

Flourish & Bloom



Growing together at
Falmouth Community Hub.

Welcome to the Autumn Edition of Flourish & Bloom

As I write, gentle rain falls outside, a welcome relief after a challenging growing season marked by heatwaves and scarce rainfall. A hosepipe ban has been implemented to conserve water, prompting gardeners in Cornwall to make tough decisions on watering to keep their plants alive, carefully deciding where limited water will do the most good.

Seasons remind us to enhance garden resilience against climate change. Strategies include improving soil, collecting rainwater, selecting drought-tolerant plants, and creating shade to protect gardens and their ecosystems. **Further exploration of climate-resilient gardening will follow in this edition.**

Despite challenging weather, a successful plant sale was held in May at the Falmouth Community Hub, supported by generous locals. Proceeds, along with those from last year's sale at Govenek Hub, have helped fund Growing Together - our gardening for wellbeing program. Thank you to all who donated, volunteered, and attended! In June, the new sensory garden was named the **Lowenek Sensory Garden** and opened by the Mayor, providing a space for the program that promotes confidence, wellbeing, and connection through gardening. Lessons learned in Falmouth will help expand Growing Together in St Austell and Govenek Community Hubs.

Beyond our hubs and community projects, our gardeners continue to help older people across the communities we serve to care for and enjoy their own gardens. Whether in a private garden or a shared community space, gardening can bring people together, support wellbeing and help us remain connected to the natural world. This has not been an easy summer, but gardens teach us that difficult conditions can encourage adaptation, creativity and resilience. We hope this edition offers some useful ideas and a little inspiration for the season ahead. As always, your stories, ideas, and gardening successes are warmly welcomed, feel free to email me at jeff.muir@ageukcornwall.org.uk or lee.davies@ageukcornwall.org.uk

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Lowenek Sensory Garden

A welcoming place to grow, connect and flourish



In June, we were delighted to officially open the Lowenek Sensory Garden at our Falmouth Community Hub. Lowenek means “cheerful” in Cornish—a fitting name for a garden created to bring enjoyment, companionship, and a sense of well-being to everyone who visits. The garden was opened by the Mayor of Falmouth, Councillor Alan Jewell, in the company of clients, volunteers, staff, and many of the people who helped bring the project to life. Designed as a calm, welcoming, and accessible space, the garden encourages people to experience nature through color, scent, sound, texture, and taste. Accessible paths and raised beds make it easier for people with different levels of mobility to take part, while the varied planting offers interest throughout the seasons.

The garden serves as a space for much more than just cultivating plants; it has been thoughtfully designed to enhance wellbeing, encourage gentle activity, and foster companionship among our day clients. Whether they wish to garden, socialize, or simply relax in the fresh air, the garden accommodates all preferences. The Lowenek Sensory Garden is now home to ***Growing Together***, our gardening for wellbeing initiative. Participants can engage at their own pace, contributing to sowing, planting, and caring for the garden. This experience not only builds confidence and teaches new skills but also offers the joy of shared company. As the garden evolves, it will grow alongside its users, providing participants with a true sense of involvement and ownership.

This wonderful new community resource was made possible by a generous £20,000 grant from The National Lottery Community Fund. We would once again like to offer our heartfelt thanks to The National Lottery Community Fund—and to National Lottery players—for supporting the project and recognizing the important contribution that gardens and shared outdoor activity can make to people’s lives.

We are also enormously grateful to everyone who contributed their ideas, skills, time and enthusiasm to the project. Creating the garden has been a truly shared effort, and seeing it being enjoyed by clients and participants is a wonderful reward for everyone involved.



Helping Your Garden Face a Changing Climate

Simple ways to create a more resilient garden

No garden can be completely climate-proof, but we can make our gardens better able to cope with hotter, drier summers, sudden downpours and wetter winters. The good news is that many of the changes involved are simple, affordable and beneficial to both people and wildlife.

Choose the right plants



Before buying a plant, consider the conditions it will face. Is the position sunny, shady, exposed, or sheltered? Is the soil usually dry, damp, or waterlogged? **A plant suited to its location will remain healthier and need less attention and water.**

For hot, sunny areas, consider drought-tolerant plants such as **lavender, rosemary, thyme, sedum, santolina, verbena, echinacea, and ornamental grasses**. Many have silver, narrow, or aromatic leaves that help them conserve water while also providing flowers for bees and other pollinating insects. Trees, shrubs, and hedges are especially valuable. Their roots help water soak into the ground, while their leaves provide shade and reduce temperatures for people, plants, and wildlife. Even a small tree, such as a crab apple or rowan, can make a difference. Remember that drought-tolerant does not mean drought-proof. New plants still need regular watering while their roots become established.

Looking after your soil



Healthy soil holds water more effectively and supports stronger plants. Adding homemade compost or well-rotted organic matter will improve the structure of both sandy and clay soils. **Covering the soil with a layer of mulch also reduces water loss, suppresses weeds and protects plant roots from extreme heat. Apply compost, leaf mould, bark or another suitable mulch while the ground is moist, taking care to leave a small gap around plant stems. Bare soil dries quickly, so try to cover it with planting or mulch wherever possible.**

Making every drop count!



Collect rainwater from sheds, garages, greenhouses, and house roofs in water butts. If space allows, connecting two or more water butts will provide a useful reserve during prolonged dry spells. When watering, give plants a thorough soak around their roots rather than sprinkling the surface little and often. **Deep watering encourages roots to travel further into the soil, making plants more resilient. Water early in the morning or during the evening, when less will be lost through evaporation.** Prioritise containers, vegetables, and newly planted trees, shrubs, and perennials. Established lawns rarely need watering. They may turn brown during drought, but usually recover when the rain returns. Reducing the amount of paving and artificial grass also allows rainwater to soak naturally into the ground. Where heavy rain collects, a planted rain garden or shallow depression can slow the flow and help prevent localised flooding.



Simple ways to create a more resilient garden

Provide water and shelter for wildlife

Hot, dry weather is difficult for birds, hedgehogs, insects, and other garden wildlife because natural sources of water and shelter can disappear. A shallow dish of fresh water placed in a shady spot can provide a vital drinking and bathing place. Add a few stones so insects can land safely and escape if they fall in. Keep the water topped up, change it daily during hot weather, and clean bird baths regularly. A pond is one of the most valuable wildlife features a garden can have, however small. Make sure it has a gently sloping side, stones, or another escape route so animals can get in and out safely. Trees, hedges, shrubs, and climbing plants provide essential shade and shelter. Leaving a slightly wilder corner, a log pile, or some longer grass will give insects, amphibians, and small mammals somewhere cool and protected to hide. ***Try growing a mixture of flowering plants so that nectar and pollen are available for as much of the year as possible. Avoid pesticides wherever you can, as these can harm the very wildlife we are trying to support.***

Start with one change

You do not have to redesign your whole garden at once. Adding a water butt, planting a small tree, mulching one border or putting out a shallow dish of water are all worthwhile steps. A climate-resilient garden can still be colourful, productive and beautiful. ***By working with nature and using water thoughtfully, we can create gardens that continue to support us—and our local wildlife - even as the climate around us changes.***



Sunflowers by Captain Sunflower

Leaning into Autumn

A season of reflection, renewal and beginnings

Autumn is often described as the end of the gardening year, but perhaps it is better understood as a threshold. The main story of the growing season is becoming clear, the heat and urgency of summer begin to ease, and space opens for us to pause, take stock and begin looking ahead. There can be a temptation to cling to summer, mourning each fading flower and every shortening evening. Yet autumn has a character and beauty of its own. Seed heads catch the lowering sunlight, berries brighten the hedgerows and leaves gradually take on their autumn colours. Rather than seeing these changes only as signs of loss, we can lean into the season and appreciate what it offers.

This is a good time to walk slowly around the garden and notice what has happened. **Which plants flourished? Which struggled with the heat? Where did the soil dry out most quickly, and where did water collect after heavy rain? What brought pleasure, and what became difficult to manage?**



Growing Together
Artworking from blooms
cropped

This reflection is about learning from the garden rather than judging successes or failures. A challenging growing season highlights areas for improvement, such as shade needs or soil quality. Autumn is ideal for new beginnings, with warm soil supporting the establishment of trees, shrubs, and spring-flowering bulbs. Preparations for the future include making leaf mould, spreading compost, collecting seeds, and dividing overcrowded perennials.



Govenek Community Hub
garden is blooming again

We do not have to make the garden too tidy. Leaving some seed heads, hollow stems, fallen leaves and undisturbed corners will provide food and shelter for insects, birds and other wildlife. A garden settling into autumn is not neglected; it is still full of life, much of it simply becoming quieter or less visible. **As the pace slows, autumn invites us to slow down with it. There is still useful work to do, but not everything needs to be finished at once. We can make time to sit outside with a warm drink, watch the changing light and enjoy the particular scent and stillness of the season.** Autumn reminds us that renewal does not always begin with obvious growth. Sometimes it begins quietly: in roots forming beneath the soil, in compost returning goodness to the earth, or in a gardener reflecting on what has been and imagining what might come next. ***The summer may be ending, but the future of the garden is already beginning.***



A Joyous Day at our Falmouth Plant Sale

Plants, people and community spirit

In May, we held our plant sale at the Falmouth Community Hub - and what a joyous occasion it proved to be. **The event was a wonderful example of what can happen when people come together around a shared purpose.** Age UK Cornwall staff from across the organisation generously gave their time to help, with many bringing members of their families along too. From preparing and donating plants to setting up stalls, welcoming visitors, and keeping everything running smoothly on the day, it was a genuine team effort. We are enormously grateful to everyone who volunteered. The warmth, enthusiasm, and good humor they brought to the event helped create a relaxed and cheerful atmosphere that was about much more than simply buying and selling plants. The sale was also extremely well supported by the local community.

People make a difference!

Visitors came along to browse the plants, talk to our volunteers and support the work of Age UK Cornwall, **helping us to raise a fantastic £600.** Every plant purchased contributed to that total, and we would like to thank everyone who helped make the day such a success.

Fundraising events require a considerable amount of planning and hard work, but the plant sale showed how enjoyable that work can be when it is shared. The generosity of our staff, their families, and the wider Falmouth community transformed the event into a genuine celebration of plants, people and community spirit. ***Thank you to everyone who grew or donated plants, volunteered their time, helped behind the scenes or simply came along and bought something. You all played a part in making the day so memorable. Jeff Muir.***

Captain Sunflower shining at Falmouth Community Hub

The image below beautifully encapsulates the spirit of our 'Growing Together' within local communities and spaces.

Please keep emailing
lee.davies@ageukcornwall.org.uk

with any upcoming events, sessions, or gardening-themed activities. We will be sure to share far and wide, adding anything we can to the next newsletter and our social media platforms.

Have a lovely end of summer everyone.

