

THE SPADE

THE SPRING EDITION 2026 - ISSUE 74

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THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF GARDENERS

UPCOMING DAIRY DATES

DATE	EVENT	VENUE AND INFORMATION
Monday 13 April	Big Curry Lunch	Early Evening Drinks at Guildhall in the City of London.
Thursday 16 April	Rupert Tyler's garden	An afternoon visit to Liveryman Rupert Tyler's in Clapham, South London.
Tuesday 21 April	Spring Lunch	Held at Stationers' Hall. Pre-lunch drinks in their garden (weather permitting). Business attire.
Monday 27 April	Online talk Eden Project	An update, with Liveryman Professor Sir Ghilleen Prance.
Tuesday 5 May	Ascot & Bagshot Park	A visit to Ascot Racecourse, followed by a tour of Bagshot Park, home of Past Master HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.
Thursday 14 May	Company Golf Day	A full day of golf, followed by an informal dinner. Venue tbc.
Tuesday 26 May	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.
Wednesday 27-29th May	Gardens of the South West	A special three-day, two-night tour exploring a selection of outstanding gardens in Somerset and on the Somerset-Wiltshire border.
Monday 29 June	Tower of London	An evening guided tour of the Tower of London, led by Liveryman Alex Wigley, Head of Parks and Gardens Historic Royal Palaces.
Wednesday 1 July	Installation Dinner	A dinner to celebrate the beginning of the Company year and the Installation of a new Master. Haberdashers Hall. Black tie.
Tuesday 7 July	Eton College	Hosted by the Provost's wife, a special visit to the Gardens of Eton College.
Monday 7-10 Sept	Dorset Gardens Tour	Join the Master for a three-night stay in Dorset, based in Sherborne, and explore a selection of beautiful gardens in the surrounding area.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MASTER

I hope this latest edition of *The Spade* finds you all in good health, as we look to the coming of Spring. It seems like only yesterday that I was wrapping Christmas presents for the children. How quickly a Master's year can fly by!

Recent visits

As I sit and write this Message, my thoughts are still in Colesbourne, where earlier this week we visited Liveryman Sir Henry Elwes. The snowdrops at Colesbourne are everything that I had heard, and everyone remarked on what an energetic, charming and generous host we had in Sir Henry. One is always in great company on a Gardeners' trip, and I was especially pleased that we were joined by Senior Past Master Bill Fraser and his wife Penny. Bill organised the Company's previous trip to Colesbourne in 2007, during his year as Master. I hope we don't wait another nineteen years to visit Colesbourne again. Simply wonderful. In October, our Spadebearer Jonathan Matheson led a fascinating trip to Howbury Hall and the School of Sustainable Floristry, which has stimulated a very topical debate about sustainability and whether we can be making better use of British-grown seasonal flowers at Company events. A topic on which we will hear more in the near future.

Coronation planter video

You will recall that in 2023 our Livery joined with The Worshipful Company of Plumbers to present a pair of Coronation lead planters to Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla, to be placed at Sandringham House. I am delighted to report that a video of the presentation has been added to the Company website. Please have a look and watch this wonderful record of a very special moment for the Livery.

The Gardners' are growing

Our traditional Carol Service at St Giles Cripplegate was well attended, and at the Mansion House Banquet in February I was pleased to be able to announce that we have been joined by over fifty new members since the start of 2025 - over twenty of whom were with us on the night.

The "zeitgeist" Gardeners'

Particularly pleasing has been the varied and interesting professions of our new members, including garden and nursery owners; garden and landscape designers; wholesale florists; apprentices; children's gardening; tea

grower; terrarium entrepreneur; and pollinator ecologist. We have also been joined by the Head of Plant Collections, Chelsea Physic Garden; the Head of Gardens & Parks, Historic Royal Palaces; and the CEO of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. An incredible range. It is so very exciting to see and feel our Company growing, and the enthusiasm of our new members. Hearing this, an envious guest from another Livery remarked to me how "zeitgeist" the Gardeners' are at the moment. But of course this is the result of a major effort from all of you. Thank you. And we owe thanks also to our Membership Secretary, Lucy Van Liew. Members are the best source of new members, so please do continue to think about friends and colleagues who may enjoy our Livery, and consider inviting them to an event so they can see for themselves. If you have any questions, Lucy is always happy to help.

Honouring David Longman

In December I was honoured to have the pleasurable task, at our annual Tradescant Court lunch, of presenting a Company citation to Senior Past Master (and Father of the Company) David Longman - in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of his being Master. Think about that - not fifty years since David joined the Livery. Fifty years since being Master. I am in awe. And very pleased to report that David is in tip-top shape.

More 'events' to come

You will see in these pages that we continue to deserve our reputation as an 'active' Livery. I am grateful to all those who have contributed to making this edition so very interesting. Looking ahead, we have a wonderful programme of events ahead of us, and I hope to see as many of you as possible at our Spring Lunch at Stationers Hall in April. My thanks to our amazing Events Officer, Helen Colebrook, who has been absolutely brilliant at making all of this happen, along with our Learned Clerk, Dr Christine Rigden. Helen has been working on several additional events, between now and the end of my term in July, details of which will be circulated as soon as they are confirmed. So please keep your eyes on your Inboxes! If you feel that you might not be receiving Livery emails, please let the office know.

Getting more involved

Similarly, please put up your hand if you would ever like to do more within the Livery. As a member-led organisation, the Gardeners' always welcome hearing from those who feel the time is right to become involved in our many interesting activities, whether it is judging with Flowers in the City, helping our Schools Outreach team, assisting the Charity or shaping our events programme. To name but a few! The old cliché, that you get out what you put in, has certainly been my own experience during my year as Master. I have been enjoying myself tremendously. And that is because of you, my fellow Gardeners. I am so very grateful for all the support and friendship you have shown me.



The Master presents a Company citation to Senior Past Master and Father of the Company, David Longman.

CITY GARDEN WALK

September's City Garden Walk, led by Nick Evans, Chairman of Flowers in the City, revealed the challenges of maintaining these unique gardens, writes Jenny Bolton-Clark

Houndsditch finally rejuvenated

Vibrations from the London Underground are common, but the extensive bomb damage in the Houndsditch area of The City in the Second World War, resulted in no protected views and few listed buildings. This has allowed rapacious construction with continued significant ground disturbance. Pocket-sized Jubilee Gardens sits over a substation on a shallow substrate with drainage challenges and is overshadowed on all sides. Master Robert Howard related how the Company had unsuccessfully tried to adopt and rejuvenate it but over 10 years later, with a sizeable budget, City of London Corporation has finally reopened the garden which has been skilfully transformed into a space that works hard for both wildlife and people.

Sustainability and seasonal interest

In Finsbury Circus Gardens, Alex Piddington-Bishop from City Open Spaces (COS) explained how the balance between sustainable practices and seasonal interest is maintained. The drought tolerant, permanent planting is supplemented with a small amount of seasonal bedding to avoid the repetitive design of recent public spaces. Seedheads and architectural planting are used to extend the season

in Exchange Square on the roof of Liverpool Street Station. Woodland areas and perennial beds create different habitats for people and pollinators, providing respite from the extreme wind conditions. In the new garden at Drapers' Hall, a great deal of care was taken to maintain year-round interest, with different seasonal features.

Getting the balance right

The balance between recreational experience and environmental practice is delicate. Finsbury Circus borders are watered sparingly but the lawn is irrigated, resulting in a cooling effect whilst producing softer grass. Night-time watering minimises evaporation and increases absorption, combatting access and drainage difficulties. In Exchange Square, Sue Payne from Q&S Commercial Landscaping explained how participation from all service providers (eg. window cleaners using no harmful chemicals), was essential to not despoil their organic irrigation set-up. The plants on the 15th floor of 120 Fenchurch Street require fertilising daily but grow in a lava, pumice and zeolite mix which has a high retention capacity, so meticulous maintenance is crucial.

Recycling leaves

Finsbury Circus has some of London's tallest plane trees and leaf drop is a year-round problem. Alex explained how he is looking at increasing shrubs so leaf-blowers can be used without damage to delicate plants. Exchange Square has started to use the green waste from those recycled leaves to supplement their seaweed fertiliser.

Up on the roof

In Fenchurch Street's spectacular roof garden, Nick Evans related the challenges of controlling 85 wisteria and how, even at this height, the box hedging is attacked by blight.

Complicated project

Drapers' Hall archivist, Penny Fussell, explained that a project on a listed site in a conservation area in a confined position surrounded by extensive construction, makes for a very complex project. Their answer for a mixture of permanent structure, woodland planting and topiary which helps with the deep shade, with bulbs and herbaceous plants adding colour which can be changed seasonally.

Our thanks go to Nick for an exceptionally interesting trip.



Some of the 85 wisterias at 120 Fenchurch Street.



Head Gardener at Exchange Square Tizianna Lia (showing us the tools she uses) came through the Future Gardeners scheme.



There is space for wildlife and people at Jubilee gardens.



The newly opened Jubilee Gardens in Houndsditch.



The Company group with Alex Piddington-Bishop from City Open Spaces.



Permanent structure, topiary and seasonal colour at the Drapers' Hall.



Plane trees at Finsbury Circus.

COMPANY CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE

A special evening of worship, song and friendship at St Giles' Cripplegate

It was a brisk winter's evening in mid December when we entered St. Giles' Cripplegate for the annual Christmas Carol Service writes Jon Adams.

Special atmosphere

Once through the doors, we were met with a warm glow from the amazing display of candles which created a wonderful atmosphere of peace. We were greeted by members of the Court alongside many friends from the Company and their guests.

The music

As the service started the lights were dimmed, leaving just the candles flickering as the choir walked up the aisle holding more candles as they sang that wonderful carol 'Once in Royal David's City'. The Choir of St Giles' of Cripplegate was outstanding, adding their voices to the beautiful organ

music played by Elizabeth Day which resounded around the ancient church generating a spiritually atmospheric and quite moving scene. All working under the Musical Director, Anne Marsden Thomas MBE. The music being a great personal favourite with my wife Christine and myself.

The readings

The readings were spoken by our Honorary Almoner SPM Tom Gough, Honorary Chaplain The Revd Canon Jack Noble, the Clerk Dr Christine Rigden, the Spadebearer, Jonathan Matheson, the Renter Warden, Bob Iveson, the Upper Warden David Balfour and finally the Master Alderman Robert Howard. Their words were spoken with true feeling and poignancy. We were also given some enlightening thoughts in The Revd. Canon Jack Noble's excellent sermon.

Musical finale

The final carol was a superb rendition of 'O Come, All Ye Faithful', also known by its original title 'Adeste Fideles', with the wonderful choir adding their descants to the resounding sound of that wondrous organ, making such a marvellous fitting finish to the service. After the blessing from the Revd Canon, we were privileged to hear the organist Elizabeth Day play Carson Cooman's 'Fantasy on Adeste Fideles'.

Drinks, nibbles and chat

Once the music had finished we were treated to wine, fizz and soft drinks plus delicious canapés made by members of the company, while having a good chat with fellow members and their guests. The whole evening summed up The Gardeners' for me: friendship, fellowship and tradition. We look forward to next year's service.



The procession, led by the Spadebearer moves up the aisle.



The congregation is seated and ready for the service.

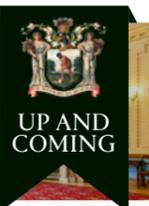


The Honorary Chaplain The Revd Canon Jack Noble delivers an inspiring sermon.



The Master, Alderman Robert Howard gives his reading.

SPRING LUNCH - TUESDAY 21ST APRIL
Held at Stationers' Hall. Pre-lunch drinks in their garden (weather permitting) Business attire.



THE MANSION HOUSE BANQUET 2026

Another fabulous night at The City's most prestigious venue writes John Michaelson

Few buildings announce themselves quite like the Mansion House. Completed in 1752 to the designs of George Dance the Elder, its Palladian portico has graced the heart of the City for nearly three centuries – a monument to civic ambition, if not, as Sir John Summerson once tartly observed, to universal good taste. The Egyptian Hall, where we dined, owes its name not to anything pharaonic but to a passage in Vitruvius – the sort of etymological detour only the City could carry off. Its imposing columns rise to a gallery, and the effect, by candlelight, is theatre.

Entering the Egyptian Hall

Guests were received in the Salon, that glittering room of crystal chandeliers. The Master, Alderman Robert Howard, led the procession into the Egyptian Hall, escorting our principal guest The Lord Gove PC and Alderman & Sheriff Robert Hughes-Penney representing the Lady Mayor. The Revd Canon Jack Noble, our Honorary Chaplain, launched proceedings with a prayer – always a wise precaution before a gathering of gardeners.

A fine repast

The dinner was superb. Chalk Stream Trout Pastrami. Seared Venison Loin – hearty enough for a late pruning session. Poached Winter Fruits and then a surprise: Whipped Ricotta drizzled with the Lady Mayor's own Mansion House Honey – proof the bees of the City are doing their bit. The Post Horn Gallop from Royal Marine trumpeters roused any who had been over-attentive to the Sauternes.

Welcoming the guests

Once Grace had been sung, the Master proposed the Loyal Toasts. After the loyal toasts, the Upper Warden welcomed the guests including: Alderman & Sheriff Robert Hughes-Penney representing the Lady Mayor and his wife Elspeth; Sheriff and Deputy Keith Bottomley and his husband Kevin; Dr Linda Yueh, chair designate of the Royal Parks; the Deacon of The Incorporation of Gardeners of Glasgow, Comd Nick Barton RN, with the Deacon's Lassie, and his Clerk, David Syme; and Marc Pietro Buonfrate, Master of the Zunft zu Gärtnern Basel, and his Clerk, Florian Schär. Between Glasgow and Basel, the fellowship of

gardeners has never much troubled itself with borders.

Alderman & Sheriff Hughes-Penney responded on behalf of the Lady Mayor

"It is *blooming marvellous* to have you here," he declared – earning the groan it deserved and the applause it merited. He noted the 11,000 acres the Corporation manages – a resource for sustainability biodiversity and quality of life and presented two gifts: a Mayoral Spoon for the Clerk, and for the Master, a glass paperweight with stone from the Whispering Gallery of St Paul's, and material gathered on the Thames foreshore – Representatives of the City, and mercifully low-maintenance.

The Master's Speech

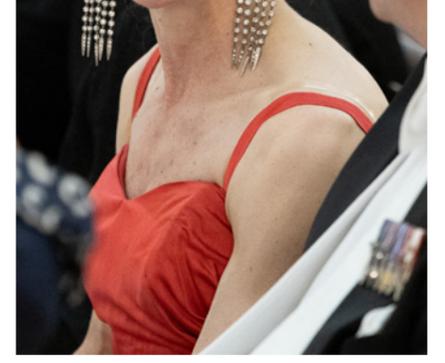
The Master thanked all for braving the wet, windy weather. He observed that ours is one of the few livery companies whose trade is not merely historic but thoroughly alive. He welcomed Fran Barnes of the Horticultural Trades Association, Kate Ebbens of GIMA, and Emily Brennan, the Corporation's Director of the Natural Environment. The Master spoke of the Company's three pillars. On fellowship: he proudly noted fifty new members this year – nearly half present at dinner – thanks to the tireless efforts of the Membership Secretary Lucy Van Liew. On the trade and crafts: the Schools Initiative, the Guild apprentices programme with The Royal Parks Guild, City & Guilds and Capital City College, and the Discovery Day. On charity: The Livery Climate Action Group, Pollinating London and our Flowers in the City campaign.

As well as grants to the Whittington Hospital for a therapeutic garden, Great Places in Berkshire, City Harvest London, Spindling the Harvest, and the Lady Mayor's Appeal.

The Lord Gove, responded on behalf of the guests

Lord Gove thanked the Clerk, the Beadle and the Mansion House staff before confessing that while he had got his hands dirty, it was in attempting to shimmy up the greasy pole in politics, not in cultivating the soil. Lord Gove then exhibited his customary wit, erudition, and an appreciation for the noble profession of gardening he claimed to have developed while Secretary of State for the Environment. He said: "*Our national history is shaped by gardens. Whether it's the poetry of Milton or Marvell, whether it's in music, whether it's the way the very columns of this Mansion echo the beauty and symmetry of that which we cultivate in our national imagination – gardens are woven into the fabric of British identity.*" This led to his most substantive point: we must develop new plants, crops and seeds more resilient, less dependent on fertiliser and pesticide, and yielding more than ever – and Britain is leading the way. Maintaining that edge will depend on horticulturalists, who have a special role in making sure the future is prosperous. It was a notably well-rooted argument to send us home thinking more grandly about what we do. Lord Gove finished with the traditional toast to the Company and the Master, bringing a splendid evening to its close.





THE GARDENERS' CHARTER: WHY 1605

Georgina Craufurd, Hon. Archivist, explains how the massive expansion of Tudor London and Spanish persecution of the Dutch hastened the creation of our Charter

Dan Cruickshank the historian described Tudor London as 'a tale of two cities'. It expanded in the later 16th century to more than twice its previous size, and increased from 50,000 to 500,000 people by 1700. However, after series of bad harvests in the late 16th century there was not enough corn for bread, and poorer Londoners were starving. Nor were there enough vegetables to make up the difference. Stowe's survey of London in 1598 showed how the City of London still was concentrated in its old boundaries, starting just east of the Royal Courts of Justice. West of this, there were some aristocratic residences by the Thames (such as Somerset House, the old Savoy Palace, and Arundel House), but nothing had been built north of The Strand – an old word for a beach, as it was the beach which bordered the river.

The answer to our food shortage arrived with thirty thousand Dutch protestant refugees fleeing Spanish persecution in the later 16th century. They brought the secret of forcing vegetables by making hotbeds with a layer of heat-producing manure under the top-soil; as a result, a small area of land could produce a much larger crop, and more than one crop a year.

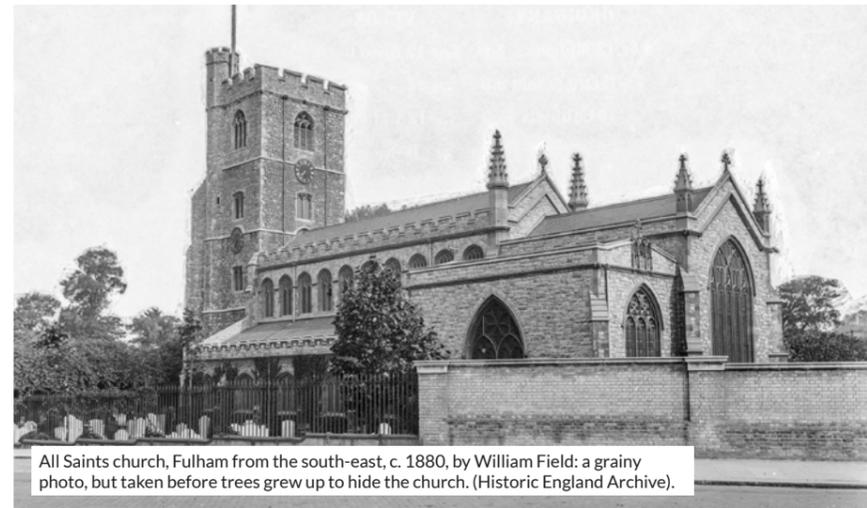
The Charter
James I's charter of 1605 (which is in English, with a few Scots words like 'wiss' for 'know') allowed members of The Gardeners' Company to grow vegetables in open fields close to the City, including Southwark ('the Las Vegas of Tudor London') and Westminster Abbey's old convent garden north of the Strand (hence Covent Garden), and to sell them there and in the City. The Charter (replaced in 1616) described our activities as "The trade, craft or misterie of gardening, planting, grafting, setting, sowing, cutting, arboring, rocking, mounting, covering, fencing and removing of plants, herbes, seedes, fruites, trees, stocks, setts, and of contriving the conveyances to the same belonging..."

The Gardeners' produce
It is possible that James may have taken the fashion for eating vegetables from Scotland's age-old connection with the French, and that he had brought

it to England with him. New produce included orange carrots which the Dutch developed by crossing the original grey and yellow ones. Certain areas specialised in certain produce; Battersea, Barnes and Mortlake grew Asparagus (known as sparrow-grass), Fulham parsnips, and Hackney grew turnips, to name a few. (Or were they Swedish turnips? i.e. swedes, Rutabaga napus, a hybrid between a cabbage and a turnip which was noted in 1620.)

Nor should we forget the importance to customers (and financially to our Freemen!) of herbs, including chamomile and mint, and sweet-smelling flowers. Mitcham for centuries was known particularly for lavender; in fact, it is mentioned in the records of nearby Merton Priory in 1301. Lavender was important not only to guard against diseases, but also to keep moths away from both clothes and woollen carpets. (It was swept across the carpet and back each day, leaving a residue of lavender oil.) The nearby river Wandle would have taken cargoes of both flowers and oil down to the Thames.

The Company continues to grow
Meanwhile members of the newly-chartered Gardeners' Company thrived. Joint research into graves in the churchyard of All Saints, Fulham (right next to the Thames), has shown that a large number of Freemen of the Company lived in Fulham and were buried there from the early 17th century onwards; some belonged to dynasties over many decades.

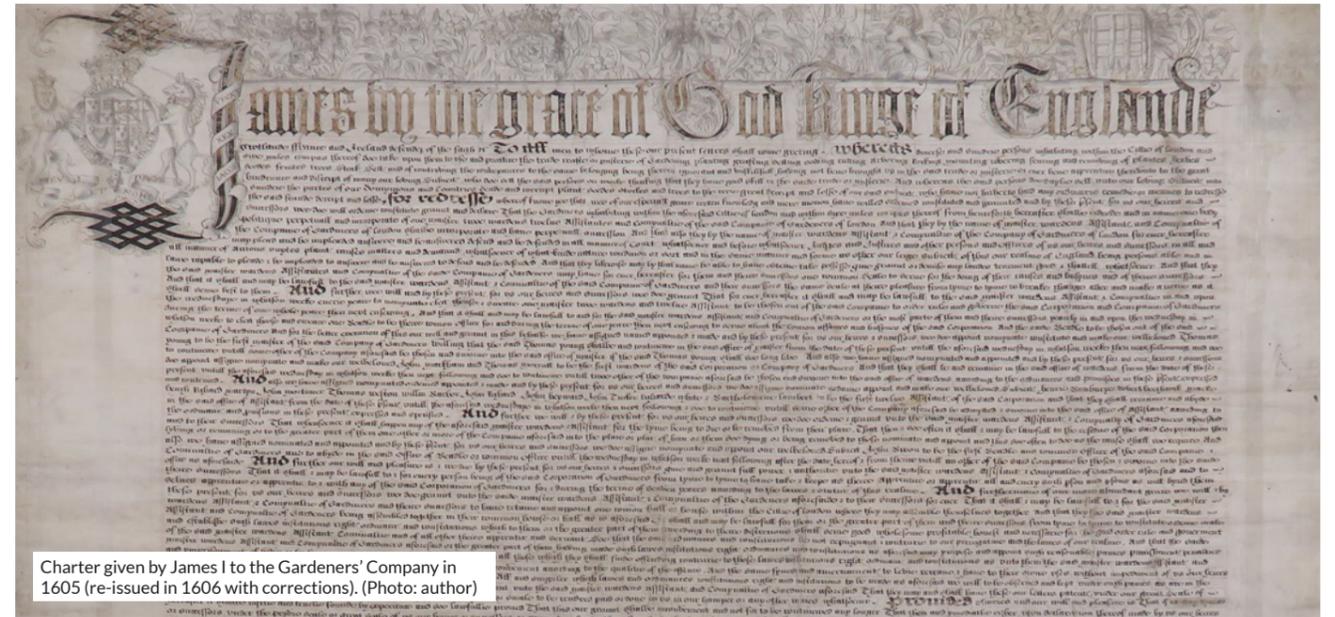


All Saints church, Fulham from the south-east, c. 1880, by William Field: a grainy photo, but taken before trees grew up to hide the church. (Historic England Archive).

Others were nationally known, for instance George London who (with Robert Wise) founded the Brompton Park Nursery in 1681, and who supplied plans, plants and trees to numerous designed landscapes, for instance at Kensington Palace (since then re-designed). Other areas next to the Thames were made productive, such as Chelsea, Southwark, Barnes and Mortlake. The last was almost completely given over to market gardens in 1838, and both it and Barnes continued to produce for the London markets into the 1920s, until the land was built over.

Covent Garden
Covent Garden was developed in 1631 as a square by the Earl of Bedford for smart town houses for aristocratic and gentry families who wanted to follow the new fashion and spend the summer socialising in London; but the fruit and vegetable market still remained. These families (not just heads of family or MPs) wanted new, exotic, or out-of-season produce for entertaining each other, and they could get this in the market, which was usefully close to the Thames.

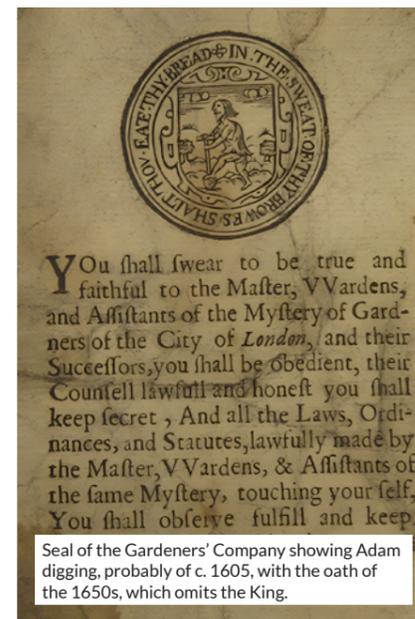
By 1640 London was 20 times larger than any other English city. This expansion over time finished by connecting the cities of London and Westminster. Our records show how the membership of the Gardeners' Company expanded over this period, and into the 18th century; it was definitely a boom time up till then for the company.



Charter given by James I to the Gardeners' Company in 1605 (re-issued in 1606 with corrections). (Photo: author)



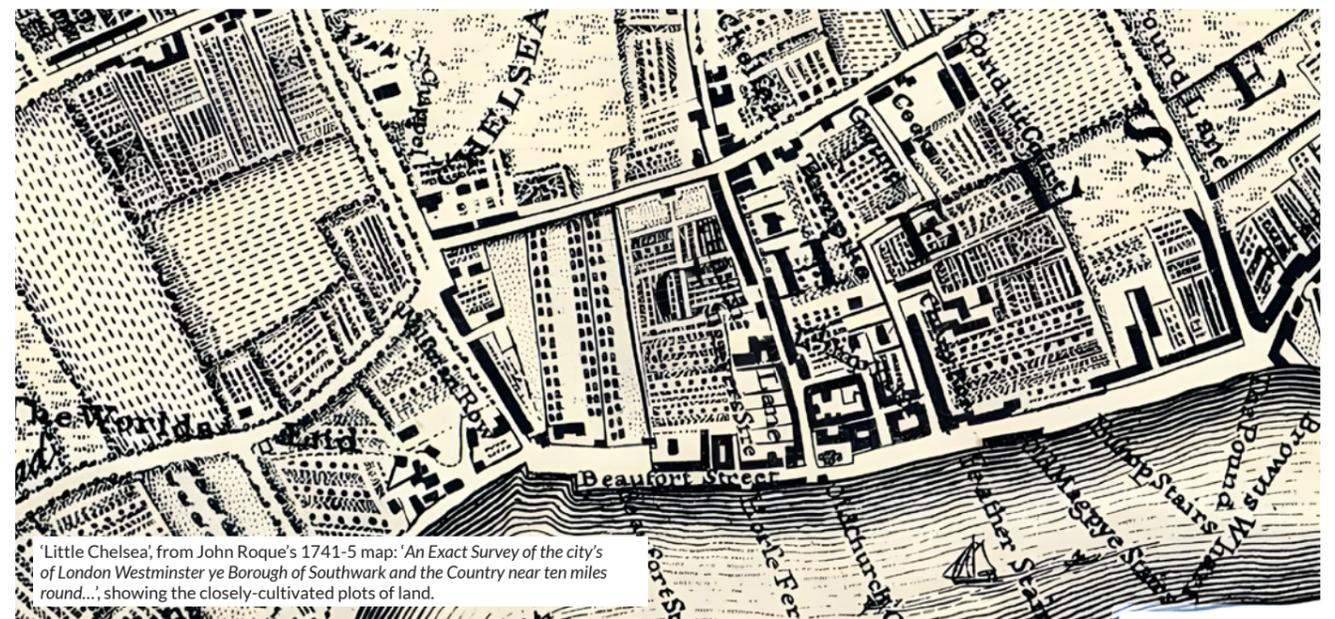
Portrait of James I by John de Critz, himself a Flemish immigrant, from around 1605 (Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London).



Seal of the Gardeners' Company showing Adam digging, probably of c. 1605, with the oath of the 1650s, which omits the King.



Clandestine woodcut encouraging Dutch Protestants to flee persecution, late 16th century.



'Little Chelsea', from John Roque's 1741-5 map: 'An Exact Survey of the city of London Westminster ye Borough of Southwark and the Country near ten miles round...', showing the closely-cultivated plots of land.

VISIT TO HOWBURY HALL

Members get the opportunity to learn the art and craft of floral arranging and table scaping at the School of Sustainable Floristry, writes Victoria Inglis

On a beautiful sunny autumn day in early October we arrived at Howbury Hall to be greeted by our lovely hosts Lucy Copeman and her partner WCOG Liveryman Julian Polhill, owners of Howbury Hall.

School of floristry

Lucy established Howbury Farm Flowers 14 years ago and co-founded The School of Sustainable Floristry in 2021, where the ethos is to always use local British seasonal flowers. We were joined by Lucy's co-founder Cissy Bullock and Lucy was also accompanied by her dog Daisy!

Introductory talk

We started the day with a hugely informative talk. Lucy explained how and why she created her flower farm and how it has evolved to rotational seed planting throughout the year with as much interest in the foliage as the flowers. Lucy is part of Flowers From the Farm, an organisation which stretches across the country to provide and encourage people to use flowers in season throughout the year.

Using local produce

Both Lucy and Cissy were keen to reinforce how important it is to use locally grown flowers that have a strong scent, are authentic and fresh and open properly. By contrast cut flowers from abroad can be dropped in silver nitrate to prolong their short life but it shocks them and they do not open nor have much scent. Cissy says she can always make wonderful bouquets and arrangements throughout the year with seasonal flowers, even in February!

Frogs or foam?

Cissy told us how she never uses oasis floral foam as it is much more sustainable using flower frogs. To illustrate full sustainability in arrangements she told us that to create a funeral spray they bind moss on twigs with straw which is all fully compostable. She also uses vegetable leaves, for example asparagus and rhubarb leaves, as well as grasses such as *Panicum virgatum*, which self sows prolifically, for contrast.

Walled garden and flower farm

We then had a wonderful tour of the

impressive large walled garden which is divided into two areas: the Vegetable Garden and the Flower Farm. Lucy has glass greenhouses all along the south facing wall as well as some poly tunnels.

Annuals

There are masses of annuals sown in these poly tunnels. She sows three times a year; October, February and May; so she always has a continuous supply of plants: *Cosmos bipinnatus* 'Apricot Lemonade' is a current favourite which has a long flowering season; *Ammi majus* and *visnaga*, *Antirrhinums*; *Centaurea cyanus*; *Phlox drummondii* and *Cerinthe major* are among others. With weddings in mind Lucy is growing *Scabiosa caucasica*, "Fama White" and *Scabiosa caucasica*, "White Perfection". In winter these seedlings are watered every three days, in summer every day.

Perennials

Lucy grows a lot of different seasonal plants in her beds: *Anemones*, *Tulips*, *Ranunculus* and *Alliums* as well as a variety of different texture contrast plants like *Eryngiums* and *Veronicastrums*. With climate change Lucy is adapting and planting perennials such as *Geums*, and *Alchemilla mollis*.

Delightful dahlias

On top of this Lucy estimates that she grows 120 different varieties of *Dahlias*. She grows a variety of flower head shapes including waterlily, collarette, single petaled and pompom. Wedding favourites are the peach sunset tones;

especially varieties 'Night Silence', 'Perch Hill', 'Salmon Runner' and 'Carmel Antique'.

Dahlia maintenance

Lucy lifts half her *dahlias* each year in annual rotation to dry out and store and then splits the tubers in the Spring to plant out again. She says if you leave *dahlias* in the ground in perpetuity the tubers get too big and the flowers get smaller. She uses a slow release fertiliser once a month in the growing season. She found the best mulch over winter is woodchip which she recycles after by moving it onto the paths as a weed suppressant. She has to start irrigating the plants now in April.

Table scaping

Meanwhile Cissy had been gathering produce from the garden to 'table scape' our lunch table. She had placed small glass vases along the length of the table and interspersed them with groups of quinces and small apples, some still attached to twig branches with leaves. While we watched, she arranged different sized blush coloured *dahlias* with small asters and grasses in the vases. The whole effect was stunning.

Thank you

We had the most wonderful day, a delicious lunch and the weather shone down on us. We left totally inspired. A huge thank you to Lucy, Cissy and the Howbury Hall team.

CISSY'S TIPS FOR FLOWER ARRANGING

- You need three principal flowers: the bride, the bridesmaid and the gate crasher!
- No flower should be pointing in the same direction
- Start the arrangement making a V shape as a frame with your flowers
- Place a single large flower head lower down centrally to anchor the arrangement
- Different texture foliage are key to compliment the flowers



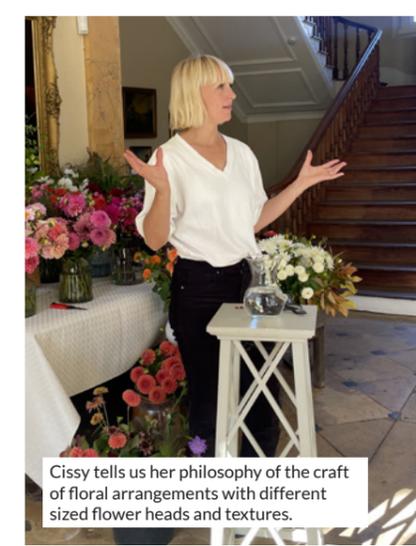
The Gardeners' proudly display their floral creations at the entrance to Howbury Hall.



Cissy demonstrates how to do a 'table scape'.



Flower selection for gardeners to arrange



Cissy tells us her philosophy of the craft of floral arrangements with different sized flower heads and textures.



A view of some of the wonderful collections of Dahlias in the walled garden.



The Gardeners' arrangements in the Hall.



The Spadebearer Jonathan Matheson, on behalf of The Master, presents Lucy Copeman with the WCOG Livery Shield as a thank you.



ASCOT & BAGSHOT PARK - TUESDAY 5TH MAY
A visit to Ascot Racecourse, followed by a tour of Bagshot Park, home of Past Master HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.

BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME

Next year will see the centenary of the National Garden Scheme. Gillian Taylor traces the roots of the 'Yellow Book' and how it has become an national treasure

The National Garden Scheme (NGS) gives visitors access to over 3,500 gardens in England, Wales, N Ireland and the Channel Islands. Next year it will be celebrating its centenary and thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers and visitors has raised over £74 million. Many of us will have seen the yellow signs persuading us to make a detour to visit a new garden, but how did the scheme start?

Enter Florence Nightingale

In 1859 William Rathbone, a wealthy merchant from Liverpool worked with Florence Nightingale to develop a fledgling District Nurse service. This provided patient care in the home and was expanded in 1887 to become the Queens Nursing Institute (QNI). In 1926 a member of the council, Miss

Elsie Wagg, had the idea of raising funds using the nation's obsession with gardening. She persuaded garden owners to open usually private locations and to charge a shilling a head. A year later the NGS was formed and almost 600 gardens signed up.

The 'Shillingses'

By 1930 around 900 gardens were involved including Sissinghurst Castle, where Vita Sackville-West gave the public the nickname of 'shillingses'. The famous Yellow Book appeared in 1949 and in 1980 the NGS became independent from the QNI resulting in the funding of a wider range of charitable ventures.

Royal patronage

His Majesty the King, initially as the

Prince of Wales, has been Patron of the NGS since 2002. Core health related recipients now include MacMillan Cancer Research, Marie Curie, Parkinsons UK and Hospice UK. The scheme also started to support horticulture and garden related projects, with Perennial becoming a regular beneficiary. Perennial has been a partner with the NGS for 40 years and over that time has received £4.5million. Grants are also given to Community Garden Projects nationwide. In 2016 Mary Berry was appointed President.

A team effort

Opening your garden for the NGS is very much a team effort and although hard work, is extremely rewarding. Volunteers on the car park and gate, cake bakers, and tea and plant stall

minders are key to the success of the opening. So why do owners sign up with the NGS?

Call of the bluebells

I spoke to Liverymen Barbara Jeremiah and Jill Ede who have been opening their gardens for charity for many years. At Brick Kiln Cottage Barbara has created a beautiful wildlife haven. She and her partner Kay Linell had not planned to move to Hampshire 33 years ago but: "We saw the bluebells and never left". In 2002 they were delighted to receive an award from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust in recognition of their approach to conservation and wildlife gardening. Opening the garden gives the opportunity to raise funds for good causes, to share their love of gardening and to inform visitors about the benefits of sustainable horticulture.

Many visitors

The once neglected woodland is now restored, and the cottage garden is alive with colour and texture. An

average open afternoon will welcome 250 visitors, many of whom come back every year to share the pleasure of looking at plants and talking to likeminded individuals. Volunteers range from a High Court Judge to members of the local garden club. A recent venture is an educational area for children to encourage interest in birds, bugs and of course plants.

20 years of openings

Jill Ede at Old Thatch, a chocolate box thatched cottage, has been opening for nearly 20 years, on average three times a year. Her parents introduced her to the concept of garden visiting as a child. She saw visiting NGS gardens as a natural progression and a great way to see which plants thrive in the area. Opening for both charitable and personal reasons Jill enjoys exchanging tales of woe and success with the visitors. Entrance money is given to the NGS, while refreshment proceeds support a local charity.

In 2025 the NGS appointed a new

HORTICULTURE



President to take over the reins from Mary Berry, one of our Company, Alan Titchmarsh CBE VMH, seen together (at the bottom of the page) at RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Alan told me: "I'm absolutely delighted to have become President.....I was aware of the NGS as a boy growing up in Yorkshire and to be able to do my bit for an organisation that encourages gardeners to share their passion and their beautiful patches of earth is a real treat and a great honour"

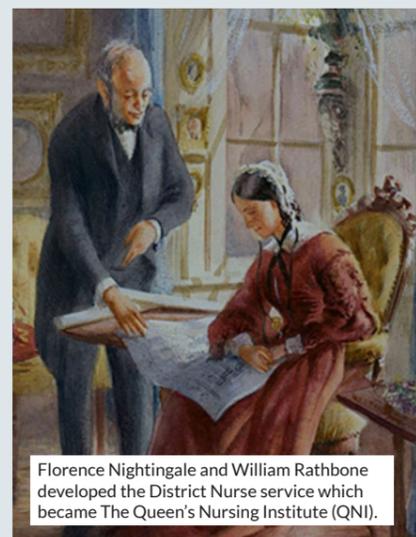
Why not get involved?

If you would like to get involved then why not visit an NGS garden this year, talk to the owner and the volunteers or visit the NGS website. Practical matters to consider before taking the plunge might be parking provision, cake suppliers and the question of a 'loo'!

I am sure Barbara and Jill will be happy to give advice and to welcome you to the NGS team. www.ngs.org.uk



The bluebell wood at Brick Kiln that so captured Barbara and Kay can be enjoyed by NGS visitors.



Florence Nightingale and William Rathbone developed the District Nurse service which became The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI).



Old Thatch during one of its three annual openings.



QNI Nurse on motorbike circa 1926.



In 1926 Miss Elsie Wagg, a council member of the QNI came up with the idea of generating income through opening gardens for visitors, which would become the NGS.



Brick Kiln Cottage garden.



Queen Victoria and Queen's Nurses.



Alan picked up the reins of NGS from Mary Berry at Chelsea in 2025.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

People sometimes ask how we decide which applications to support, particularly for our smaller grants. Reliant as we are on the donations to the Charity by members of the Company, we have relatively modest sums to give and choices have to be made. Our aim is to focus on our roots as gardeners, directing our grant giving to activities using or associated with horticulture where we can make an active difference.

Each month - August and December excepted - all the charity's trustees individually consider applications for small grants, those under £1500. Sometimes further information or discussion takes place by email before each trustee indicates their support, or not, for the request. Usually there is a high degree of consensus; it's rare for

there to be a split vote. This email-based process means that we can turn round applications quickly, which is particularly helpful for smaller organisations.

It helps when we consider applications to know if any of our livery members are involved personally. The application form asks about this. If a good cause which you know is thinking of making an application, do encourage them to do so. The application does not need to be lengthy; it just needs to focus clearly on what the money is going to be used for in practical, down-to-earth detail.

The report on the Fifth Trust sensory garden (see following pages) shows how a small grant makes a difference. Our £800 grant for plants

complemented income from other sources, and the hard work of staff and students themselves, to make a restful and tranquil garden to people whose disabilities makes them most in need of the benefits that such gardens can bring.



PROTECTING BIOSECURITY AT CHELSEA

In June 2025, the Worshipful Company of Gardeners of London Charity awarded the Chelsea Physic Garden a grant of £3,500

The grant was to support the purchase of new PPE, uniform, and equipment to enable their volunteers to work safely at the Garden. The grant is ensuring that opportunities to volunteer at the Garden are accessible, while also protecting the biosecurity of their plant collection.

Grant Outcomes
Jennifer Dyer, Chelsea Physic's Fundraising Manager explains: "Thanks to our grant we were able to fit out a storage shed and purchase over 40 pairs of boots and 100 work shirts in various sizes, utilising over 70% of our grant. The remainder of our grant will be spent down in the Spring, once volunteers return to the Garden and we can identify what PPE and equipment is still required. The purchased PPE was made available to volunteers by 01 September 2025, since then our horticultural and community gardening volunteers have logged 1,650 voluntary hours, equating to over £35,350 of gifted time."

Micro volunteering
"In addition to regular volunteering, we are now able to offer more micro volunteering opportunities. The first of which was a 'Bulbathon' planting day in late September. Thanks to a legacy, we purchased 7,500

spring bulbs. We recruited twenty-five volunteers to help us plant them, all of whom were outfitted with boots thanks to our Worshipful Company of Gardeners' grant. They logged over 110 hours of gifted time to the Garden, the fruits of which will be seen in the spring, when a variety of corms, tubers, and bulbs bloom in beautiful spring colour."

Protecting biosecurity
"As well as supporting accessible volunteering, the provision of boots and PPE ensures that we can protect the biosecurity of our plant collection from external pests and soil pathogens. We are pleased to report that the provision of boots to volunteers formed an

important part of our biosecurity policy, which was then submitted as part of our successful Botanic Garden Conservation International accreditation application."

Max Levy, Volunteer Manager at Chelsea Physic Garden said: "The grant has been incredibly helpful to us. We have been able to remove two large financial barriers to horticultural volunteering: the purchase of boots and shirts. This has enabled us to offer volunteering opportunities to a wider range of people. Providing our own equipment to volunteers has also enabled us to maintain stricter biosecurity on site - crucial to the survival of our collection and our BGCI accreditation."



Chelsea Physic volunteers enjoy a group photo after having completed the Bulbathon in late September.

BLOOMING-UP HOMERTON



In May 2025 the Worshipful Company of Gardeners granted £6,000 over two years to the Core Arts Community Garden project

Giuliana Molinari of Core Arts, the charity behind the 'Blooming-Up Homerton' project, explains: "The aim of the grant is to employ a gardener to train excluded adults in the local community suffering severe mental ill-health to maintain/improve our community garden in Hackney."

Horticultural workshops
Mollinari continues: "Using horticultural workshops we use gardening to address both the crisis in mental health and the biodiversity emergency creating inclusive 'green' educational opportunities in the horticultural sector. Access to therapeutic gardening sessions for those with severe mental ill-health with wrap-around support is limited in London and the project is addressing this. Our green spaces are helping mental ill-health from reoccurring as well as addressing the physical health of our participants through gentle exercise while gardening. And at the same time creating and maintaining a community garden for the inner city."

Addressing mental ill-health
"We teach horticultural skills to people who experience severe mental-health issues including Bi-Polar, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Personality Disorder, anxiety, depression, isolation, and suicidal ideation referred to us through health and social care professionals. Across the wider community we work with adults of all ages, cultures and backgrounds, 50% are older people experiencing social isolation."

Expected outcomes
Development of public-facing beautiful flower borders that incorporate habitats to inspire conversation and change public attitudes towards the natural environment for the better, combining traditional gardening aesthetics, wild plants and crafted organic habitats. The project will provide release from mental distress with mindful gardening and improve the lives of 50-plus adults experiencing mental ill health, or other people who experience stigma, marginalisation, isolation and/or disadvantage, will

be improved through increased self-confidence, social inclusion, better access to growing spaces, and by developing a sense of purpose through eco-friendly gardening workshops and events.

- OPPORTUNITIES FOR BPOC**
- 70% of Core Arts beneficiaries are Black and People of Colour (BPOC) who are less likely to be offered alternative therapies.
 - Currently there is a lack of diversity in the horticulture sector due to limited entry points, affordable horticultural education, and awareness of job opportunities.
 - 85% of our participants are accessing gardening opportunities for the first time.



70% of the beneficiaries are black and people of colour as well as disabled.



The grant allows Core Arts to employ a specialist Gardener to run the community work.



Gardening is an important activity for those who have little or no access to green spaces.



It brings people of different backgrounds together through working as a team.

FIFTH TRUST SENSORY GARDEN PROJECT

In 2023 The Worshipful Company of Gardeners of London Charity granted £800 to purchase plants to help adults with learning disabilities

The Fifth Trust is an award-winning charity that supports adults with learning disabilities from the age of 16. They offer 20 different activities to 170 students across two skills centres, based in the beautiful Elham Valley near Canterbury, Kent.

Creating tranquil spaces

The aim was to create restful, tranquil spaces with assorted colours, textures and scents for the students to explore. As well as helping students on the autism spectrum to calm and focus themselves, multi-sensory gardens have shown to benefit people with ADHD, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, and developmental challenges in a safe and stimulating environment. The garden was to be designed, planted and maintained by service users (students) taking part in horticulture sessions.

Timeline and dedications

Mick James of Fifth Trust explains: "The project went ahead in March 2024 and by the end of June we had completed the three garden areas. At this stage we made the decision to dedicate the gardens to the memory of two of our students: Ian Sayle and Susie Gurney, who sadly passed away last year and planned to combine the opening of the gardens with a celebration of their lives. Our horticultural staff then

got to work on the designs for the gardens and began ordering the plants we needed. Meanwhile, the seating we purchased allowed students and staff to enjoy their lunch al fresco while others took the opportunity to use the area for a game of boules!"

Touch, sight and smell

"During July and August, our students planted a variety of flowers, shrubs and trees. By early September, the three garden areas were completed, with each offering a unique sensory experience. The garden in memory of Susie Gurney incorporates touch, sight, and smell. For example, the different plants and grasses add both tactile and auditory elements, each feeling different to the touch, with the rustling sound they make in the wind being wonderfully relaxing."

Calm water feature

"The garden in memory of Ian Sayles invites students to sit and calm themselves, complete with a water feature and beautiful greenery. A final shaded area with a circular bench provides a quiet spot for rest under our sail, donated by Roger Davies Jones Trust in 2023. Our art students added a nice final touch by painting some ceramic toadstools to be 'planted' around the gardens."

Learning for horticulture students

"Moving forward, the sensory gardens will provide continual learning opportunities for our horticulture students. As well as helping with its ongoing maintenance there will be seasonal changes, with some plants being exchanged for others and endless scope for experimenting with different colours, textures and aromas. There are also plans for our art students to paint murals on the side of the raised planters."

Thank you

"Many thanks to The Worshipful Company of Gardeners for your generous donations which allowed us to complete this exciting project."



Outdoor seating and shade canopies allow comfort while patients enjoy the sensory garden.

LAUNCH OF NEW STUDENT BURSARY

The Worshipful Company of Gardeners granted £5,000 as a bursary for a garden design diploma student at West Dean College for 2026 and 2027

Setting up a career

The course is designed to prepare students for careers in the garden design industry, the course follows the growing year, combining practical hard landscaping, gardening skills, plant science and creative design principles with additional study required each week.

The recipient of this year's award

Heidi Hennessy for West Dean College was recently able to announce the name of the first recipient of what is called The Worshipful Company of

Gardeners of London Bursary:

"Charlie White, who has accepted their place to study on our Diploma In Garden Design starting January 2026, is our selected candidate. Charlie scored highest against the application criteria: must be a UK national; demonstrate the need for financial support, potential and a career in the industry. A report from Charlie and lead tutor, Humaira Ikram, will be shared with the Company in June and a final report in December."

Charlie White is the first recipient of the new Worshipful Company of Gardeners Bursary at West Dean College.



TRAINING DAY SUCCESS

CHARITY



In 2025 The Worshipful Company of Gardeners granted £1500 to The Gardens Trust to fund a Research and Recording Training Day

Background

The Gardens Trust (GT) is a national charity dedicated to protecting and conserving the heritage of historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes. They campaign on their behalf, undertake research and conservation work, and encourage public appreciation and involvement.

In-person support

Tara Tanjga of GT explained: "The Worshipful Company of Gardeners generous grant enabled us to take our research and recording training on the road and provide in-person support to County Gardens Trusts (CGT). We invited applications from CGTs, whose research groups would benefit from training and from engaging new volunteers."

First session

Sessions were awarded to Avon & Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Northamptonshire Gardens Trusts. The first training day was delivered on 18 November 2025, hosted by Oxfordshire Gardens Trust (OGT) at Banbury Museum, followed by a site visit to the historic People's Park.

Overview of the Day

Tara Tanjga continued: "Our Project Volunteer Support Officer, Sally Bate, led a full and engaging workshop for 15 participants, all of whom were new to garden history research. The morning introduced attendees to key historic sources and research techniques, enabling them to begin piecing together the development of People's Park. In the afternoon, the group explored the park in person to compare their findings with surviving features on site. By the end of the session, eight participants had already committed to joining OGT's research group, with further interest anticipated."

Participant Feedback

Feedback from attendees was extremely positive. Comments included:

- "Congrats to all for putting together an interesting and rewarding day."
- "A really exciting possibility for personal development."
- "Your day was absolutely brilliant, helping us get off to a good start."

This enthusiastic response reflects both the value of hands-on training and importantly its impact in strengthening volunteer engagement.

Oxford Gardens Trust's Plans

OGT intends to run a 12-month pilot project to research 6–12 unregistered sites from its Gazetteer. This will involve desktop research, site recording, and testing a streamlined recording method. Regular sessions will provide training, feedback, and opportunities for volunteers to share progress.

Conclusion

Tara Tanjga concluded: "The Banbury training day was a highly successful start to this programme of regional research workshops. The support of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners has directly enabled us to grow local volunteer capacity, inspire new interest in garden history, and strengthen OGT's ability to research and record vulnerable landscapes. We are delighted with the outcomes of this first session and look forward to delivering the remaining workshops in Bristol and Northamptonshire in 2026."



Project Volunteer Support Officer, Sally Bate, led a full and engaging workshop for 15 participants, all of whom were new to garden history research.



The morning session introduced attendees to key historic sources and research techniques.



In the afternoon, the group explored the park in person to compare their findings with surviving features on site.



By the end of the session, eight participants had already committed to joining OGT's research group.

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