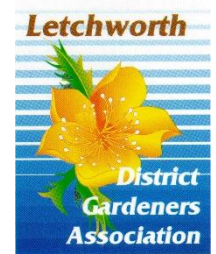


GLEANINGS FROM THE COMPOST HEAP

WINTER 2024/5



WELCOME to the **COMPOST HEAP**. In this edition we give you the chance to win **£15** worth of vouchers to spend at the Trading Store. See page 7 for details. Before that, let's start with a quick look back at 2024.

A LOOK BACK AT 2024



Our best day of the year came in June when over 130 members and guests joined us for the Bob Flowerdew talk. The £350 raised from the charity raffle and commission from Bob's book sales was generously matched by LDGA and donated to Garden House Hospice Care.

Sue Mitchell's 'Enraptured with Raptors' talk including a visit from some of her owls was our most popular speaker evening, closely followed by Fiona Rose with her talk entitled 'In the Garden with William Morris'.



Chaco
(Elmo)

White-faced Scops
(Yoda)

Barn
(Aero)

COMMITTEE MATTERS

On a less positive note our Secretary Diane Pohlman has had to stand down from committee for the time being due to ill-health. We wish her all the best on her road to recovery.

This means we need a volunteer to cover for her on a temporary basis. If you are interested in helping out, please email chairman@ldga.org.uk and he will contact you to discuss further.

As mentioned in the last edition, we also need to find volunteers to help keep the Trading Store running in the manner we have become accustomed.

The two Johns have said they will be standing down at the AGM of 2026 so we must act now so those with the knowledge can pass it on.

Come and join our friendly and sociable Trading Store team. Special skills are not necessary, just your enthusiasm, as full training will be given. There are a wide range of tasks to suit every interest:

- identifying new stock & suppliers
- ordering & pricing
- shelf & product labelling
- receiving deliveries
- managing the stock file
- programming the till
- organising rotas
- session managers, till operators
- store helpers, store upkeep

If you would like to get involved, come and speak to us at the Trading Store or email trading@ldga.org.uk.

COMING SOON

Here's what's coming soon; for the full year's programme see your new Trading List or visit our website www.ldga.org.uk

Thursday 16th January at 12:30pm



Sausage and mash lunch with vegetables and onion gravy followed by a light-hearted quiz. £16 per head.

Letchworth Golf Club.

Must be booked in advance (see below).

Sunday 26th January at 9:00am

Trading Store opens for the 2025 season.

We start the year with our 'Potato Day' when there will be 10% discount on all seed potatoes and the first chance to renew your membership in person.



Wednesday 5th February at 10:00am

Coffee Morning at Tapps Garden Centre.

Thursday 20th February at 7:30pm

AGM followed by a members' social at Letchworth Golf Club.

The agenda and previous year's minutes will be circulated nearer the time. Copies of the examined accounts will be available just before the meeting starts. However, if you would like to look at them in advance, please let us know by emailing treasurer@ldga.org.uk or asking at the Trading Store and we'll get a copy to you.

Wednesday 5th March at 10:00am

Coffee Morning at Tapps Garden Centre.

Thursday 20th March at 7:30pm

'The Show Must Go On' - preparations for shows with Annie Godfrey from Daisy Roots at Letchworth Golf Club.

Wednesday 2nd April at 10:00am

Coffee Morning at Tapps Garden Centre.

Thursday 10th April at 7:30pm



'Butterflies of Britain and Europe' with Roger Gibbons at Letchworth Golf Club. (This is one week earlier than usual)

For more information or to book the lunch please contact our meetings organiser Jane on 01462 635745 or email meetings@ldga.org.uk

The cost of our regular Thursday evening meetings at Letchworth Golf Club is £4 for members and £5 for non-members which includes refreshments.

One of the advantages of meetings at the Golf Club is the availability of food beforehand. You can choose from the bar menu or the daily specials and there is no need to book. Orders must be in by 6:30pm. If you're not having supper, you can still come along to the talk as usual.



You maybe interested to know that the Golf Club offers a social membership. This gives you and your guests access to the club house where you are entitled to discount on food and drink purchases. You may also participate in all club social events and use the clubhouse for private parties. The yearly fee is £180 plus £95 bar levy. For full details call 01462 683203 to contact the club directly.

OUTINGS

Looking much further ahead, we intend to do another winter lights visit this year, the destination is yet to be decided.



TRADING STORE

The Trading Store closed on Sunday 27th October at the end of what was another successful year.

With the government's peat ban floundering many retailers have resorted to selling peat-based products again. We, however, are sticking with our mainly peat free offerings. Some old names such as New Horizon PF and Melcourt PF won't be reappearing this year as we didn't believe they gave best value for money. Instead, we have recently introduced this trio from Durston's which we hope you will like.



- Durston's Multi-Purpose Peat Free, 40l (red bag) £5.35
- Durston's Multi-Purpose Peat Free + John Innes, 40l (blue bag) £6.25
- Peat Free John Innes Seed, 25l £4.95

Regular visitors will know that during the year we installed a shiny new motorised roller shutter door at the Trading Store.



This not only makes life easier for those opening and closing the store but also adds an extra layer of security. Oh, and it looks better too.

Thank you to all our members for your continued support by purchasing items at the store. Thanks also to all the helpers, your assistance has been invaluable.

We reopen the store for the 2025 season on Sunday 26th January at 9:00am. You will be able to renew your membership and get the usual opening day 10% discount on all seed potatoes. We look forward to seeing you all then. Our preferred method of payment is credit or debit card.

Here's a reminder of the additional varieties of seed potato we have this year:

- First early - Red Duke of York - a heritage potato variety dating back to 1942
- Second early - Estima – which produces large oval tubers great for baking
- Main crop - Carolus - a new variety with dual blight resistance
- Main crop - Kerrs Pink – best simply boiled in their pink skins. Ireland's favourite potato.

Let us know what you think. Email trading@ldga.org.uk or speak to us in store.

FERTILISER

We are often asked at the Trading Store what is the difference between one sort of fertiliser and another, growmore and blood fish and bone for instance. To try to answer this question let's first look at some fertiliser basics.

What is fertiliser? According to the RHS: *'Fertilisers are concentrated sources of plant nutrients, usually in compact form such as pellets, granules, powders or liquids. They are used to improve plant growth and yields.'*

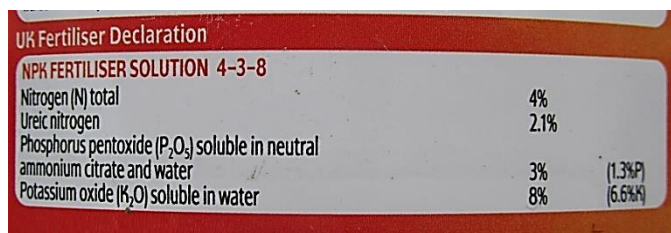
This is not to be confused with soil conditioners such as manure, leaf mould and garden compost which help the soil to form into crumbs with spaces for air and water between them, making nutrients, water and air all more available to plant roots.

Most fertilisers are based on the three major plant nutrients: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P) and Potassium (K). The proportion of each varies according to which aspect of plant growth you are trying to improve.

- Nitrogen is for green leafy growth
- Phosphorus is for root growth
- Potassium is for fruit and flowers

The NPK system of identifying nutrient content is mandatory on the packaging of all fertiliser products in the UK and takes the form N:P:K where N is the % of Nitrogen by weight in the fertiliser, P is the % of Phosphorus and K is the % of Potassium. The rest is inert base material.

For example, 7:7:7 indicates 7% of each nutrient and is therefore a balanced fertiliser. Whereas 4:3:8 indicates a higher proportion of K making it more suitable as a tomato feed, as with Tomorite below.



UK Fertiliser Declaration			
NPK FERTILISER SOLUTION 4-3-8			
Nitrogen (N) total	4%		
Ureic nitrogen	2.1%		
Phosphorus pentoxide (P ₂ O ₅) soluble in neutral ammonium citrate and water	3%	(1.3%P)	
Potassium oxide (K ₂ O) soluble in water	8%	(6.6%K)	

Be aware though, with this system of marking the P and the K indicates the values of phosphorus pentoxide (P₂O₅) and potassium oxide (K₂O). The actual values of P, 43.6% of P₂O₅, and K, 83% of K₂O, are usually shown in brackets.

In addition to this, fertilisers contain small amounts of other elements called trace elements such as magnesium and iron which are also essential for strong growth.

Fertilisers are available in two main forms: inorganic which are man-made and organic which are derived from plants or animals.

Inorganic fertilisers are faster acting and include Growmore, Miracle-Gro, Chempak and Tomorite.

Organic fertilisers tend to be slower acting and include bone meal, fish blood & bone, poultry manure and liquid nettle or comfrey feeds.

The last two examples can be made at home, they won't have exact NPK values but in general nettle feeds will be high in Nitrogen and comfrey will have more Potassium. You may also consider getting a wormery, this will give good general feed which should be diluted at a rate of about 10:1 before use.

Let's look at the NPK values of some of the fertilisers we keep at the store.

	N	P	K
Bonemeal	3.5	18	0
Fish Blood & Bone	5	5	6
Growmore	7	7	7
Rose Food	5	5	10
Sulphate of Ammonia	21	0	0
Sulphate of Potash	0	0	51
Chempak 2 High N	25	15	15
Chempak 3 Balanced	20	20	20
Chempak 4 High K	15	15	30
Chempak 8 Low N	12.5	25	25
Doff Tomato Feed	4	2	10
Tomorite	4	3	8
Maxicrop Tomato	4	2	6
Chicken Manure	4	3	2.5
GroSure Slow Release	12	7	19
Miracle Gro Soluble	24	18	16
Miracle Gro Slow Rel	22	7	14
Phostrogen	16	10	24
Multicote Pellets	15	9	15

It might seem that the bigger the number the better the product should be but always check the pack size and application rates of each product to work out the best value for money.

Back to the original question, what's the difference ... well it's all in the NPK.

PRODUCE SHOWS

A big thank you from Show Secretary Paul to all those, some for the first time, who helped set up, run and pack away the shows. Without your help there would be no shows.

Here is a quick reminder of the dates and photography themes for 2025:

Summer Show: Sat 12th July

- Wildlife / Shades of yellow / Set in stone

Autumn Show: Sat 13th September

- Blowing in the wind / Machinery / A subject of your choice



If you have not shown before, make 2025 your first time. You never know you could be going home with the new exhibitor's prize. Paul is the man to contact if you need help or advice. Email shows@ldga.org.uk or give him a call on 01438 727422.

When we get it right our shows run like well-oiled machines, but a bit like the proverbial swan, there is a lot of paddling going on under the surface. Let's have a look behind the scenes of a year in the life of our shows.

You could say our show year starts on show day the previous year. Because dates of second Saturdays in July and September are set in stone now, we can provisionally book judges as we see them. We can provisionally book the church hall too.

During show season we visit other shows for ideas and inspiration.

Next, we have our show sub-committee meeting, usually in October, where we carry out a review of the year's shows. We look at what's been good and what needs improvement. We also discuss feedback and suggestions received. Amendments to the show schedule are noted and themes for floral art and photography classes are chosen. We can now confirm church hall and judge bookings.

By mid-January we have amended, proofread, and printed the show schedule. Copies are sent to the judges and other interested parties. The website is also updated. The Banksian, sweet pea and NDS medals as well as BFS blue ribbon are ordered from the relevant societies. Online publicity is arranged.



About a month before the show:

- we collect in trophies so they can be engraved and cleaned
- we make our first appeal for cakes for the refreshments
- we obtain raffle prizes
- we arrange a cash float
- we arrange local publicity

About a week before show:

- we erect advertising banners in church hall grounds
- we ensure we have helpers for show day (teas, raffle, plant sales, stewards)
- we arrange to collect hall keys, confirm time for access for set up on Friday and recruit helpers
- we start to receive entry forms, emails, and phone calls from exhibitors
- we make our final appeal for cakes for the refreshments

Two days to go:

- we fill out exhibitor cards for entries already received

One day to go:

- we transport show equipment to the hall from trading store
- we set out show tables, cover and place class markers
- we set out tables and chairs for refreshments
- we make vases available for exhibitors

Show day morning. Doors are open by 8:30am and there is a flurry of activity until staging ends at 11:15am. We deal with exhibitors wanting extra entry cards or more space on the show bench. We deal with extra exhibitors arriving last minute. The kitchen is prepared.



Show day mid-day. Judges and accompanying stewards then take over. Winners of classes and cups are recorded, and prize stickers placed on exhibitors' cards. Photos are taken for the website. We then ensure that judges have their gratuities and refreshments, raffle, and plant stall floats are allocated.



Show day afternoon. Doors open at 2pm. While the visitors are looking round, behind the scenes trophy winners and prize money is being worked out.

We keep a record of who wins the awards so we know who to ask when we need to collect them the following year.

At the end of the afternoon, we draw the raffle and make the presentations.

After exhibits are removed, we pack away equipment, chairs, and tables. We clean the hall, remove the rubbish, turn out the lights, lock the doors, and return the keys.

In the days following the show, we return all show equipment to the trading store and deliver any unclaimed raffle prizes. We then provide the treasurer with a breakdown of costs and return float.

WEATHER WATCH

Since the last Weather Watch in late summer, we have generally experienced mild, dull and unsettled conditions, in fact much the same as 2024 as a whole.

September started warm then turned wet. Things were much drier by the end of October which made for easier leaf collecting. This continued into November until 19th when we saw a sprinkling of early morning snow.



The weekend of 24th and 25th November was disrupted by storm Bert and two weeks later, an action replay with storm Darragh which produced a 97mph gust on the S. Devon coast. December continued wet with some localised flooding, then another spell of stormy weather on New Year's Eve caused more disruption. January has started cold.

PLANTS NAMED AFTER PEOPLE



Aubrieta

Claude Aubriet
(c.1650s –1742)
French flower
painter

Lavatera

Johann Lavater
(1611–1691)
Swiss physician
and naturalist



Tradescantia

John Tradescant
the Younger
(1608–1662)
English naturalist
and explorer

Weigela

Christian Weigel
(1748–1831)
German scientist



Wisteria

Caspar Wistar
(1761–1818)
American
physician and
anatomist

COMPETITION TIME



£15 worth of Trading Store vouchers could be yours if you can find all the listed words hidden in the grid: they can be forwards, backwards, up, down or diagonal.

L	N	S	U	R	O	H	P	S	O	H	P
A	I	E	D	E	C	S	T	G	B	H	O
E	T	L	O	E	H	A	T	R	L	S	R
M	R	T	O	E	E	T	O	O	O	I	C
E	O	T	F	L	M	O	M	W	O	F	I
N	G	E	F	C	P	P	O	M	D	F	X
O	E	N	O	A	A	S	R	O	S	E	A
B	N	L	D	R	K	S	I	R	O	N	M
M	U	L	T	I	C	O	T	E	R	O	R
I	I	C	O	M	F	R	E	Y	G	B	R

PHOSPHORUS NITROGEN COMFREY DOFF
MULTICOTE GROWMORE NETTLES CHEMPAK
MIRACLE GRO BLOOD FISH BONE MAXICROP
ROSE FOOD TOMORITE BONEMEAL POTASH

When you have got them all, rearrange the unused letters to make a word and write it in the box below.

See reverse for details of how to enter

RHS DISCOUNT CARD

As most of you will already know, one of the benefits of our RHS affiliation is free garden entry each year for up to 55 of our members and guests.

Another benefit is a discount card which gives 50% off the cost of entry for two at any RHS garden. Members may reserve the use of this card from 1st February on a first come first served basis. Collection and return of the card will be for the member to arrange. Please take advantage of this benefit if you can.

Competition rules & how to enter

To enter this free competition simply cut out this form, find the words in the grid, solve the anagram, and add your name and membership no. below. Hand it in to us at meetings, coffee mornings, or at the Trading Store when it reopens. You could also email the answer to competition@ldga.org.uk or include it with your membership renewal.

Open to current members only and only one entry per membership please.

All entries must be received by 12:30pm on Sunday 16th February.

The winner of the Trading Store vouchers will be the first correct entry drawn out of the bag at the AGM on 20th February.

The winner will be notified directly.

The organisers of this competition are not eligible to enter. All decisions made by LDGA are final and no correspondence will be entered into.

Name _____

Membership number _____

MEMBERSHIP

It's that time of year when membership renewals are due. It's still £6 per household for the year, so please re-join and take advantage of all the benefits that LDGA has to offer; the savings that can be made at our Trading Store alone make it worth doing.

It couldn't be easier: fill out the renewal form and return it to us with your fee. We prefer you to do this in person if possible. Come and see us at coffee mornings, monthly meetings or at the Trading Store when it reopens. Otherwise, we accept bank transfers or payment by post, just follow the instructions on the form. If you are not renewing in person, please add £1 to cover the cost of posting your new membership card or send an s.a.e.

Andrew Dear (Chair)

chairman@ldga.org.uk

Vacant (Secretary)

secretary@ldga.org.uk

John Riley (Trading)

trading@ldga.org.uk

Paul Heydon (Shows)

shows@ldga.org.uk

Andrew Dear (Compost Heap)

editor@ldga.org.uk

Jane Thorn (Meetings)

meetings@ldga.org.uk

For all LDGA information, including events, store opening times and much more, visit: www.ldga.org.uk

Promoting horticulture since 1906

Contact