

CSGGA Newsletter

February 2024



RHS Affiliated Membership Number: 10570237

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May 2024

Priestfield Arboretum – Tim Pye

Who knew about Priestfield Arboretum? Not many of us did so we were interested to hear about this 'gem hidden in the Chilterns' from Tim Pye who is the Co-ordinator from the Friends of the Arboretum. Priestfield Arboretum is located between Great Missenden and Little Missenden in the area of Little Kingshill, which is only six and a half miles from Chalfont St Giles.

The site runs downhill into the Misbourne Valley and is predominately a woodland with a selection of

specimen trees and clearings. A wildflower meadow has also been created (with help from the local school) to provide extra habitat for wildlife with special areas dedicated to foxgloves and bracken.

The site has an interesting history having been started in 1917 by Thomas Priest who collected pine trees. During WWII it was used as a hiding place for equipment and machines from the London Docklands. It became very overgrown but was rediscovered in 1982 by the Forestry Commission and which led to the site being cleared and the subsequent formation of the Friends of Priestfield Arboretum who now maintain the site. The storms of 1987 helped them by clearing out some more of the invasive species.

Tim showed us many pictures of interesting tree specimens on the site that we could see including many new species that have been planted - potentially including a Prestwood Black Cherry! He also explained about 'Champion' trees (Individual trees which are exceptional examples of their species because of their enormous size, great age, rarity or historical significance) and listed the examples that could be seen.

Visiting the site

There is no vehicular access onto the site but there are lots of pedestrian paths to enable visitors to get right up close to the specimen trees. Open days run twice in the year with the next one being 19th May (TBC) when guided tours will be operating. Self-guided tours are also possible with a guidebook available at the open day. For more information go to Priestfieldarboretum.org.uk

Vicky Mogford



Next Month's Meeting – Thursday 14th March

Tom Cole – Propagation of Woodyies and Non-Woodyies

Tom Cole, always a knowledgeable and popular speaker will be joining us to give an illustrated talk highlighting the propagation of a range of woodies; trees and shrubs, plus perennials. He will be discussing the benefits of key techniques to be used at key points throughout the year.

Reminder that we are serving refreshments after the talk for the next couple of months. Doors open at 7.45.

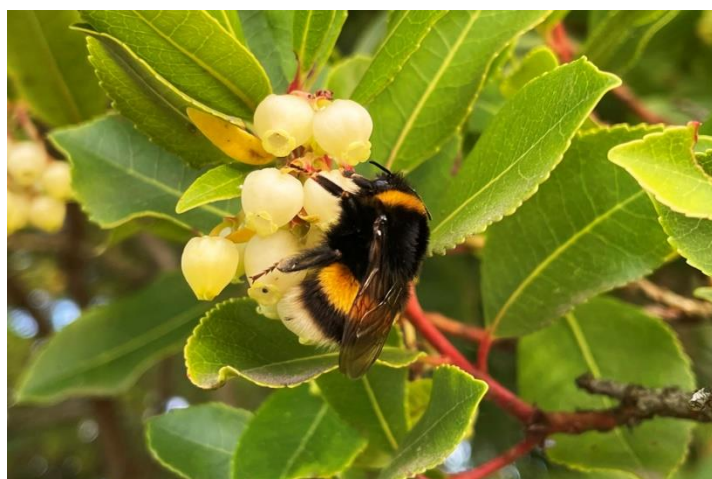
M's Action Diary for February

- Trim clematis stems back to a strong bud
- Cut back deciduous grasses such as miscanthus, down to ground level. Evergreen grasses such as stipa should be combed through to remove any dead material.
- Plant bare root hedging, roses and deciduous trees.
- Cut all tatty, brown fronds of ferns back to the base of their stalks to make way for the fresh new foliage that will unfurl.
- Give rhododendrons, azaleas and camelias a slow release plant food that has been formulated for ericaceous plants.
- Trim winter flowering heathers after they have finished flowering. Do not cut back into old wood.
- Lift and divide clumps of snowdrops and cyclamen corms to encourage spread.
- Prune winter flowering jasmine after flowering and tie in any long stems.
- Cut back mahonias after flowering, removing old stems to make room for new growth.
- Remove old hydrangea flower heads down to a large bud once danger of frost has passed.
- Keep feeding wild birds and give them fresh water to drink and bathe in.



Bumbles on Blooms

Following the Great Garden Birdwatch, it's now the turn of the bees! The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) has launched a nationwide initiative to monitor 'Bumbles on Blooms', in a bid to identify which plants are most visited by bumblebees in spring and help these vital pollinators to thrive.



From **12 February until 31 May 2024** the RHS, supported by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, is calling on all members of the public to observe bumblebee sightings on flowers in gardens and parks across the UK, and record their findings and photographs.

Bumblebees are a vital group of wild pollinators, helping to pollinate our garden plants as well as much relied on crops such as apples, tomatoes, and peas. When the weather starts to warm, queen bumblebees emerge from hibernation seeking

flowers to provide nectar as fuel for flight and protein-rich pollen to feed the developing larvae of the worker bees.

The dual challenges of habitat loss¹ and climate change mean that the availability of flowers in springtime is critically important for helping bumblebees establish successful colonies at the start of the season.

Data gathered during this project will help boost bumblebee populations by ensuring that gardeners receive the best advice for what to plant, and improve our understanding of their habits. Wildlife specialists from the RHS will monitor the results that could also provide valuable insight into whether factors such as flower colour and how urban or rural a site is influence bumblebees' plant choice.

Getting involved in this project requires a few simple steps:

1. Photograph bumblebees on flowers
2. Check the [identity of your bumblebees](#) (simply submit as 'bumblebee' if unsure)
3. Submit your record to the 'Bumbles on Blooms' project on [iNaturalistUK](#) (app or online)

For more information visit the [RHS website](#)

Green Gardening Tip – Helping Bumblebees

Bumblebees need lots of flowers to feed on. Give them a helping hand by adding some of these bumblebee favourites to your outdoor space to ensure there's always something for them to feed on in Spring and Winter before nature's bounty kicks in. Try to have at least two plants flowering each month, the winter months being most critical. Plants with large open flowers make it easier for the bees.

Spring

Almond (*Prunus dulcis*) Mar
Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) Feb,Mar
Bluebells (native) Apr,May
Crocus Jan,Feb
Flowering Currant (*Ribes*) Mar,Apr
Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*) Mar
Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari*) Mar,Apr
Lungwort (*Pulmonaria*)
Primula Vulgaris (Primrose) Mar,Apr
Snakes's head fritillary (*Fritillaria*)
Tulip Mar,Apr,May
Wallflowers (*Erysimum*) Mar/Apr

Winter

Autumn flowering crocus Nov
Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*) Nov/Dec
Deadnettle (*Lamium*) Nov
Erica Carnea (Heather) Nov,Dec,Jan
Galanthus (Snowdrop) Jan,Feb
Harebells (*Campanula*) Nov
Hellebore (Christmas/Lenten Rose) Jan,Feb,Mar
Mahonia Nov,Dec,Jan
Winter aconite Feb, Mar
Winter flowering heather (*Erica* or *Calluna*) Nov,Dec,Jan
Winter flowering clematis Dec/Jan
Winter flowering honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) Dec/Jan



And if you think your garden is already "bee-friendly" take a look at the Bumblebee Conservation Trust website and log your existing plants to see how well you score [Flower Finder](#) | [Bee Kind](#) | [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#)

For everything you might ever want to know about bumblebees visit the [Bumblebee Conservation Trust](#)

Plant Sale – Saturday 11th May, 2024

This year we are holding the Plant Sale in the Reading Room, to avoid the two issues of transporting tables and the vagaries of the weather. If you've already started planting your seeds, don't forget to plant a few extra for the plant sale.

Seeds to plant now that are always popular at the sale include:

Cosmos	Basil
Cornflowers	Cucumbers
Love in a Mist	Peppers
Marigolds	Sweet corn
Zinnias	Tomatoes



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