

Flourish & Bloom

A flying start, courtesy of Helyn Jacobs



A Season in Pictures

In each edition, we would love to share your glorious garden pics. During March & April, we received a bounty of wonderful snaps from our resident Twitcher, Helyn Jacobs. There are far too many pictures to share, so we will feature a few throughout this newsletter.



A Warm Welcome from me

Welcome to the very first edition of Age UK Cornwall's gardening-focused quarterly Flourish & Bloom. It is our intention to bring you seasonal gardening hints and tips, news of events and a few things like crosswords to boot.

My name is Jeff Muir and I am the Team Lead for our in-house gardening service. As a former archaeologist I have always been 'down to earth' but these days you are more likely to find me at work in my veg patch with a garden fork than brushing the soil with a paintbrush.

At Age UK Cornwall we are proud of our gardening service, and you can rely on our gardeners to do a great job for you in the garden. They will always be there for you whether it's your roses that need pruning or you just need a cup of tea and someone to chat to.

I really hope you enjoy reading our newsletter. If you have a particularly beautiful plant in your garden and would like to enter our photo competition but maybe need a bit of help, feel free to collar your gardener on their next visit and they will be happy to help take that picture. Similarly, if you have a story to share, would like to appear in, or just have an idea for our next edition, please get in touch.

Spring is now well and truly underway and summer is coming. Happy gardening everyone!

Jeff Muir | jeff.muir@ageukcornwall.org.uk
Team Lead, Age UK Cornwall Gardening Service



Your Gardening Tips

As we head into summer, with the last frosts hopefully now behind us, many plants will take advantage of the warmer weather to put on a spurt of growth as they begin their annual competition for space and light. Unfortunately, this also includes weeds. Which if left unchecked at this time of the year will soon run rampant across beds and borders.

Whilst it may be tempting to use weed killers, it is always best to remove weeds by hand wherever possible as herbicides kill more than weeds and can cause unintended harm to pets and wildlife. If pulling out weeds by hand is a bit too much for you, that is what your Age UK Cornwall gardener is for!

With the early fruit blossom season coming to an end, late flowering fruit such as Apples, Quince and Medlars should all still be blossoming their hearts out. Flowering shrubs such as Lilacs, Rhododendrons and Azaleas will be coming into their own right now, with masses of vivid blooms. Hydrangea will follow in mid to late May, for some early varieties, and June onwards for most others.

Now is also the time to be filling up your borders with annual bedding plants. With Geraniums, Marigolds, Petunias and Cosmo all being firm favourites. Ground-hugging annuals such as Alyssum and Lobelia and biennials such as Forget-me-Nots will help to fill in the gaps and keep weeds down, whilst tall plants such as Sunflowers, Dahlias and Sweet peas will provide structure and go a long way in hiding unsightly fencing or walls.

Towards the end of June, wall-grown shrubs may need to be kept in check and carefully prune other early flowering shrubs to encourage new growth and flowers for next year.

Five ways to Garden with Nature

No.1 - Think twice before using pesticides and weedkillers

There is nothing more discouraging in the garden than pesky pests that attack our plants and weeds that choke our prized flower beds. In frustration, many of us reach for shop-bought pesticides and weedkillers, the problem with this is that they wipe out friendly bugs as well as unfriendly ones. Try natural pest control methods instead - beer traps for slugs, soapy water for aphids etc. and pull those weeds by hand, or better still, get your Age UK Cornwall gardener to do it for you!

No.2 - Only use peat-free potting compost

Peat bogs are one of the most effective ways to store large amounts of carbon. Leaving them undisturbed instead of mining the peat moss for compost and potting mixes is an easy way to help save the planet from climate change and help nature at the same time.

Make sure the next time you buy compost it says 'Peat Free' on the label. Or better still, make your own compost if you can.

No.3 - Compost at home and recycle garden waste

Home composting helps feed the good soil microbes that keep your soil healthy and fertile, gets rid of the need for peat-based compost and reduces the need to burn fossil fuels getting rid of your green waste. If you don't want to compost, the next best thing is to recycle your green garden waste by using the Cornwall Council 'Brown Bin' service that turns waste to compost. To find out more, call the waste and recycling team on 0300-1234141. They even offer assisted collections so you don't have to move your brown bin to the roadside if you can't manage.

No.4 - Give the bees and butterflies a helping hand

Apart from looking beautiful, bees and butterflies are crucial pollinators, helping fruit trees and bushes to set fruit and vegetables to grow. Growing flowering plants helps attract and sustain declining bee and butterfly populations. Why not try buddleia, lavender, mint, borage, sage, thyme, oregano, onion, sunflower and rose.

No.5 - Plant veggies

Growing your own herbs, fruits and vegetables is a good way to make your garden more climate-friendly. Home-grown food tastes so much better than shop-bought. It also removes the need for plastic food packaging, refrigeration and transportation. Why not consider reducing your lawn area to introduce a veg patch? Your Age UK Cornwall gardener will be delighted to help you out.





Know your Gardeners Michelle Lobb



Covering ST Austell and the surrounding areas. This has been a complete career change for me, and so far, (despite the rain) it has been great. I have found so many aspects to gardening that I enjoy it is difficult to know where to begin.

Those who garden every day have wellbeing scores 6.6% higher and stress levels 4.2% lower than people who don't garden.

[rhs.org.uk](https://www.rhs.org.uk)

But, simply put, it feeds my;

Mind – I recently read that there is some evidence to suggest that gardening is good for our brains and can prevent dementia, if I can keep my cognition intact, then that is a 'yes please' from me. I have found it so interesting working in different gardens and learning from their owners about what they grow and how, and why they do it, which means I often come away with ideas and inspiration.

Body – I am burning calories and getting paid for it, what is not to like?

Soul – The mental health benefits of gardening are well known. Obviously working outdoors is a key factor, but it is the everyday job satisfaction that makes it a winner for me. Every time I work, I always have visual evidence of what I have achieved, how great is that?

From a practical perspective, working for Age UK Cornwall has meant that I can have the flexibility to manage my other commitments whilst earning an income from a job that I enjoy. I feel well supported, and as an employer, I get the sense they care about me as an employee, which is important to me.

Gardening Services What you told us!



In early 2023, we conducted a customer satisfaction survey, asking you what we did well, what we could do better, and if we made a difference. These are the results.

QUALITY

1. **87% of people interviewed said that our service was either Excellent or Good.**



2. **93% of people said that our Gardening team and Admin Staff were Helpful and answered their questions.**

HELPFUL

3. **92% of people we spoke to said that the Gardening Service was Value for Money, and our Invoicing process was easy to understand.**

GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY

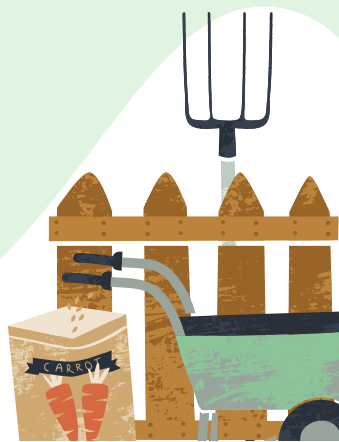


4. **94% of individuals said that Gardeners arrived on time and 94% of Gardeners stayed for the right amount of time.**

PUNCTUAL

RECOMMENDED

5. **95% of people would recommend the Age UK Cornwall Gardening Service to their Friends, Family, and Loved ones.**



Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read our first-ever Bloom & Flourish newsletter. We hope you found the articles insightful and useful.

On your left are the results from our 2022 Gardening Services Satisfaction Survey – if you have any feedback, don't hesitate to email@ageukcornwall.org.uk

A bit of fun

Try our Gardening Brain Teasers below, can you answer the riddles below?

What is the first thing that a Gardener plants in his Garden?

What kind of Garden does a Baker have?

You bury me when I am alive, and dig me up when I die. What am I?

I am a seed with three letters in my name. Take away the last two and I still sound the same. What am I?

You planted sunflower seeds in your back garden. Every day, the number of flowers doubles. If it takes 52 days for the flowers to fill the garden, how many days would it take for them to fill half the garden?