



The Winter Garden at Dunham Massey

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- Tom Acton, Head Gardener at Arley
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- Jake Croft, Head Gardener, update
- The Wildflowers of Cyprus

Future events (see pages 10/11/12)

- CGT events
- 17th April 2pm Visit to Stonyford gardens
- Thurs 8th May AGM, Whitby Park
- Thurs 18th June, Biddulph Old Hall – NOW FULL
- RHS Malvern Spring Festival 8-11 May
- RHS Chelsea Flower Show 20-24 May
- RHS Flower Show Wentworth Woodhouse 16-20 July

Emily Chandler and the Winter Garden at Dunham Massey



Emily Chandler with some of her team in 2019

We were very pleased to welcome Emily Chandler, Head Gardener at Dunham Massey, to talk about the Winter Garden there. Members, friends and visitors enjoyed Emily's presentation with her enthusiasm and love of plants clearly illustrated by lovely pictures.

The 10th Earl of Stamford left the Dunham Massey Estate to the National Trust in 1976 and the Winter Garden was opened in 2009. Emily has been Head Gardener for the past ten years following a couple of years as a gardener there. She talked about the huge problems they faced to clear the area for the new Winter Garden within a backdrop of ancient trees. The land was wet and liable to

flooding and the sandy soil very poor, problems which still exist today.

The Winter Garden was planted with trees, shrubs and other plants to build up a garden with a succession of seasonal interest for colour, scent and form. Development of the garden has been ongoing and Emily took us through the seasons discussing the variety of plants to see. The triangle of tall, white Himalayan birch (right) (*Betula utilis* subsp. *jaquemontii*) has been very successful with its underplanting of bulbs, beginning with early snowdrops. More birches have now been planted across the path.



Prunus serrula

Many trees and shrubs provide Autumn colour as their leaves turn. The acers are particularly useful for this but Emily reported that only one tree remains of the eight striped bark *Acer tegmentosum* 'White Tigress', originally planted. Another tree with Autumn interest is the *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* with its sweet toffee apple smell. Unfortunately squirrels have been damaging these trees by stripping the bark. There has been Honey Fungus infection in the garden too but the plan to deal with this is to restrict disturbance of the ground in that area so that no roots are damaged.

In early winter the bare trees show their form and peeling bark among the coloured *Cornus* stems and evergreens. *Camellia japonica* 'High Hat' is the earliest to flower in December and continues through to March. From early January there are a number of varieties and colours of *Hamamelis x intermedia* in flower. These

are a naturally occurring cross of *H. japonica* and *H. mollis*, the Japanese and Chinese species which are scented.

Emily suggested that, although the shaded woodland of the garden is not ideal for a *Daphne*, they have grown well. The *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' has clusters of highly scented pink and white flowers from January to March and those at the entrance are very popular with visitors.

There are hellebores, early snowdrops and winter aconites followed by a succession of other bulbs. The number of dwarf iris has decreased but crocus, cyclamen and daffodils are thriving.

As Spring progresses the daffodils make a splendid display (see front page) and the trilliums (below) appear at the same time as blossom on the shrubs and trees. It was suggested that frequent visits should be made to appreciate the succession of flowering plants at this time of the year. These include camellias, rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias. To learn more about the many varieties it is well worthwhile joining a garden tour.



Camellia japonica 'Nuccio's Jewel'



Trilliums

In the Summer there is still plenty to enjoy and, at busy times in the rest of the garden, Emily directs people to find tranquility among the greenery and ferns of the Winter Garden. This garden at Dunham Massey is for all seasons and an inspiration to us all.

Janet Horne

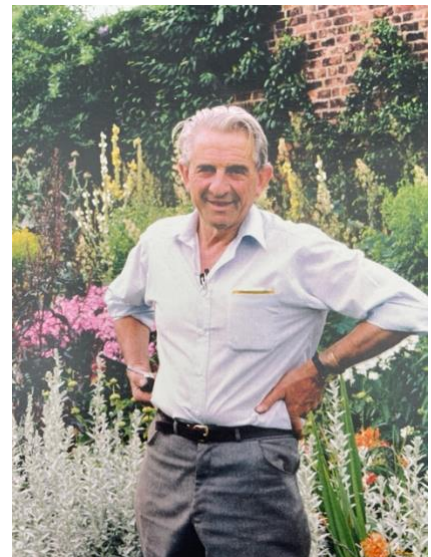
Photos Sue Eldridge

More photos can be found on the CGT website [CGT Events gallery](#)

Tom Acton, Head Gardener at Arley

Tom Acton, who died recently just before what would have been his 99th birthday, was a hugely important figure in the history of the gardens at Arley Hall after WWII. Tom's father, Albert, was a joiner working for the estate. Apart from a short spell in the RAF during the war Tom spent his whole life at Arley. He attended Arley School, leaving at the age of 14 when he joined the garden staff under the then Head Gardener, Frank Brown.

During the war, the hall was occupied first by a home for evacuated children and then by a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers. During that period the gardens were devoted mainly to growing vegetables and fruit to feed the residents. This emphasis continued after the war when the garden was run as a marketing business selling vegetables and cut flowers in the local area.



However this project was never very successful and in the late 1950s my parents took the decision to change direction. They decided to restore the gardens as much as possible to their original splendour with a view to try opening them to the public which actually started in a small way in 1964. Tom was very much involved in this project from the beginning and in 1960 he was appointed Head Gardener. From then on he worked very closely with my mother, Elizabeth Ashbrook, and they forged a great partnership together. Tom had already acquired considerable knowledge of how to care for plants, shrubs and trees of all kinds. My mother was artistic and well informed about the traditional design of the garden and the two worked very well together.



The first task was to restore the Herbaceous Border which had received very little maintenance during the war. The gravel path down the centre was replaced with lawn and the planting was concentrated on hardy herbaceous perennials. My mother planned the colour scheme so that in the early part of the season, May to early July, the colours were mainly cool – blue, pale pink and white. Later on all the hot colours would appear – bright red, wine red and purple.

During the war and the period of market gardening the two large walled gardens were devoted as much as possible to growing vegetables and fruit. When the commercial activities ceased my parents decided to convert the larger of these walled gardens to an ornamental layout. My mother created the design which is there now. It is centred round an ornamental stone pond which was moved from its original situation in the middle of the East Garden (on the East side of the Hall).

In the area round the little Tea Cottage a large collection of shrub roses was established providing interest in the early and mid-summer periods and much work was done in the Rootery to restore its earlier character as a little mountain rock garden. Azaleas were introduced into this area and they proved to be remarkably successful. Later my brother, Michael Flower, now Lord Ashbrook, started to develop the area to the north of the Hall known as the Grove. A large and interesting collection of shrubs and trees was gradually established and from 1982 onwards this area was also opened to the public. The Grove is now recognised as one of the leading woodland gardens in the North-West.

The opening enterprise was immediately successful and visitor numbers quickly rose. Arley became increasingly well known and received national recognition, winning a BTA (British Tourist Authority) Landscape Heritage award in 1975, and in 1987 received the Garden of the Year Award from the Historic Houses Association.

Tom was closely involved in all these developments and he became well known in horticultural circles in Cheshire and beyond. He was a founder and active member of the Professional Gardeners' Guild which now has over nine hundred members and later he was awarded an Associateship of Honour by the RHS. He also became a popular and frequent speaker at local gardening societies and a judge at competitions.

Tom retired as Head Gardener in 1992 at the age of 67. He then embarked on a second career as a part-time teacher. He ran practical gardening courses at Winwick Hospital, the WEA North West Region and other venues. He was on a national register of garden speakers which took him all over the country giving talks. He was much loved by his students, many of whom kept in touch with him even after they had ceased attending the courses. They all talked afterwards about how inspiring his classes were, how much knowledge he had and how good he was at delivering that knowledge.

The final thing I want to say about Tom is to draw attention to his enormous charm and warmth as a person. I well remember as a small child going into the gardens at Arley and hoping that I would bump into him. He was always incredibly warm, friendly and jokey. This charm was recognised by all who met him and I think it contributed much to the popularity of the gardens. I know that everyone in my family was extremely fond of him and very conscious of the huge debt owed to him by the Arley estate.

Jane Foster, sister of Lord Ashbrook, daughter of Elizabeth Ashbrook mentioned in the article
I am very grateful to Jane for writing this article and sourcing the photos. Editor

The Gardens Trust's response to the Government's intention to consult on removing it as a statutory consultee



Image and logo courtesy of the Gardens Trust website

The Gardens Trust is a statutory consultee for all planning applications that may affect a site nationally designated on the Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. There are over 1700 Registered parks and gardens, split into Grades I, II*, II.

Registered Parks and Gardens include urban public parks ranging from internationally famous Birkenhead Park in Merseyside to small sites adored locally, globally iconic 'English gardens' such as Chatsworth in Derbyshire or Sissinghurst in Kent, places of remembrance such as Highgate Cemetery in London, institutional landscapes such as the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, and community hubs such as Stoney Road Allotments, Coventry, seaside gardens such as the Marine Gardens in Clacton.

The Gardens Trust receives some 1800 planning application consultations each year, and provides local planning authorities with many hundreds of constructive advice recommendations to support positive change. Around 80% of our comments are advice to support approval of planning permission, with only 20% expressing serious reservations about proposals.

To support the Gardens Trust's statutory consultee work it receives a grant of £42,000 from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

In order to deliver its statutory consultee role, the Gardens Trust's small team of national paid Conservation Officers and experts working pro bono coordinates a volunteer army across 36 affiliated County Gardens Trusts.

To read the Gardens Trust's full response to the Government's consultation proposal, click this link to their website: [Gardens Trust response](#)

Cheshire Gardens Trust has just received information about the launch of a fighting fund to support the Gardens Trust's campaign. For further information or to donate see the information below

[Gardens Trust fighting fund](#)

A message from the Council of Management

Being on the Council of Management (CoM) isn't an onerous task, particularly as its workload is planned to be streamlined to involve only three or four meeting per year. However, it is critical to the future continuance of the Trust because our constitution requires CoM to have at least four serving members. At the AGM on 8th May, it is currently anticipated that the number will reduce to three unless more people come forward.

A separate communication regarding this issue will be sent to all members in advance of the AGM. This will include a description of the role of a Council of Management Member.

We look forward to hearing from you!

David Cash

Jake Croft at Lamport Hall

I was absolutely delighted to spot Jake Croft on Gardeners World a few weeks ago. He last appeared in these pages in July 2021, when he was head gardener at Adlington Hall, but we lost track of him when Adlington Hall was put up for sale. I was even more delighted when he responded to my email and agreed to tell us what he had been doing. Editor



Jake Croft at Adlington Hall

When the staff at Adlington Hall were told that the estate was going up for sale, I decided to hand my notice in that week as I couldn't bear to watch the gardens go back into decline while a buyer was sought. I was fortunate to be offered a rôle at Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire and I have been the Head Gardener there since leaving Adlington Hall. They are very different gardens to each other, but I liked the fact that Lamport had some interesting historical elements, its most famous being the Rockery which, when I arrived, was closed off to visitors and completely overgrown and derelict; I was a little shocked as this was something I had read about before visiting.

My main task when starting at Lamport was to get on top of the main gardens and inject some energy into them. We started with renovating the grounds at the entrance to the hall, installing a bulb display, now planted annually with 6,000 bulbs. We re-introduced roses to the rose garden using all German roses and renovated the pond and fountain. Another big project was done with a good friend of



Lamport Hall

mine Jos

Smit from JUB Holland. We piloted a bulb and wildflower planting scheme along the main drive, all planted by machine and flowering from February till early Autumn.



The irises

My biggest achievement was the restoration of the Rockery. We received grant funding and I did a lot of research to find out as much as I could about its creator and his style of planting. We replanted it with as many of the original types of plants as we could but also using some more modern cultivars which I am sure Sir



The restored rockery

Charles Isham would have used if they had been available to him at the time. The gardens recently featured on Monty Don's programme 'British Gardens' and there you can hear the story of the

Gnomes but sadly the filming was done just before works began on the restoration. I have also housed my own collection of Irises in the gardens including trials irises from all over Europe; these have been a big hit with the visitors.

I have now left Lamport Hall and started my own garden consultancy business covering the whole of the UK. One of my clients is the new owner of Adlington Hall so I am back in Cheshire helping them with the gardens. This is an unexpected twist but that garden has a special attachment that is hard to explain so I am glad to be working with them. I do miss the people and gardens of Cheshire.

Jake Croft

A Cheshire Orchid enthusiast discovered in 'The Gardeners' Chronicle'



Oncidium alexandrae

Elijah Ashworth (1840-1917) was the owner of Elijah Ashworth & Co, Textile Machinery Makers of Smedley Road, Irl Vale, Colleyhurst, Manchester. He lived at Harefield House, Wilmslow. He was a member of the Royal Horticultural Society and Chairman of the North of England Orchid Society, and was said to have one of the biggest orchid collections in the country. The North of England Orchid Society was founded in 1897 and claims to be the oldest orchid society in the world. Meetings took

place fortnightly in the Coal Exchange, Manchester, when members brought plants to be admired and judged. Shows were held annually. On December 18th 1913, a show of over 1000 orchid plants was held.

The Herbarium record of the Natural History Museum notes that Ashworth was a collector from 1897 to 1901. In 1904, a cultivar of *Odontoglossum crispum* (now *Oncidium alexandrae*) from Ashworth's collection was sold at auction to McBean's, the orchid nursery, for 340 guineas, raising the highest price for an orchid to that date. This had been discovered in Columbia by Theodor Hartweg in 1841/2.

On October 24th 1905 at the Royal Horticultural Hall, the Orchid Committee unanimously awarded a first class certificate to Mr Elijah Ashworth Esq. (Gardener Mr Holbrook) for *Oncidium corynephorum* Lindl., a beautiful species from Peru (identified in 1838 from herbarium specimens) shown for the first time. The specimen caught the attention of Robert Allen Rolfe at this event as recorded in the Gardeners' Chronicle (Vol 38 1905) though it was incorrectly labelled as *Oncidium leopoldianum* Rolfe.

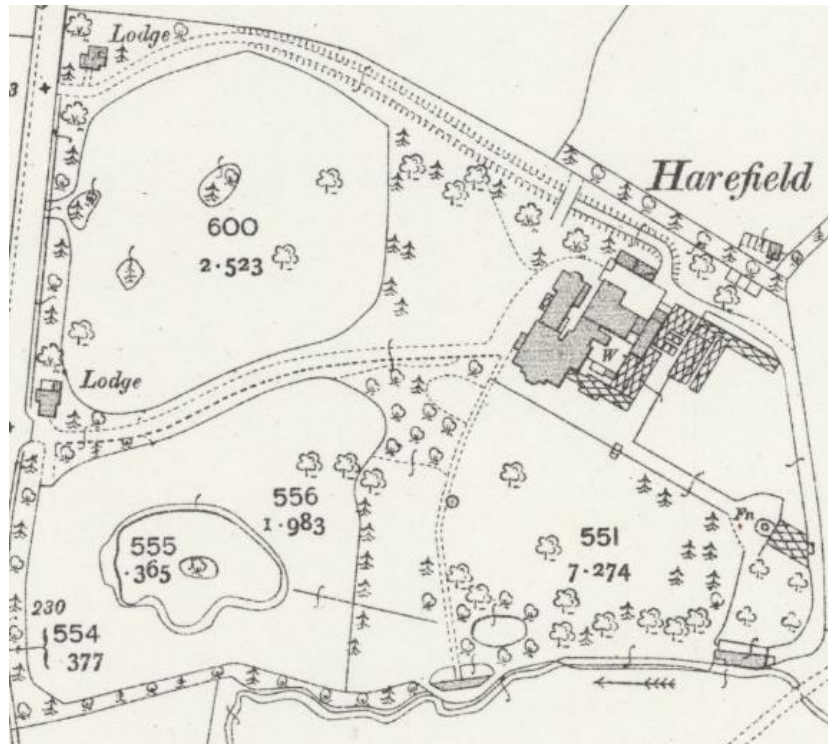
Rolfe was an orchid specialist at the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew from 1879, the first curator of their Orchid herbarium and founder of 'The Orchid Review'.



Drawing of *Oncidium corynephorum* Lindl. by
Elijah Ashworth

This is a drawing by Elijah Ashworth, taken from the article by Stig Dahlström in The International Odontoglossum Alliance Journal, Summer 2020.

The 25 inch OS map for 1909 below shows the extensive range of glasshouses (crosshatched) at Harefield House. Alfred Holbrook and his brother James were both gardeners living at Harefield Lodge. It would be interesting to know how many glasshouses held orchids and who was the expert grower.



References

[Link to Gardeners Chronicle](#). This takes you straight to the article on *Oncidium Corynephorum* by R.A. Rolfe. To enlarge the font click on the + sign at the top of the page

[Grace's Guide to British Industrial History](#) with information on Elijah Ashworth and Co.

Monica Walker

The wildflowers and cultivated plants of Cyprus



Walking in Cyprus

Many of us crave a little bit of sun in the dark months of winter. I certainly did. I was lucky enough to travel to Cyprus for a walking holiday in late February, early March when the temperatures were 18-20 degrees, ideal for walking. The terrain is beautiful with mountain ranges, particularly the Troodos Mountains dominated by Mount Olympus, and fabulous coastal areas with undulating paths and views of the sea. We were lucky to have a local guide, Jerome, who was so knowledgeable about the history, culture and plant life of the island.

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia. It is 226 kilometers long and 96 km at its widest. It is very close to the coasts of Turkey, Lebanon and Syria, in a strategic

position with a long and troubled history. It is still divided, the Republic of Cyprus in the south, the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus in the north and a United Nations-controlled Green Line providing a buffer zone between the two. There are two mountain ranges, with the most accessible Troodos Mountains covering the area in the middle. These are volcanic in origin with rich mineral deposits such as asbestos, copper and iron, which have been important from earliest times.



Arbutus andrachne Greek strawberry tree in the Troodos mountains



Dark Bee Orchid Ophrys fusca

Originally the island was covered in forest. There is far less now with the activities of man, but, because of government policy, it is more forested than, say, Crete. It is particularly covered in several varieties of pine and juniper, as well as endemic varieties of oak and cedar. The flora of Cyprus is one of the richest in the eastern Mediterranean, with around 1,800 indigenous plants; 120 are endemic i.e. unique to Cyprus. Key are the orchids, with some very unusual plants. Our guide was particularly good at finding these often tiny plants, including the bee orchids. But perhaps more beautiful were more common plants with meadows covered in anemones and cyclamen in every nook and cranny.

Alongside the wildflowers, trees and shrubs, were the cultivated plants. We were lucky enough to visit a small plantation of citrus and other fruit, lovingly tended by Kris. He grows a very wide range of citrus fruit, lemons of all shapes and sizes, sour orange, grapefruit, kumquat, pomelo, as well as figs, passion fruit, papaya, avocado, bananas and loads of herbs. Kris uses the fruit and herbs to make jams, marmalades, chutneys and drinks, some of which we were able to sample. Delicious.



Kris with one of his many citrus trees



Cyclamen purpurascens



Citrus medica, one of the many unusual citrus fruits



Anemone coronaria

Sue Eldridge

Photos Sue Eldridge and Nicola Woods (one of my fellow walkers)

Forthcoming Events

Cheshire Gardens Trust Events



Thursday 17th April at 2pm a visit to Stonyford Cottage Gardens and Nursery (see left)

Thursday 8th May AGM Theatre Porto, Whitby Park, Ellesmere Port, CH65 6QY, 1.30 pm for optional self guided walk in Whitby Park, 2.00pm Start of 2025 Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 18th June a visit to Biddulph Old Hall and Gardens (now full but please contact the organiser to be put on a waiting list)

All the details and booking arrangements have been emailed or mailed to members.

The Gardens Trust

The Gardens of Ireland Tour, The Gardens Trust 12th - 19th May 2025

20th-Century Gardens: Evolution, Influence and Conservation May 30th – June 1st. Study weekend in partnership with Oxford University and the 20th Century Society.

For further information see [The Gardens Trust events](#).

RHS Flower Shows

There are big changes to the RHS Shows in 2025;

There will be no flower show at Tatton in 2025, though it will return in 2027. Instead there will be a show at Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire [Wentworth Woodhouse RHS Show](#) (16-20 July). Then in 2026, the RHS will host a show on the **Sandringham Estate**, the private Norfolk country home of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

There will be a Flower Show at Hampton Court in 2025 (1-6 July) but thereafter it will be biennial. For 2026, the RHS has announced that a new show will be taking place in the historic grounds of **Badminton Estate** in Gloucestershire, before returning to Hampton Court Palace in 2027.

Chelsea Flower Show will be held 20-24 May and Malvern Spring Festival 8-11 May

National Garden Scheme

Plenty of gardens open during May, June, July. Some new or more unusual examples are:

Norley Court (right), Sun 27th April, Sun 25th May, Sun 20th July, a large spring and summer garden with a bluebell wood, rhododendrons, azaleas, pieris, tulips, daffodils and kalmias.

HMP Thorn Cross, 2nd and 3rd May and dates throughout June, July, August, September. Arley Road, Appleton, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 4RL. This is an open prison with large sprawling grounds.

10th May, 64 Carr Wood, Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire, WA15 OEP, 2/3 acre landscaped, south facing garden, laid out in 1959 by Clibrans of Altrincham

11th May, Tiresford, Tarporley, Cheshire, CW6 9LY. Established 1930s garden, undergoing a major restoration project, with views of Beeston and Peckforton Castle





7th and 8th June, One House Walled Garden, Rainow, SK11 OAD. An historic early C18 walled kitchen garden, hidden for 60 yrs and restored by volunteers.

8th June Maggie's Manchester (left), supporting people with cancer, with gardens designed by Dan Pearson

14th June, Willaston Grange, Willaston, Cheshire, CH64 2UN, A restored Arts and Crafts garden extending to 6 acres

27th, 28th and 29th June, Blakelow Farm, 10 acre

hillside garden with views over Macclesfield

Sunday 29th June, Burton Village Gardens, Four delightful gardens, with plenty of parking, refreshments and plants for sale

And plenty more, including familiar gardens, such as **Bolesworth Castle** (Friday 9th/10th May),

Lane End Cottage Gardens (Sun 10th/11th May), **Manley Knoll** (Sun 18th May), **Tirley Garth** (18th May), **Bankhead** (Sat 24th May), **The Old Parsonage** (Sun 25th and Mon 26th May), **Tattenhall Hall** (1st June), **Laskey Farm** (Sun 4th and Mon 5th May and other dates in June, July, August), **Peover Hall Gardens** (Sat 7th and Sun 8th June), **Sandymere** (Sun 8th June), **Bluebell Cottage Gardens** 21st and 22nd June

For more information see [The National Garden Scheme](#)

Planthunters Fairs

Dorothy Clive Garden, Willoughbridge, Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 4EU

Easter Sunday/Monday 20th/21st April and 24th /25th August

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens, Malpas SY14 8ET, Sun April 27th and Weds 23th July

Capesthorpe Hall Macclesfield, SK11 9JY Sun 11th May, and Sun 10th August

Norton Priory Sun 1st June, Runcorn WA7 1SX

For further information see [Plant Hunters Fairs](#) website.

Open Gardens

Heatons Open Garden Scheme, Heaton Moor, Stockport, Sunday 15th June 12 noon

Willaston Village Open Gardens, near Neston, Wirral, Cheshire, Sunday 22nd June, 12.30 – 5.30 pm

Buxton Garden Trail, Buxton, Derbyshire, Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd June 2025 10.30am to 4.30pm. App 30 gardens open, tickets

Castleton Secret Gardens (right), Castleton, Peak District National Park, Derbyshire, Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th June 2025

11.00am to 4.30pm. App 14 gardens open

Eyam Open Gardens, Eyam, between Hathersage and Bakewell, Derbyshire, Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th June 2025, 11.00am to 5.00pm, Saturday, 12 noon start on Sunday, app.13 gardens open





Chorlton Open Gardens, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Greater Manchester, Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th June 2025, 11.00am to 5.00pm, app. 16 gardens open

Wells for Africa Sat 28th June, 10.30am – 4.30pm. A wealth of gardens open in Wilmslow [Wells for Africa](#) (see left)

Other gardens

Eaton Hall (right), Eccleston Chester CH4 9ET, open to the public on June 15th, July 13th, Aug 24th, pre-booking required [Eaton Hall open days](#)

Combermere Abbey Tuesday 13th May and Tuesday 17th June 10am – Garden Open Days with bluebells in May [Combermere Abbey Open Days](#)

Blossom Events

[Dunham Massey blossom trail](#), May and June

Quarry Bank Mill [Blossom Trail](#) April and May

[Norton Priory Blossom Day](#); 4th May

[Lyme Park](#) blossom walks 1st May – 1st June

Bluebell events

Arley Hall and Gardens Guided Bluebell Walks, 3rd, 4th and 5th May [Bluebell Walks](#).

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens, 4th and 5th May, 7 Million Bluebells Woodland Walk [Cholmondeley What's On](#);

Rode Hall Bluebell Walk, 30th April to 5th May [Rode Hall](#)

Dorothy Clive Garden, a variety of events during May, June, July – Spring Garden Tour with Curator Kathryn Robey 27th April; Plants and castles of Transylvania 8th June; a short history of flowers with Advolly Richmond, 13th July [Dorothy Clive events](#)

Ness Botanic Gardens Plant propagation Sat 3rd May [Ness Botanic Gardens](#)



RHS Digital Library

The RHS holds collections spanning over 500 years of garden history and science. These have been digitized and are now free to search online for the first time. From the home page you can search Treasures of the Archives, where you can find the Account Book of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, all 97 pages of it or a letter from Charles Darwin to William Robinson.

Under 'Whats new' on Digital Collections, you can find an online exhibition – A host of golden daffodils and under Collections you can find Gertrude Jekyll's Scrapbook.

All fascinating stuff to be found on [RHS Digital Collections](#)

Copy date for July Newsletter is 30th June 2025

Contributions to the Newsletter are very welcome. If you want to comment on articles in this edition or would like to contribute one for the next, please contact the Newsletter Editor, 148 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport SK7 6HE or email newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk