



Picture provided by
Helyn Jacobs

Season's Greetings

Welcome to the latest edition of our gardening newsletter.

With spooky goings on, bonfires and whizzbangs out of the way, we have begun heading towards Christmas and Midwinter. It's a time to cosy up in your favourite jammies with a hot chocolate and start to get through that long list of books you have been meaning to read all year.*

If you are anything like me, you will now be pouring through seed catalogues to find the perfect variety of sweetpeas, cucumbers or tomatoes for what I am sure will be a long hot summer next year (ahem). This year seems to have been a year of extremes, with periods of unseasonably warm weather early on, prolonged showers in March and April, hot and dry conditions, at times, in the summer months, and a very wet and stormy October. These conditions have meant that plants are very confused about what season they are in. My pear tree produced a second flowering long after any new pears would be viable, and I had strawberries and roses right through until the end of October. Here's hoping for some fine, dry and stable dry weather ahead!

Here's hoping you and your loved ones have a jolly and peaceful time over Christmas, Yule and Midwinter, however you choose to celebrate.

Best Wishes from Jeff Miur and everyone at Age UK Cornwall.

*P.S. - Thinking of reading. I can thoroughly recommend BorrowBox, a free eBook and eAudio book service from Cornwall Libraries. Contact your local library for more details.

Winter Tips for your Garden

Treasure Fallen Leaves

With wind whipping through the trees and frost an ever-present danger, our lawns will be covered in wet, slippery leaves. Whilst this may look pretty, a thick layer of wet leaves will block out both light and air and can do a great deal of damage to a lawn.

It is a good idea to rake up all the leaves (better still, get your Age UK gardener to do it for you). Any collected leaves are best stacked in wire containers to produce great leaf mould, which can be mixed with compost after a couple of years to produce a potent seed potting medium.

Alternatively, shred the leaves using your lawn mower, then add them to the compost heap. If mixed in layers with fresh green material they will produce wonderful compost.

Plant Spring Tulip Bulbs

If you haven't got around to planting your spring bulbs, it is starting to get a little late in the year for most varieties. Much depends on the weather though, and if it isn't frosty, you could take a chance and get your bulbs in if they are still sitting on your kitchen table. Tulips can be planted later and should be fine.

If you don't want to take a risk, store your unplanted bulbs in cold, dry conditions. If they are stored in damp conditions, they will rot.

Plant Garlic, Onions, and Broad Beans

Ideally, overwintering onion sets are best planted in October or November, but as with the spring bulbs, it is probably still fine to plant them out now. Around now is your last chance to plant overwintering garlic varieties. They are hardier than onions, and you may get away with it, even into December. You can plant overwintering Broad Bean varieties such as Aquadulce in November. Any later than that and it may be better to wait for Spring.

More Tips for your Garden

Pruning and hardwood cuttings

In the depth of winter is the perfect time to prune open apple and pear trees. Prune by cutting out any dead wood or vigorous shoots growing inward or those rubbing together, aiming to open up the centre of the tree into a wine goblet shape so that air can circulate well. Overall, you should trim this year's growth by about a quarter. If you take too much in one go, you may cause the tree to miss a year of fruiting. Not the end of the world if you must remove a lot of growth, but to be avoided otherwise.

Now is the perfect time to take hardwood cuttings from fruit trees and bushes. Snip off a healthy-looking piece of the fruit bush that has grown this year, at a diagonal, just below a bud. Snip off the other end just above a bud so that the cutting is about 15-30cm long. Dip the bottom end in root hormone compound and plant into well-draining compost so that about a third of the cutting is showing above the soil, keep the pot in a cold frame or up against a sheltered wall and wait until Spring! A similar procedure can be used for non-fruiting shrubs such as Buddleia and Forsythia.

Put out bird food and water

The thing about the poor birdies in the months ahead - the cold weather means there isn't much to eat and drink. Winter is the time when Robins especially comes to the forefront of our thoughts.

They follow us around the garden, whenever we are doing anything to do with the soil, in the hope that grubs will be unearthed and appear in all our Christmas cards.

Why not help them out by providing fat balls hung in trees or insect-rich bird mix on high bird tables well away from cats? Don't forget, they also need water, so a bird bath or water container near a shrub is best, so it can be approached safely, but again be wary of cats.

We hope these Hints and Tips get your Garden through Christmas and beyond - do send your Wintery pictures to lee@ageukcornwall.org.uk or jeff.muir@ageukcornwall.org.uk

Picture provided by
Lee Davies



Know your Gardeners

Jeff Muir

As Gardening Team Lead, Jeff covers a wide area of Cornwall from Penzance to Indian Queens.

What brought you to gardening, and why do you enjoy it?

My Dad used to grow veggies when I was a young boy. I guess I picked up the bug from him, though I did not realise it until many years later. He grew tomatoes in the summertime in a greenhouse he made himself. I still remember the gorgeous smell of tomatoes on the vine.

His great passion was growing show leeks. I remember the dreadful day he came in from the garden to say someone had slashed his leeks overnight to ruin his chances in the local leek show. This stuff was taken very seriously in the north!



Jeff with Mavis

What is your favourite part of the job?

I take great satisfaction in returning an overgrown garden to its original tidier state. Sometimes, life just gets in the way, and people simply don't have the time to keep up with the garden. I love working with people and getting to know their gardening priorities. I will always give people what they want if I possibly can.

Know your Gardeners

Jeff Muir

What is your favourite gardening season and why?

My favourite gardening season has to be summer when everything is growing at a fantastic rate (including the weeds sadly). There is no better feeling than watching runner beans lengthen on the vine or tomatoes swelling in the greenhouse and being able to think, 'I did that.'

What do you think about when you are mowing lawns or doing gardening?

I would like to tell you that I think about the great philosophers and how we can all live our lives to the best of our ability. But when I get home to enjoy a nice, hot cup of tea and a chocolate biscuit, it's more likely to be garden-focused, sharing that 'it looks like rain again.'

What book are you reading at the moment?

I have just finished *The Book of the Moon* by Maggie Aderin-Pocock, which I found interesting, but a bit dry. Currently, I am working my way through *The Village Carpenter* by Walter Rose. It was published in 1937 and provides a lovely glimpse into the world of a carpenter's shop from times gone by.

What is your favourite music?

I have a very eclectic taste in music, from classical and opera to Billie Holiday. At the moment, I am particularly enjoying Miles Davis.

I do like making things. So when I am not gardening, you might find me working on a woodworking project or some other crafts. I have just finished a herb drying rack made from natural wood and some hemp rope which is hanging in my kitchen.

A Special time of year

...has been my gardener since 2022. I rely on his thoughtful help and advice especially regarding the seasonal care and planting of my garden. I know him to be always reliable and his advice is invaluable.

A Message from Mavis

Mavis, who has been a client since 2022, shared this special letter with us. I think the words sum up our Service beautifully, and it is a pleasure and delight to receive similar messages from clients who continue to be supported by our wonderful Gardening team up and down the County.

"I rely on his thoughtful help and advice, especially regarding seasonal care and planting of my garden. I know him to be always reliable, and his advice is invaluable. Another all-year-round brilliant service from Age UK Cornwall, who have also provided Home Support."

Thank you from Mavis

Acts of Kindness

As the nights draw in, the colder weather is felt, and Christmas draws close, the best gift we can give is kindness, particularly in these challenging times. Our team have shared a few to get you started:

1. Check on your Neighbours and/or pop a festive card under their door.
2. Make an effort to smile and talk to your neighbours.
3. Spend 10% less on each person's gift and donate that 10% to a charity you know they support.
4. Get involved with a local Christmas appeal.
5. Recycle your Christmas trees and keep the birds fed.
6. Donate food, clothes, or gifts to local hubs/shelters.

Gardening Fun & Games

Name: _____ Date: _____

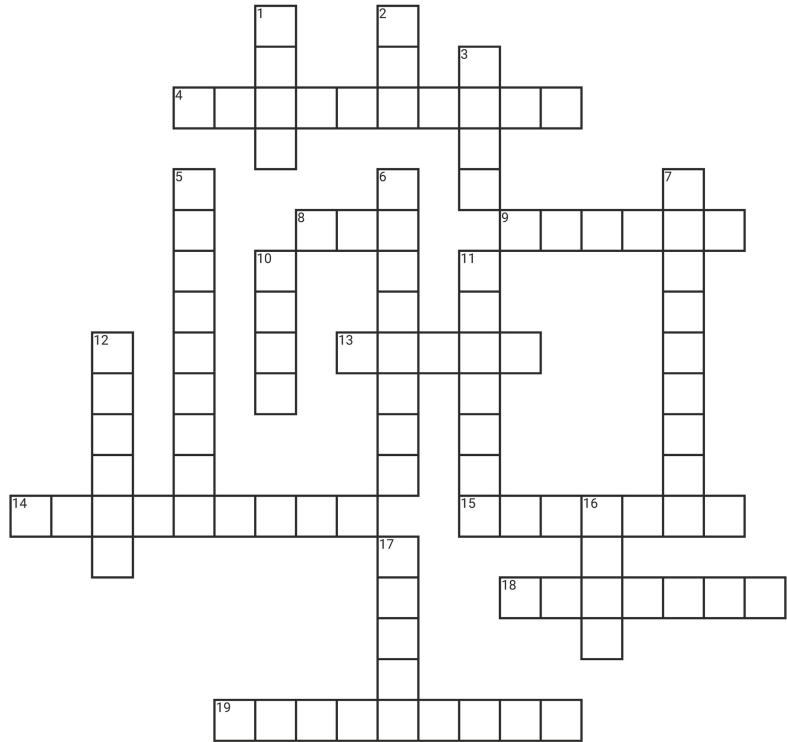
Christmas Crossword

Across

- 4. Christmas Drink 'Smoking Blshop
- 8. Chemical Formula for Snow
- 9. Milk Punch
- 13. Comes down the chimney
- 14. First name of Scrooge
- 15. Patron Saint for Boxing Day
- 18. Country that started the tradition of putting up a Christmas Tree
- 19. Festive time of the year

Down

- 1. Christmas Log



- 2. Festive Number One hit with 'Lonely this Christmas'
- 3. Famous saying - "Naughty or '____'"
- 5. Hang this on a door frame
- 6. Male Actor starred in 'The Polar Express'
- 7. Christmas classic film
- 10. Stands tall in your living room
- 11. Part of a reindeer
- 12. Festive Bird
- 16. Christmas tippel

- 17. Name of the department store in a christmas classic film

Xmas Fair Dates

Newquay | 9th Dec

10am - 2pm

01637 876150

Falmouth | 1st Dec

10am - 2pm

01326 316 880