



# Bishop's Waltham Gardening Club

## JUNE 2026

**Well, thank goodness May has gone! The first half was a bit of a nightmare for us with cold winds drying the soil, then very cold -and frosty- nights and then heave showers hitting our crops. As with everything it's 'Global Warming' but I think I will complain to Trading Standards about the use of 'Warming'!!!!**

Everything should be growing well now the danger of frost has passed, and the ground has warmed up, so we are really going flat out to ensure our plants are healthy and well-watered.

If you started French Beans under cover, you may have already planted them out, but later is definitely best in order to get them 'growing away' quickly for a tender crop.



The RHS says that "Dwarf beans are quick to grow, but only crop for a few weeks, so you need to make [repeat sowings](#) or sow cultivars with different cropping periods for a summer-long supply. Climbing beans take longer to reach cropping stage, but will then produce beans over a longer period, from mid-summer to early autumn if picked regularly"

The picture on the left is Cobra, a climbing variety, but I espied a different variety called Mamba from Thompson and Morgan at our -fairly- local Haskins, West End. It promises to outstrip Cobra, so I am giving it a try.

You will, I hope, have already erected the canes either in 'wigwam' or 'V' shapes ready for the crop. The RHS adds "Raw pods/beans harmful if eaten. Wear gloves and other protective" (the mind boggles!!). I must admit I have never read that one before! Supposedly, "French beans do not need feeding and can actually improve nitrogen levels in the soil. In the autumn, cut plants just above soil level, leaving the roots behind. These will help to boost nitrogen levels as they decay in the soil. The tops can be added to the compost

heap.", although other advisers say "use Tomato Fertiliser" Either way, plant in good, well drained, soil -average soil is fine (not too alkaline or acid)- facing south if possible. and keep watered.



### Spot the difference?? French Bean Mamba

**With heat, you get evaporation and this can dry out your soil very quickly. After giving your plants a thorough watering, lay a thick mulch -but not touching any stems- and a layer of manure would be ideal, feeding as it keeps the moisture in. There is a product that is useful around strawberries and it's called 'Strulch', not cheap but seems useful.**



**Manure, or a choice of these £?>>**

**Can you trust online purchases?**

I ask this question as I cannot say that I have had pleasant results from various suppliers. I have bought better cheaper plants locally and I know what I am getting. The only one that I can say was reasonable was the firm that is very popular for bulbs.

As an example, I wanted a white 'Bleeding Heart' to go with the Red one in my garden. I paid £14.95 for what looked a good specimen on the internet. When it arrived, it was a puny offering, one broken stem and looked a real, sad, plant! I immediately took a photo and, by chance, visited a local – and very reasonable- Garden Centre this side of Wickham. There I saw a really sturdy healthy plant for..... £7.99, and I could have bought 3 for £7 each! Another example was a bulb supplier, direct from Holland. The goods arrived well packed, of good quality and with quite 'professional' notes etc.. I duly planted a window box with 'tete a tete' and was sure this was going to be a spectacular display. I have always had a good show, but these were top-sized bulbs. In February a few came up and flowered, but not the show I wanted. Since then, others have shown and flowered but not tete a tete!!! What is your experience of 'online'? Please let me know. Incidentally, the famous firm involved repaid my cost without quibble or delay – after I sent them a picture of 'theirs' and the one I bought for £7.99.

**Proof that our 'Speaker Events' welcome expert visitors**, various subjects and offer superb value as it's included in your -very modest- annual subscriptions.



June's guest speaker's subject is '**GARDEN SNIPPETS**' on **Wednesday June 24<sup>th</sup>, with Pip Bensley.**

**Pip has a wealth of experience in the horticultural and floral world, and this is shared fully in her talks. Her talks are accompanied by beautiful colourful images taken thanks to her incredible access to the top nurseries in the country whilst the plant buyer at Hilliers. As usual it's at St Peter's Church Hall, Free Street, Bishops Waltham SO32 1EE. Doors open at 6.45pm, for a 7pm start. Members free; Visitors £2;**

**Refreshments and a Raffle. This venue is extremely popular, not only for it's handy locality, but also for comfort and the various screens and sound system that means everyone can see and hear.**

**One of our previous speakers, Maggie Haynes from the Tuppenny Barn Project, has been awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal by the RHS. Our congratulations to Maggie for a well-deserved award.**

**I was interested to learn via a 'Which' Magazine** that tomato plants grown in varieties of peat-free and seed composts from Levington and Wickes had shown signs of weed killer damage. This can happen in 'green bib composts' where lawn clippings are part of the problem, having been weed-treated.

**Some good news** is that 'Sylva Grow' Multi-Purpose Compost and also Seed Compost rated highly in their trials. So, it proves it's worth paying a little extra for quality as this is the variety we stock at our Albany Road Shop!

**On the subject of seed compost**, I used it this year and had much better results than previously when I used a multi-purpose compost. Nothing wrong with the compost, just too 'strong' I guess, in fertiliser and maybe a bit too 'open' in its structure. This advice from the Internet..... *Using multi-purpose compost may seem convenient, but it often contains too many nutrients and a coarse texture that's not ideal for tiny roots. The finer mixes of seed compost reduce the risk of damping-off disease and encourage faster germination.* 'Which' also marked down the Levington variety of seed compost.



**Sylva Grow, highly rated by 'Which' and stocked in our Albany Road shop.**

**Also, I see that our 'Jacks Magic' compost is recommended by Dobies.**

## Bridge that gap.

The tulips have finished, the daffs long gone and my wonderful bellis have lasted from February 'til now and the Wallflowers have faded. I have planted the summer bedding but there would be a distinct lack of colour without plants such as Sweet Williams, Cosmos, Lupins, Scabious, Poppies and Geum.



There are other hardy perennials such as Delphiniums (if they can escape the attention of the slugs!), Herbaceous Salvia, Lavender, Penstemon and Hardy Geraniums.

Sowing seeds now should mean a quick getaway with the warm soil but do beware of the summer sun as it can 'boil' the seeds so a little shade can help. Don't flood the seed bed, but prepare it well – a recent tip was to prepare, then wait two weeks whilst the weed seeds appear then zap them with a hoe- gently water before sowing - perhaps some vermiculite would be handy in the groove you made for the seeds- then thinly sow and cover as instructed on the packet. Gently water again and keep moist. Once growing well, again, refer to the packet for moving to final 'quarters'.

One of the more recent pleasures at the allotments is to see flowers on many plots. This not only looks nice -and takes the sometimes bland look of greenery- but encourages more pollinators and welcome predators who will help keep down the 'fly'. Maybe also it provides a 'corridor' for these flying friends?

Writing about the fliers, I kept meaning to dig up the surplus parsnip plants but other tasks always seemed to come first. I now have a 5' (about 1.5mtrs for you younger readers!!) group of plants that are almost ready to flower (very tiny and not colourful) but are so popular with the bees, wasps and all sorts of others. It's like Cow parsley and the RHS refers to this as...

Cow parsley is a native wildflower, commonly found throughout the UK. It is increasingly grown in gardens as an ornamental, but often just appears in less-tended areas like orchards and [allotment](#) boundaries, as well as in gardens bordering open countryside. This is because cow parsley produces lots of seed, so an individual plant can quickly multiply. Bear in mind that its flowers provide an early source of nectar for many [pollinators and](#)



[beneficial insects](#), including [hoverflies](#), other flies and beetles, and its seeds are eaten by small [birds](#). Grown in a [grassy meadow](#) or [wildlife corner](#), it is a great way to boost the biodiversity of your garden.

Well, there we are. My inadvertent laziness in not clearing the parsnips was actually a good thing for Nature!

*A common blue butterfly feeding on a cow parsley flower (Shutterstock)*

**Do the 'Oca Coky'. They suggest a May sowing, but the frost has now gone and the soil much warmer. However, this is the background from [Garden Organic.org.uk](#)**

Oca (*Oxalis tuberosa*) is a staple crop of the ancient Peruvians as they will grow at high altitude on relatively poor, acidic soils at low temperatures and in high rainfall areas. Introduced to the UK in 1600, it was suggested as a possible substitute for potatoes after the Great Famine in Ireland but has never been intensively developed by selective breeding unlike the potato.

### **How to sow oca**

Oca is not hardy, so needs to be started off indoors in most areas. Tubers begin to form as the days shorten, so in the north or frost prone areas it's advisable to either grow them under protection or in containers so they can have the longest possible growing season.

Plant tubers in April, individually in 10-15cm/4-6in pots, on a bright but frost-free windowsill. Shoots will appear within a couple of weeks and plants grow quite rapidly. In sheltered sites, oca will often overwinter if a little extra protection is given such as a mulch of twigs, bracken or straw (as for dahlia tubers.)

Alternatively, tubers may be planted directly in May (they are likely to be showing sprouts by



this stage). Press them down into the soil at least the same depth as their length, and space around 30cm/12in apart, 60cm/2ft between rows or at 40cm/14in apart in a bed. Protect with fleece if the weather suddenly turns chilly. Avoid very alkaline soils.

**An oca in flower above pretty, clover-like foliage.**