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Dear Member,

As I write this newsletter it's far too cold for gardening! Hopefully the unseasonal cold spell will soon be over and I'll have a chance to plant my broadbeans...

CHRISTMAS AGM AND SOCIAL

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the society will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Monday 16th December, at the Saffron Community Link on Market Street, next to the Saffron Building Society.

Please arrive from 6:45 so we are ready to start at 7:00. At this meeting, we present the accounts, elect the Committee to serve for the next year, review the past year and lay out plans for 2025. There is also an opportunity for all members to ask questions, raise suggestions and get involved in volunteering - from helping set up the various shows to organising other events. So come along and meet the Committee and other members. When the official business is over we can all enjoy some refreshments while you meet the committee and other members and discuss your ideas informally. The meeting will end at 8:30. We look forward to seeing you!



THE AUTUMN FLOWER AND PRODUCE SHOW was held in Swards End Village Hall on Sunday 29th September. We were pleased to welcome several new members, who boosted the number of exhibits to nearly 150 - in spite of it having been a difficult year for vegetable growers. The Babbington Smith Trophy for the most points in the show was won by Vera Willson, who also won the Harry Green Trophy for the best bloom in the Rose section; the Harry Green Cup for the best floral arrangement; the Walker Trophy for most points in the domestic section; and the Saffron Walden Plate for best exhibit in the vegetable section. Robin Crouchman, Sharon Davey and Alan Taylor all tied for runner-up in the Babbington Smith Trophy. David Livermore won the Ellis Rooke Cup for gaining most points in the combined shows of 2024, and the runner-up was Sharon Davey. David Livermore also won the Sewell Cup for his vegetables, and Sharon Davey won the Acrow Bowl for most points in the flower and fruit sections.



The John Coe Trophy for Best Bloom in the dahlia classes was won by Alan Taylor, and the judge awarded an RHS exceptional display certificate to his eight magnificent blooms (above centre).

In the children's classes, Chloe Hollidge and her brother Jack jointly won the Eric the Hedgehog trophy for the most points in the junior section.



Happy winners Vera Willson and David Livermore

SHOW DATES FOR 2025

SPRING DAFFODIL AND FLORAL SHOW

Sunday 13th April 2025, Swards End Village Hall

To mark the return of this very popular show, Robin Crouchman has some expert tips on getting your daffodils ready for the show (see below..)

SUMMER ROSE AND FLORAL SHOW

Saturday 21st June 2025, Swards End Village Hall

AUTUMN FLOWER AND PRODUCE SHOW

Sunday 28th September 2025, Swards End Village Hall

OTHER SOCIETY EVENTS PLANNED FOR SPRING 2025

Chile Top to Toe

Monday 3rd March, 7:00 p.m., Saffron Community Link

Liz Livermore has visited Chile twice, both times with expert botanist guides (Martin Gardner and Sabina Knees of Edinburgh Botanic Garden, and David Hazelgove, past President of the Alpine Garden Society, and Daniel Montesinos, a Peruvian botanist who has described 29 new species in the Andes mountains). She will give an illustrated talk about her travels and the plants she met along the way. This will be followed by question time and refreshments. Members £2, guests £5.

Topic to be announced

Monday 7th April, 7:00 p.m., Saffron Community Link

A Guided Tour of the Gardens at Audley End House

We hope to arrange a special Horticultural Society visit to the gardens at Audley End House - details to be announced.

Summer Garden Party

This will be at a member's house in Radwinter in early July - date to be confirmed

GROWING AND SHOWING GOOD DAFFODILS

Robin Crouchman has been a member of the Saffron Walden Horticultural Society for many years, and is a fully qualified Royal Horticultural Society Judge.

Here's his menu for growing and showing your daffodils.

Starters

- Daffodils benefit from regular watering, so beware of any dry spells in Winter or early Spring
- From late February to showtime in April apply fertiliser that is rich in potash (and go on using it during the warmer months as the flowers fade to ensure the bulb is in good condition for next year's flowering)
- As soon as any flowers start to open, take care not to let the plants dry out. Watering at this stage will help the blooms to reach their full potential size

Mains

- About three weeks before the show, check your daffodils for garden pests - pick off any slugs and use a general insecticide if necessary. To avoid damaging the flowers, try to spray only the stems and leaves
- The day before the show, cut the flowers - this will avoid a last-minute rush on the morning of the show
- Use a soft paintbrush to gently remove any pollen that has got stuck to the petals (but leave the stamens alone)
- Check that the flowers you want to show are at right-angles to the stem (i.e. not looking down). A flower that is slightly twisted can sometimes be gently manoeuvred into a better position. For tazettas (bunch flowered daffodils) carefully separate the flowers so that each has its own space. The judge will look at your exhibit from the front first, but will also inspect it from every angle
- Timing is important. If it looks like your daffodils will be at their best too early, you can slow them down by putting them in a moderately cool fridge up to a week before the show - you'll probably need to cut them to fit them in! If you think they might not be ready in time, bring them indoors to a slightly warmer spot (but avoid direct sunlight on a windowsill which might burn the petals)
- On show day, you can enhance your exhibit by including a couple of leaves cut to just below the height of the flower. This applies to single stem exhibits or tazettas, but don't overdo the leaves if there are three or more blooms in the vase

Afters

- Treat your bulbs well and they'll bloom even better next Spring. Feed them with potash, and don't forget to water them

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Traditional Christmas Wreath Workshop at the Old Sun Inn, Church Street

On Saturday December 14th from 10:00 - 12:00 *The Old Sun Inn* is organising a workshop on how to create a traditional Christmas wreath. Tickets cost £30, and include all materials and festive refreshments, but you will need to take your own secateurs and an apron. Book your tickets via the Tourist Information Office on 01799 524002. Compared to the price of a shop-bought wreath, this looks quite a bargain... and in one of the most outstanding mediaeval houses in Saffron Walden.

BBC Gardeners' World Autumn Fair - Friday 29th to Sunday 31st August 2025

This event is being held at Audley End House and Gardens (again, it's such a wonderful setting). You may have seen advance publicity for the **Beautiful Borders** competition. These are compact, 9m² show gardens, filled with creative design features and imaginative planting. The theme for the 2025 competition is 'Cultivating Connections', inspired by the power of garden spaces, no matter how small, to foster meaningful connections. Entries are assessed on-site by professional assessors, with medals and awards presented for Best Beautiful Border, Best Interpretation of the Theme, and Best Subscriber Border. Visitors also vote for their favourite Border in the People's Choice award. Additionally, 12 bursaries worth £200 each are available for plants and props. To enter a Beautiful Border for the BBC Gardeners' World Autumn Fair 2025, download the

application form and find full details at <https://www.bbcgardenersworldlive.com/autumn-fair/apply-for-a-beautiful-border-2024> BBC Gardeners' World events' friendly and experienced horticultural team support entrants every step of the way, from application to final build. Applications close on May 1, 2025.

MEMBERSHIP OF SAFFRON WALDEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Subscriptions for 2025-26 will be due at the beginning of March - your support is what enables us to hold the Spring, Summer and Autumn Shows every year and is helping us bring back the regular meetings and talks that we enjoyed before Covid intervened. I'll be sending details in February about how to pay your 2025 subscription, and Membership Cards can be collected at **Chile Top to Toe** on Monday 3rd March, or any of the other Society events next year.

Bye for now, and hope you enjoy planning next year's gardening from a warm armchair.

From your Membership Secretary,

Hilary Shibata