

"Over the last 5 years we have raised money within The City to purchase and replace the park benches, including a semi-circular tree bench; to add a shed to house necessary garden tools and a hose, and several glazed pots between the benches, in which to have seasonal displays of colourful flowers; to place an arch with Iceberg Climbing Roses over it, in one of the flower beds beside the bird bath; and finally to install a black board on the boundary wall, telling the intriguing history of coffee-houses in The City - this is particularly relevant as the first-ever coffee served in London, was served from a stall on the edge of this garden by the servant of a Levant Company merchant, called Pasqua Rosée, in 1652. All of this has quietly transformed the garden.

Expert gardening help

"However, what has transformed the garden most of all, has been the addition of a part-time gardener. He has extended the garden under a silver birch tree, where grass found it hard to flourish, and has filled that with ideal plants, which seem to be much happier than the grass was."

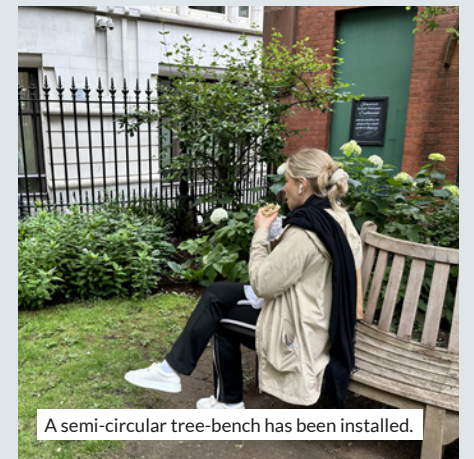
Adding interesting varieties

"Aside from the usual expected garden tasks of weeding, pruning, watering, fertilising and controlling pests, he has added to the interest of the garden with Japanese Anemones, Alchemillas,

skimmias and much besides - perhaps the most notable being different varieties of salvia. He was rewarded for his work this year with a Silver Certificate of Excellence in the City of London Summer Competition.

Please visit us

"We are very grateful to The Worshipful Company of Gardeners for their generous help and we trust that if any members of your company are in the vicinity of Cornhill, they might divert to St. Michael's Alley and view the garden to which you have so generously contributed."



A semi-circular tree-bench has been installed.



The garden is meant to be an oasis for City workers and visitors alike to relax in and enjoy the beauty of the trees and plants.



Local workers relax and enjoy the garden away from the bustle of the City



UNITED GUILDS SERVICE - FRIDAY 20TH MARCH

We join other Livery companies and guilds for a service at St Paul's Cathedral, followed by an optional lunch

STEPHEN GEOFFREY BERNHARD

1st May 1946 – 4th Oct 2025

It was with great sadness that we report the passing of Senior Past Master Stephen Bernhard CHort., FCIH

Stephen died peacefully on the 4th October 2025 at University College Hospital after a long battle with pulmonary fibrosis and lung cancer. He had suffered from several ailments for many years and fought through them valiantly while continuing to take a very active part in the life of The Worshipful Company of Gardeners. In his 42 years with the Gardeners' Stephen came to epitomise the three principles of all Livery Companies: fellowship, education and charity.

BERNHARD FAMILY TRADITION

Stephen's energy, drive and deep connection to the world of horticulture are part of a remarkable family tradition: his father Jeffrey was not only a significant player in the UK landscape industry, but was also a highly respected member of the Gardeners' Company. Stephen's son James plays an active role as a design consultant for The Gardeners'.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Stephen leaves a profound legacy to the Gardeners' Company. He established the first Education Committee, which now does a huge amount of work with young people, showcasing the many career opportunities modern horticulture provides, and thus paving the way for future generations of gardeners.

NUFFIELD SCHOLARSHIP

The Gardeners' involvement with the Nuffield Scholarship was his idea. Stephen was passionate about this high-level international scheme to support and develop future leaders in horticulture. He first proposed it in 2016 and thanks to his determination, hours of researching potential applicants, and his initial generous sponsorship, Dr Richard Harrison was appointed in 2018, to further his studies on the UK soft fruit industry. Two more scholars have followed to date.

FUTURE GARDENERS

The charity Future Gardeners was the brainchild of SPM Paul Rochford and Mike Fitt of our Company. At first, it was under the remit of Stephen and the Education Committee. When it became a stand-alone charity Stephen continued as a hardworking trustee.

The programme is fully aligned with his desire to give greater opportunities to young people as it supports access for all to careers in horticulture.

PASSIONATE AND FORTHRIGHT

Stephen didn't tolerate second best in the Company, as in life generally. If he disagreed with something or someone, he said so. He certainly called a spade a shovel. And yes, he did ruffle a few feathers along the way, but it was never intentional, and he was usually right in what he did. He spent a huge amount of time in pursuit of arriving at a better place, a better standard, and a better outcome for the Company.

MODERNISING OUR CHARITY

In 2021 Stephen brought his intense modernising focus to our own Company Charity, bringing in a new team of officers and refreshing the Company's methodology. While serving on the committee he worked tirelessly to ensure that all members of The Gardeners' contribute financially, as we all pledge to do on joining the Company.

YEAR AS MASTER

During his year as Master, Stephen sought to bring our fraternity together by putting on fun, smaller, less costly events. He was interested in people and was always keen to get to know new members.

CAREER SUCCESS

In his work life, Stephen provided visionary leadership and his influence shaped the global turf and agronomy industries. His passions for innovation, education and excellence inspired generations of turf professionals. He founded his eponymous company in the early 1980s and over several decades guided the business from its roots in precision engineering and horticulture to become a world leader in turf technology. His achievements were recognized with the Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade 2008 - an honour he was rightly proud of. In 2024 he set up The Stephen Bernhard Foundation which will continue to support training opportunities in horticulture, particularly in turf technology and management for years to come.

DEEPLY MISSED

Stephen was driven, focussed, tenacious, had a good grasp of detail, was generous of spirit, and charismatic. The Gardeners' are poorer without his involvement. His drive, his honesty, and his friendship will be missed. The Gardeners' have lost a true and loyal stalwart of The Company.

Our thoughts go to his wife Jenny, daughter Alex and son James.

