



## Wollerton Old Hall's Head Gardener

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# Claire Tatler, Wollerton Old Hall Garden

## Twenty First in our series of Head Gardeners



*Claire in the rill garden*

I met Claire on a lovely sunny day when Wollerton Old Hall was blissfully empty, apart from a group of artists painting in the garden while trying to keep cool in the shade.

Claire was born and grew up in London. The family moved to Grasmere in the Lake District when Claire was fifteen. Claire loves it up there and still goes back. In fact, she was due to swim the length of Ullswater, all 7.5 miles of it, on the weekend after I met her.

On leaving school after A-Levels, Claire had a year out travelling to Australia on her own, and then moved to Bridgnorth to attend Wolverhampton University to study English and British Sign Language. After leaving University she worked as a freelance Sign Language Interpreter, then became Dudley Council's in-house interpreter. She then went on to become the Manager for the Race Equality and Communications Service for Dudley Council before becoming Manager for the Community Equipment Service for the NHS/Dudley Council.

At this time, Claire acquired an allotment and fell in love with gardening. Using her annual leave and flexi time she began to work as a volunteer in the Kitchen Garden at the National Trust Attingham Park. Whilst volunteering for the National Trust Claire found out about the 'Women's Farm and Gardens



*Gateway into the main garden*



*A remodelled part of the garden with topiary and Hydrangea paniculata*

Association' (WFGA) and their 'Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme' (WRAGS). She applied to the WFGA and managed to negotiate training for one day a week over two years, rather than two days a week over one year. She was taken on by Sarah Callander Beckett at Combermere Abbey and for two years worked four days a week as a Social Services Manager and one day a week as a WRAGs trainee. Six months before the end of her traineeship she was offered a full time position as Gardener at Combermere Abbey and made the transition to a full-time gardening career. This obviously meant a significant drop in salary, but fortunately the WFGA were able to offer grants and this enabled Claire to continue to study for her horticultural qualifications. She had already achieved RHS



Level 2 but with the financial support from the WFGA she was able to study for RHS Level 3 at Pershore College and achieve her chainsaw qualifications and spraying certificates.

Claire remained at Combermere Abbey for 7 years and worked her way up to Assistant Head Gardener. She also met her husband to be, Phil Tatler, Head Gardener, who had an award-winning show garden at Tatton Flower Show in 2016 on behalf of Combermere Abbey.



*The hot garden*

Claire left Combermere Abbey and moved to Elton Hall, Ludlow to take up the position of Head Gardener. Elton Hall is a private home with approximately seven acres of garden including a walled kitchen garden. At the time that Claire took over as Head Gardener the owners were aiming to renovate both the Hall and gardens. Claire was given free reign but worked with the owners to ensure that the garden met their needs. In the garden, she renovated a 2-acre wildflower meadow and created five new borders. As it was a beautifully mature garden with many superb specimen plants, Claire worked carefully to ensure that the new planting complimented the architectural style of the previous Head Gardener. Whilst at Elton Hall she started the three-year RHS Masters in Horticulture which was completed when she was in her next role at the National Trust. Claire graduated top of her cohort, was awarded the Crittenden Memorial Prize by the RHS and was asked to speak at their conference at RHS Wisley last year.



*A lovely mixture of phlox, roses and Hydrangea paniculata against the old shed*

After four years at Elton Hall, Claire took up the position of Head Gardener at The Weir Garden, a National Trust property in Herefordshire. This is a spectacular riverside garden. Working with limited budgets for the garden as in any National Trust property, Claire also managed to raise substantial external funds to improve the edging in the Kitchen Garden to make it safer for visitors, to install a new more efficient compost area and a new biosecurity area. She also got planning permission for a compost toilet for the volunteers who had previously had to walk a mile for facilities! There

was also a 1930s rockery, which needed renovation. With advice from the National Trust Garden Advisor, she was able to contact the Pershore Alpine Garden Society who were invaluable at advising on everything from planting to creating a suitable stone mulch.

Although not at The Weir for very long, by working with the Gardening team, the Visitors team and the Head Gardeners at the other properties in Hereford, Claire saw many changes introduced at the property to improve the experience for the staff, volunteers and visitors. The opening hours were extended, and accordingly year-round plant interest was introduced. In line with the other properties in the Hereford portfolio, visitors with dogs on leads were allowed into the garden and parkland, and more biodiversity was introduced throughout the gardens to promote healthy soil and subsequently much healthier plants. However, Claire was travelling an hour and a half each day to and from work although she enjoyed the garden and working with the team there. She discovered



*Roses and clematis over an arch at the bottom of the garden*

that Wollerton Old Hall Garden (only half an hour from her home) was looking for a Head Gardener, so she wrote to the owners, Mr and Mrs Jenkins. Following an interview Claire was offered the role of Head Gardener and she took up the position in February 2024.

Lesley Jenkins had studied fine art and has created the garden known for its strong architectural design with a series of fourteen garden rooms. John is an accomplished plantsman and their combined plant knowledge is enviable. There are no planting plans; Lesley prefers to develop paintings or drawings of the garden silhouette and how the plant grouping might look and she works in a very organic manner slowly building the exceptional plant combinations. Planting is exuberant with excellent succession, mostly herbaceous perennials with significant collections of roses, salvias, clematis and topiary. The couple started the garden here in 1984 on a bare site and

are still developing and creating new planting ideas.

In addition to Claire, there is only one other full time gardener, Charlie. He is currently at Reaseheath College studying RHS Level 2 in Horticulture for 1 day a fortnight. He was recently with Reaseheath at the Arley Flower Festival where they won a gold for their small show garden. There is also a small but much valued group of garden volunteers. Claire sees her main contribution as looking after the horticultural elements of the garden, keeping the soil healthy, ensuring that the pruning regime is in place for all plants, keeping the plants healthy as well as all the general maintenance for this garden. She describes it as keeping the canvas ready for Lesley to create her art on.



*Behind the scenes at Wollerton Old Hall*

As well as the day-to-day maintenance of the 2.68 acre garden, Claire and Charlie do the propagation, trim all the topiary and hedges, and maintain the nursery and plant sales area (above). Claire also ran Winter Workshops last year, which were a great success and is looking forward to running them again this year. The garden is open to the public on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, and on other days groups, coach trips and enthusiasts are welcomed from all over the world to this very special garden. Visiting groups can book a Head Gardener's tour and for the public there is a free Head Gardener's tour on the last Friday of every month; all the details can be found on the [Wollerton Old Hall Garden](http://Wollerton Old Hall Garden) website.

This wonderful garden is open from Easter till the end of September. It is the favourite garden of many gardeners, including Monty Don, Chris Beardshaw and Carol Klein. Claire is very happy here and brings enthusiasm, creativity and great energy to the role of Head Gardener. It was a delight to meet her and see the garden through her eyes.

**Text and photos Sue Eldridge (with considerable help from Claire Tatler)**



# A Garden for Wildlife



*One of the many seating areas*

Clemley House, near Tarporley, was a delightful venue for a garden visit on a hot afternoon in mid-August. Chairs and tables had been thoughtfully placed in various shady spots in the garden, and we enjoyed a warm welcome from our hosts, Sue and Tom Makin, along with some excellent refreshments.

To start the afternoon, Sue gave an introductory talk on the history of the garden. She and Tom moved into the two-acre plot in 2008. It was the first large garden they had owned, and they were determined to create one that would be both aesthetically pleasing and, most importantly, a haven for a myriad of wildlife. Until she retired, Sue was a Garden Designer, and from the very outset, her philosophy was that the garden should be organic and entirely plant based. They use seaweed or homemade comfrey fertiliser to feed the plants, and no

harmful herbicides or pesticides are ever used. Sue favours a product called *Strulch* for the beds and borders, which is a mineralised straw mulch. Not only does it retain moisture and add valuable organic matter, but it is also an excellent deterrent for slugs and snails, which avoid crossing it. The garden layout is diverse, with curved beds set into the lawn near the house, planted with a mix of trees, shrubs and perennials. A charming summerhouse is perfectly placed to give views of this part of the garden. Wander a little further, and you will find a kitchen garden, wildlife ponds and a perennial wildflower meadow. Sue told us that one of their first tasks back in 2008 had been to plant native trees such



*The summerhouse with views across the garden*



*The weeping crab apple *Malus* 'John Downie'*

as silver birch (*Betula pendula*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*). They also created an orchard with apple, pear and plum trees, all of which were covered in fruit this August. We particularly admired a crab apple (*Malus* 'John Downie') near the summerhouse, its branches bowing under the weight of little red apples.

To encourage wildlife, nesting boxes for birds and bats are placed around the garden. Sue was keen to attract hedgehogs and has been rewarded with numerous sightings, including hoglets. One of the greatest success stories, though, is the wildlife ponds. Originally, there was only one, which dried out every spring. After an old drain was removed, it was deepened and different levels created, with gently sloping access for wildlife. Marginal and oxygenating plants were added, along with log piles, to ensure a variety of habitats. Together with two other new ponds, it is now home to frogs, toads and newts, including great crested newts. A

new wet woodland of native trees has also been planted in a damp area of the meadow. These are quite rare, and Sue says that some species depend on them.



Purple loosestrife at the edges of the wildlife pond,  
with views back to the house

After our challenging dry summer, we were keen to know which plants had fared best in the garden this year. Sue pointed out a few of her favourites, including angel's fishing rod (*Dierama*) and meadow rue (*Thalictrum glauca*). There was also a striking planting of catmint (*Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant'), which is covered in bees and other pollinators throughout its long flowering season. This philosophy applies to the vast majority of the planting: everything must provide food or shelter for wildlife throughout the year. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a great example. It grows not only around the ponds but also in the flower beds and from June to the end

of August, it provides valuable nectar for many long-tongued insects.

There are many roses at Clemley and, while we had missed the peak flowering season for some, such as *Rosa* 'Open Arms' and *Rosa* 'Francis E Lester', it was interesting to hear about the links between the different varieties grown. Sue's favourite roses all have single or semi-double flowers, giving pollinators easy access to nectar. Many, such as *Rosa* 'Veilchenblau' and *Rosa canina*, also produce hips in the autumn, and they are planted throughout the garden to give a great source of winter food. In addition to many areas of fallen leaves and sticks, which are heaped and left to shelter wildlife, the garden also has piles of woody material, known as dead hedges, bordering the neighbouring fields. As these rot, they provide food for invertebrates and form a valuable part of the food chain. Sue says, "We find it important for wildlife to leave undisturbed areas like these, and it is something that can also be recreated in small gardens".

Clemley is a great example of a garden that puts wildlife first without compromising on beautiful planting. Sue and Tom are generous supporters of Cheshire Wildlife Trust and will also be opening their garden for the National Garden Scheme (NGS) next year, allowing anyone to revisit.



Bat boxes

Alison Moore

Photos Alison Moore and Sue Eldridge

## Chelsea Show Gardens to come to Manchester

Thanks to Gordon Darlington for spotting this information in the October 2025 edition of the Journal of the Society of Garden and Landscape Designers.

Two gold winning show gardens at RHS Chelsea created by landscape designer Tom Massey and architect Je Ahn are being transferred to permanent positions in Manchester. The designers' WaterAid Garden for RHS Chelsea 2024 will be included in Phase 2 of the Castlefield Viaduct Garden, which will extend the garden from 120 to 330 metres. Both the garden and its relocation were made possible thanks to funding from the grant-making charity Project Giving Back. See [Castlefield Viaduct Garden](#) for further information.

In 2026 the design duo's Avande Intelligence Garden, which was shown at RHS Chelsea this year, will be rebuilt within Mayfield Park in the centre of Manchester see [Tom Massey's website](#).

Also see Ed Bennis's article about the EGH Award for Mayfield Park.



# The Gardens Trust Volunteer Day at Stowe



*The dry garden*

Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust hosted a day celebrating Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trust volunteers in the sublime surroundings of Stowe Gardens. Attendees were welcomed by Lisa Watson, Trustee and long-term volunteer at Stowe. Linden Groves, Gardens Trust Head of Operations and Strategy, then presented 'A Decade of Determination; looking back at 10 years of volunteer achievements.' The screening of short films made by volunteers provided an insight into creative ways of communicating ideas and discoveries in short digestible snippets for social media.

Inspiring nominations for Volunteer of the Year Award were shared, and all nominees commended. Awards were given for long service and exceptional contribution, with the Volunteer of the Year Award going to Sandra Pullen for "her contribution to the Gardens Trust's Education & Training Committee and being a major player in the events programme over the last two years."

Lunch was held in the visitor centre courtyard where a dry garden has recently been established. The unpromising rubble substrate has been planted sparingly with drought resistant species such as lavender, *Verbena*, *Helenium*, *Phlox russeliana* and *Eryngium*, topped with a layer of coarse gravel. Thriving without watering, the garden was alive with bees and butterflies, and represents a small part of what Stowe is doing to tackle the effects of climate change.

After lunch Tanya Brittain, National Trust General Manager at Stowe provided an excellent short introduction to the site and seemed surprised and pleased that for many in the audience this was their first visit. When Tanya took up her post in 2019, she heard all the quotes about it being the finest 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape garden in England, but she wanted to consider what the landscape meant to her. She reflected that above all it was a landscape made by many hands, from the preparation of plans, to digging earth and carting stone, carving, building, and tree planting. She used a powerful image of working hands to convey her reflection. This seemed a perfect analogy for the day – all Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trust volunteers working together – often with their hands – to share and conserve historic designed landscapes.



*the Eastern and Western Lake Pavilions and the Corinthian Arch across the Octagon Lake*

Tanya described the complexities of land ownership at Stowe and gave a brief synopsis of the numerous restoration projects that have been undertaken over some 35 years, a truly staggering achievement, and those they aspire to do. The projects vary from the phased repair of 3.5 miles of ha-ha to the dredging of lakes and restoration of Apollo and the nine muses. Climate resilience in garden management is central to all they do, an example cited being the maintenance of trails where gravel surfacing is washed away in extreme weather or sections become impassably boggy meaning that alternative surfacing is having to be considered.



*Temple of British Worthies viewed from the Elysian Fields (with some GT worthies in the foreground)*

Barry Smith, Head Gardener, who has served Stowe for 45 years, communicated the depth of his understanding and love of the landscape through a talk and guided tour. He showed us how opportunities are taken to enrich habitat, from the creation of dead hedges discretely placed to deter access, to plug planting in meadow areas to increase seasonality. Cleft oak posts and fencing using site timber subtly reinforce eighteenth century character. Barry explained how sunk fences were used in outer areas of the park while stone ha-has bounded the gardens, with careful grading of banks to conceal paths and the placing of islands to screen the extent of lakes. Everywhere we

walked there were gorgeous vistas, the play of light and shade, new trees alongside historic plantings and at least one lofty oak thought to predate the gardens. Conscious of climate change in all they do, new tree planting includes 75% original species, 15% that are climate resistant and 10% that are disease resistant. Beech is a struggle to grow now, but *Fagus orientalis*, which has a similar habit, is a variety being looked at for replacement planting. Young lime trees looked healthy and untroubled by the drought. Barry said that these were a cultivar raised at the National Trust Killerton nursery, likely to have originated at the National Trust's Wimpole estate in East Anglia.

It was a thoroughly stimulating day and well worth the effort of travelling, an opportunity to learn, to see, to talk and be encouraged.

**Text and photos Barbara Moth**

## European Garden Heritage Awards (EGHN) 2025



*L-R: A Schroder (Presenter/host), D. Peabody, D. Williams, H. Nowne, R. Sloper all from Studio Egret West*

If you were one of the 30+ CGT members that ventured on one of our European garden visits, you will remember the impressive Schloss Dyck and the award ceremony in October 2020. The awards have continued with more and more nominations each year that are discussed in depth by an international jury from six countries. Britain always does well in terms of nominations in the historic parks and gardens category with the 1<sup>st</sup> prize for 2025 going to the Promenade de Reims (France) and joint 2<sup>nd</sup> prize going to Raby Castle with The Rising (Darlington) and South Cliff Gardens (Scarborough).

This is not always the case in the category for contemporary or modern gardens; however, this year was different with the Tower of London Superbloom and our own Mayfield Park taking a joint 2<sup>nd</sup> prize. 1<sup>st</sup> prize went to Opera Park in Copenhagen; all three parks show the high quality and diversity of the winning projects. The judges were impressed in the way the design of Mayfield Park breaks with the tradition of the English park and has more in common with northern European parks. The mix of exotic and native species along with extensive herbaceous planting gives the park a distinctive atmosphere unlike any other park in our region. Four members of Studio Egret West, the landscape architects, attended the ceremony and accepted the award for Mayfield Park. The park has been awarded many other awards, including the Green Flag Award for 2024.



Mayfield Park (right) first featured in the CGT Newsletter in January 2023 and then again in the July 2023 edition following a visit by CGT Members. Mayfield was also the site, alongside the old railway warehouse, for the first RHS Urban Show in April 2024 as reported in the July edition of the Newsletter. Certainly something to be proud of.

Further information on the awards can be found at [European Garden Award 2025 – EGHN](#). You will find information on earlier award ceremonies as well, giving you numerous places across Europe that should be on your list of places to see.

For previous reports of Mayfield Park, see [Cheshire Gardens Trust - Newsletters](#) and for further photos, see the [CGT Gallery](#) on the website.



**Ed Bennis (Mitglied der Jury)**

**Photos courtesy of Schloss Dyke and Chris Driver/Annie Coombs**

## Visit to Queen's Park, Crewe



*The clock tower with adjacent lodges*

What a complete contrast visiting Queen's Park on the outskirts of Crewe was from our previous months visit to the historic garden at Biddulph Old Hall. In their way both visits highlighted work carried out during the late Victorian period ranging from a themed garden inspired by the artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones to a public park developed for the local people of Crewe.

Our guide on a damp, drizzly mid-July afternoon was Sheila Blackburn, a member of the Friends of Queen's Park. She proved to be the ideal guide with her background knowledge of the park's history and her ability to point out the many interesting features during our guided tour.

Queen's Park, known locally as the "Peoples' Park" was gifted to the town by the London and North Western Railway to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee and the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Grand Junction Railway. It was officially opened in 1888. The driving force behind the project was Francis W Webb, Chief Mechanical Engineer for the NWR and at the time also, the Mayor of Crewe. The park was designed by Edward Kemp, landscape gardener, assisted by Webb.

The park today is very much as the original layout and very similar to the design of many Victorian public parks. It has a central axis running east to west through the distinctive oval shape of the park. There are winding paths and landscaped informal areas planted with a variety of trees and shrubs. Although the original site was poor, marshy agricultural ground it still retains five of the original oak trees from that period.

The engineers employed in building the park were challenged not only by the major earthworks, but also by the subterranean diversion of an existing stream which was culverted to run under the lake.

The lake had been created in 1883 by damming the west side of the River Waldron or Valley Brook, flooding approximately five acres of land. Near the south entrance a system using a worm-screw to control the flow of water into the lake was installed in 1913 and remains in use to fill the lake.

Our walk started at the main entrance gates off Victoria Avenue; these proudly display the Crewe Town emblem. Either side of the gates are a matching pair of half timbered lodges dated 1887, with the West Lodge incorporating a bell tower. Immediately ahead is the Jubilee Clock Tower of 1888



*The memorial stone on Burma Star Island*

fronting the Central Avenue, originally laid out as a carriage drive to the bandstand. Built of sandstone and brick the clock tower contains medallions depicting the heads of Queen Victoria and officials of the Railway Company.

Both the lodges and the clock tower are Grade II listed and were included in the refurbishing works carried out in 2011. Also, in this contract was the construction of a new lakeside pavilion to replace the 1977 Jubilee cafeteria and bandstand. In 2011, the HRH Duchess of Gloucester visited the park in celebration of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Queen's Park Refurbishment Project.

Our walk continued towards the East Gate passing the depot yard, playground, picnic area and bowling green, as well as the original oak trees. Near the bowling green is a Memorial to the late Diana, Princess of Wales.

Passing the East Gate, we arrived at the boating lake with its three islands all planted with a good variety of trees and shrubs. Proceeding now westward we passed a fine ginkgo tree (*Ginkgo biloba*) and oak tree (*Quercus rubra*) before arriving at the relatively new bridges, which allow access to the Burma Star Island, established in the 1960s. The memorial here records the Allied Forces who fought in Burma during the second World War.

The lake, the key feature of the park, was dredged as part of the restoration works carried out during the period between 2006 and 2011. This also included the rebuilding the retaining walls of the lake, the upgrading of the five bridges, together with repairs to footpaths, railings and gates. The soft landscaping works included restoring key vistas by removal of trees and other overgrown planting areas.

Returning around the lakeside to the lakeside pavilion via the Coronation Valley we arrived at our final destination, the South African/Boer War Memorial (above). This was erected in 1904 and has pride of place in the park in memory of the men from the railway companies who were part of the British contingent in this conflict.

There are still areas of the park, like Coronation Valley with its stream and waterfall, waiting to be restored when funding becomes available. For now though the emphasis is on keeping the park up to its current high standard for relaxation, exercise and a place for fun, while faithfully upholding the vision of Edward Kemp's design and principles. Our sincere thanks goes to Sheila Blackburn for a very interesting afternoon.



*Looking across the lake to the pavilion*





# Cheshire Archives on the move



*Artist's impression of the new CALS centre, by permission of Cheshire Archives and Local Studies*

Cheshire Archives may be closed but a great deal is going on behind the scenes as staff sort, re-package and conserve collections ready for moving to new premises in Chester and Crewe.

Heritage Open Days 2025 provided an opportunity to hear about the new archive facilities under construction from Paul Newman, Archives and Local Studies Manager, and Tim Brown of Ellis Williams Architects. At Crewe Tim Brown explained how the building form had

developed with the input of stakeholders, clients and planning officers. The site is situated in the town centre, visible on all four sides, providing the opportunity for those walking past to see into the building and for the activities within to be visible. The structure of the building is like a stack of books with ground floor café, exhibition space and central auditorium, the lower 'book', and research facilities and archive storage on the first floor, the upper 'book', projecting over the glass enclosed space below. The modulation of the façade is informed by work with an artist whose inspiration came from archive sources. Adjacent landscaping will include plants mentioned in the herbal of John Gerard of Nantwich.



*Work in progress, photo by Barbara Moth*

Six principles have been developed for determining which collections will be held in Chester or Crewe. Any collections with high conservation requirements will be kept in Chester where the conservation department will be based. Archivists are sorting through over 5,000 ordnance survey maps and sharing maps with the National Library of Scotland that are not yet available online.

The new archive buildings are due for handover in spring 2026. They will be stocked over the summer, and open to the public in early autumn 2026. Keep in touch with progress via [Cheshire Archives and Local Studies](#).

**Barbara Moth**

## Heritage Open Days – a walk in the park



*Participants discussing the layout of the park*

Heritage Open Days provided a good opportunity to share a little of Cheshire Gardens Trust research discoveries with others. From the site of the Roman fort overlooking the confluence of the rivers Dane and Weaver, a walk in Verdin Park explored the property of a local solicitor subsequently bought by salt magnate Robert Verdin. He gave the land to Northwich for a

hospital, park and brine baths. The baths have gone, ironically a victim of salt subsidence, and the hospital requires additional car parking - potentially in the unregistered park.

**Barbara Moth**

**Photos Ken Moth and Claire Dodman**



*The early 19th century house now subsumed within the hospital*

## Book Review - The Botanic Garden: The world's greatest botanical sanctuaries



This is a beautifully illustrated book written by Ambra Edwards, a garden writer with a special interest in garden history. Another of her books is 'Head Gardeners', from which I took inspiration for the series in the CGT Newsletter on the Head Gardeners of Cheshire. The book starts with a thoughtful introduction about the development of botanic gardens, followed by chapters on 37 (out of approx. 3,000) of the world's greatest botanic gardens.

The origins of botanic gardens are many and varied. Many started as medicinal gardens at a time when there were few alternatives. These were followed by teaching gardens during the Islamic Golden Period and then European Renaissance Gardens, established specifically to train physicians. Botany gradually developed as a separate discipline from medicine.

But 40 years ago, there was a radical change when it became obvious that plants, vital for food, medicine and the survival of our species generally were disappearing at an alarming rate, impacted by climate change and change of land use, resulting in loss of habitat. It is estimated that 40% of plant species are now threatened with extinction. Botanic gardens have been at the forefront of reversing this trend, using their vast collections of plant material, such as in seed banks and herbariums, but also undertaking research locally and across the world. There are plenty of wonderful examples of this throughout the book.

Padua Botanical Garden, established in 1545, is the oldest extant botanical garden, though there had previously been similar gardens at Cordoba, Toledo and Montpellier. This has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997.

Hortus botanicus at Leiden in the Netherlands was established in 1590, with Carolus Clusius as the first prefect. He established an astonishing botanical network and collection of plants from Europe and beyond. Carl Linnaeus who established the binomial system for plant nomenclature was also associated with the gardens.

From the UK, three are included. The oldest is Oxford Botanic Garden established in 1621, based on the garden at Padua, Kew of course, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh. The latter has a strong collection of Chinese plants brought back by George Forrest, the world's most extensive collection of rhododendrons and one of the largest collections of conifers in the world.

Further afield there are some fabulous gardens making it difficult to choose examples, but here are just three:



Brazil is home to perhaps 16-20% of the world's plants, 22% of which are endemic. The botanic garden in Rio de Janeiro has some fabulous plant specimens as well as a comprehensive botanical library and herbarium, seed and germ plasm banks and extensive research laboratories. But what is most impressive is the garden's setting in the heart of a World Heritage Site, with the iconic statue of Christ the Redeemer on the nearby peak of Corcovado.

When Marianne North first visited Singapore in the 1870s she said "The Botanical Garden of Singapore is beautiful.....behind it is a jungle of real untouched forest, which added to its charm". It is now an important historic landscape with a state of the art seed bank and a centre for plant research but at the same time it is a social space. In 2015 it was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status, following Padua and Kew.

Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden is dramatically situated on the lower slopes of Cape Town's Table Mountain. Its purpose from the very first was to celebrate the remarkable botanical riches of South Africa, which was quite radical in 1913. It is now part of a network of 11 gardens and two zoological gardens devoted to conserving the biodiversity of the nation. It has 9,600 species, 70% of which are endemic. There are some stunning plants, in particular the cycads, proteas, ericas, mesembryanthemum and South African summer bulbs.

This is a stunning coffee table book. But it is also a serious and detailed look at some of the greatest botanical gardens in the world.

Sue Eldridge

## Forthcoming Events

### Cheshire Gardens Trust Events

**Visit to Norley Court, Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2pm**, Guided tour, with an opportunity to see many interesting trees, with autumn colour and views over Cheshire

**Diane Lloyd: Plan there is no plan:** the development of Lloyds Flower Farm Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 10.30 am, Worleston Village Hall

**Alexandra Fairclough: Cheshire Parks and Gardens Heritage**, Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 10.30 am at Prestbury Village Hall

**Anne Beswick: A History of Manchester in Ten Plants**, Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February at Marthall Village Hall at 2.00pm:

**Annual General Meeting, 18<sup>th</sup> March 1.30 pm, Ness Botanic Gardens**



The speaker at 2pm will be Advolly Richmond talking about her recent book "A Short History of Flowers", copies of which will be available for purchase and signing. Attendees will have access to Ness Gardens for the day. Tea will be served at 3pm after the AGM and talk.

All the details and booking arrangements for these events will be emailed or mailed to members

### The Gardens Trust

**A Craze for Collecting.** A 5-part online series exploring more plant-hunting adventures and expeditions, and the role of collectors today. Starting Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October, 6pm-7.30pm

**Building the 18C gardens.** A 5 part online series starting Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October 10am – 11.30am

**'One of the most Beautiful Landscapes in the World':** Nuneham Courtenay Gardens, House and Village, hosted by Oxfordshire Gardens Trust, 13th Nov 2025 6pm - 7pm

**Visiting historic gardens: past, present and future May 29-31, Oxford,** Weekend event exploring garden visiting through the centuries

For further information see [The Gardens Trust Events](#) page

## Other events

### RHS Bridgewater

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, Cuttings Workshop: Successful House Plant Cuttings

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> January, Bromeliads and air plants – A beginner's workshop

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February Winter, top fruit pruning workshop, led by Marcus Chilton Jones

See [RHS Bridgewater events](#)

### Norton Priory

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December or Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2026, Winter fruit tree pruning

[Norton Priory events](#)



### Dorothy Clive Gardens

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October, Autumn talk with Head Gardener Ross Underwood

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, Tree Walk with Dr Peter Thomas

[Dorothy Clive events](#)

### Ness Botanic Gardens

Free guided tours 11am, Saturdays 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October, 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November

[Ness guided tours](#)

## Latest News

**The Wonky Garden**, which we visited recently, has been put forward for A King's Award for Voluntary Service. They joined others from Cheshire at a celebration hosted by the Lord Lieutenant Alexis Redmond and her husband Phil at their home in Cheshire. We wish them every success. The full report on the visit and the outcome of the Award will appear in the January edition of the newsletter.

**Alison Moore** (member of CoM and future editor of our newsletter) has just had an article published in the latest edition of **Garden Media Guild News**, raising awareness of the consultation on removing several statutory consultees from the planning system, including The Gardens Trust. For all the latest developments on the potential threat to the Trust's statutory status, you can follow CGT on X @ChesGdnsTrust [CGT X account](#) or Instagram @chesgardenstrust [CGT Instagram](#). Links to these social media platforms appear on the front page of the CGT website.

Copy date for January Newsletter is 16<sup>th</sup> December 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, [newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@cheshire-gardens-trust.org.uk)