



SOUTH EAST ESSEX ORGANIC GARDENERS
NEWSLETTER NO: 185 / JANUARY 2026
<https://seeog.org.uk/>

Season's greetings and best wishes for the New Year to our lovely members! Thank you for the mutual support that kept us at SEEORG going throughout the past year. We look forward to meeting up with you all soon!

SEEORG was formed in 1994, to promote the principles of organic gardening by:

- Composting organic waste
- Protecting wildlife
- Reducing pollution
- Encouraging species diversity

We are a local group of Garden Organic; supporting and working with the Soil Association and Pesticide Action Network UK.

We also have a Facebook group for SE Essex Organic Gardeners, for members and supporters at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/43705483846/> Why not check it out?

Housekeeping, etc.

To avoid disappointment, do please make a careful note now of ALL EVENTS IN OUR CALENDAR. Our meetings start at 20:00 sharp, unless stated otherwise.

Membership

Membership fees or renewals are usually due in **July** unless you joined at the beginning of the year, in which case you don't have to re-join until July of the following year. You can pay by Bank Transfer, cheque, cash or by post. Bank details: Account No: 65198805; Sort Code 08 92 99.

If you're paying by cheque, please send it to Ray How, SEEORG Membership Secretary, 5 Dalys Road, Rochford, SS4 1RA. It should be made payable to South East Essex Organic Gardeners. Alternatively you are welcome to pay in person at one of our meetings.

If you wish to set up a standing order, you can pick up a form, fill it in and let your bank know what you want to do. This is an easy way to remember and it just gets done automatically.
<https://seeog.org.uk/joi/>

Newsletter copy

Winter-themed? And pictures for our website! Any knowledge or insight you want to share? A write-up of a SEEOG event or other related event you've been to and more! We're receiving final submissions for the **March 2026 newsletter by Sunday 22 February**. Suggestions for trips out? The odd article on other areas of organic thought would also be most welcome. Please also include a link to each item, if possible, for fact-checking purposes, names, etc. This does save a lot of time!

SEEOG GROUP NIGHTS/EVENTS/VISITS 2025

How to get to Trust Links Rochford: Trust Links House, College Gardens, Rochford, SS4 1YL.
Do please let us know whether you need a lift and we will try our very best to assist.
<https://seeog.org.uk/2022/04/how-to-get-to-trustlinks-rochford-update/>

Monday 19 January: 'Create Holistic Wellbeing Through Growing a Permaculture Garden' presented by John Metcalf, Permaculture Designer, soil enthusiast, and teacher.
mbassadors@john-metcalf/

Saturday 7 February: Seed Potato Day – Do please promote our event as widely as you can! We've circulated our poster and Potato Day Pre-Order Form, which can also be downloaded from our website at <https://seeog.org.uk/> **Do please take advantage of this and remember that our tuber price will be 20p per tuber only to SEEOG members who pre-order. Keep checking our website, as well, because it's here that you will find everything from now on.**

Monday 16 March: "Allotments-Advantages and how to keep the land free" presented by Ray How. Ray covers the Eastern Region of The National Allotment Society. Are you a member yet?
<https://thenas.org.uk/>

Monday 18 May: 'Niche No Dig' presented by John Pollard and Jong Longhurst. It's a kind of deviation from the all-or-nothing approach and is based on their own rookie experience, reading, etc. It reaches to limited-space growing.

Tuesday 23 June / 08:15 for 09:00: Essex Schools Food & Farming Day, ARU Writtle, with our Home composting demonstration. This interactive event has been running since 2008. Hosting 3,000 pupils aged 8-11 (years 4, 5 & 6) from Essex Primary schools, it is an extremely popular event, and they are always oversubscribed. They will have the same six zones again in 2026, including Crops, Food, Livestock, Machinery, Countryside & Environment, and Rural Safety & STEM. Volunteers gratefully received! Here's what we did last year!
<https://seeog.org.uk/?s=Writtle+2025>

Monday 20 July: "How to use what's in season and your harvest" presented by Fiona Clapperton. Given how climate change is affecting us, it's very hard to judge.

Monday 21 September: "Japanese Gardens-a brief history, reflections on the 2025 Japanese Garden Intensive Seminar" presented by Damien Errington

Monday 16 November: "Gardening the World" presented by a speaker from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

World Soil Day: December: Guest speaker: Spencer Christy, Farm Director Lauriston Farm Limited

OTHER EVENTS IN OUR CALENDAR

Wassailing! Sunday 18 January 2026, 14:30-15:30, at St Laurence Orchard, Eastwoodbury Lane, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6UY: Join us at for our annual celebration of nature and community, where we sing songs and awaken the trees ready for Spring. A wassail is a blessing which means 'Be of good health' derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'Waes Hael'. It's a blessing for the New Year to scare away any evil spirits that would harm the trees and prevent them from bearing a full crop the next year. A crowd assembles as much banging of pots, loud singing, dancing and playing musical instruments help to make the ceremony more meaningful and spectacular. Then everyone shares a toast to the trees. Toasted bread is then tied to the trees to tempt the birds back into the orchard to help fertilise the trees once again.

NEWS

Allotment news:

1. Stoney Road Allotments, with their distinctive five summerhouses, are a rare surviving example of Coventry's early 20th-century heritage. In recent decades, the summerhouses have suffered neglect, vandalism, and decay. We have provided £250,000 in grant funding to Coventry City Council for the comprehensive repair of 3 of the listed summerhouses. The work included replacing the roof coverings, repairs to the external fabric and rainwater goods, and external redecoration. Working with allotment holders, the original features in these rare survivals have been repaired and restored.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/in-your-area/midlands/grant-for-rare-horticulture-heritage-site/>

2. Good article here...on page 22: Does your site have the best protection possible?

<https://online.fliphtml5.com/rlpov/inje/>

Credit: Allotment & Leisure Gardener / Issue 4 / 2025

Climate:

1. As weather patterns shift and extremes become more common, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Garden writer and author Becky Searle's latest Dalefoot blog reminds us that even small actions in our gardens can make a difference. She looks at how healthy soil stores carbon, how thoughtful design can help our plots ride out storms and dry spells, and why growing even a little of our own food is a surprisingly powerful step. You can read Becky's guide to building climate change resilience for the gardener here:

<https://www.dalefootcomposts.co.uk/latest-news/news/2025/12/building-climate-change-resilience-for-the-gardener.aspx>

2. Climateflation: the food system in crisis

Rising prices, shrinking harvests, and the myth of "sustainable" agriculture reveal why Big Ag is as dangerous as Big Oil

29 NOVEMBER 2025, JONATHON PORRITT

<https://www.meer.com/en/97076-climateflation-the-food-system-in-crisis>

3. The climate and nature crisis is a multi-pronged emergency impacting all aspects of British life, from national security to the food supply. This briefing was commissioned to report the latest evidence, make clear what is at stake, and outline actionable solutions.

<https://www.nebriefing.org/>

4. The National Preparedness Commission and very many specialists in this field warn arable farming in the UK would largely come to an end. See:

<https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/blind-spots-on-climate-tipping-points-reveal-complacency-on-climate-change-security-threats/>

Garden Organic news

1. Vague timescales and woolly words make the government's Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) a disappointing read-with a worrying lack of commitment to ending peat and pesticide use. Their CEO Fiona Taylor said: "It's hard not to despair-the time for serious reform in all aspects of environmental improvement is right now...the government is missing a golden opportunity to invest in public health by setting out a pathway to eliminate pesticides – and each day that a peat ban is shelved is another day this precious natural resource is stripped from our ancient peat bogs." Read more about the Plan and their response here: <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news/eip-response>

2. Grow your horticultural expertise with our new online course

Gardeners at the beginning of their career, and amateur gardeners keen to expand their knowledge, can sign up to our new online learning certificate, which provides a solid foundation in sustainable and organic horticulture. Led by our expert horticulturist Chris Collins, participants will be able to work through a series of self-guided modules that cover the key principles and practical approaches to organic growing.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/get-involved/courses-and-events/about-our-training/grow-your-skills-with-our-online-certificate>

3. With little to no discussion happening in parliament about a peat ban, we've teamed up with the Peat Free Partnership to demand the Government commits to a long overdue ban on peat compost. The campaign will include a petition and letter template so you can write to your MP. Sign the petition at actnow.peatfreepartnership.org.uk/end-peat-sales

4. Scientists have discovered a rapid molecular switch in plant roots that allows them to detect dry soils and redirect root growth to find water. This discovery could help in developing drought-resilient crops and addressing future food security challenges. Roots typically branch out in response to moisture in the soil, foraging for water and nutrients. However, when the growing root loses contact with moist soil, it temporarily halts the formation of lateral branches. This smart response helps plants redirect their root growth toward areas with higher water availability. This new study, led by scientists at the University of Nottingham in collaboration with Durham University, has identified a rapid signalling mechanism that enables plant roots to detect and respond to dry soil conditions. The study, published in *Science*, reveals that this adaptive response is triggered by a rapid increase in reactive oxygen species (ROS) in root tips. ROS act as stress signals, indicating to the roots that it has entered a dry zone.

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/scientists-discover-smart-switch-in-plants-that-allows-them-to-redirect-roots-to-find-water>

5. We've signed the Declaration on UK Insect Declines – but now it's time for action! The UK needs to create a 'Big Insect Rescue Plan' – but we need your help to shape it.

<https://butterfly-conservation.org/big-insect-rescue-plan>

6. 2026 Members Experiments

We're running three experiments this year. We'll share updates and details about our members' experiments online and in our *Organic Matters* newsletter. You can sign up for our 2026 experiments by clicking on the links below:

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/citizen-science-and-research/members-experiments/the-revival-of-the-carlin-pea-2026>

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/citizen-science-and-research/members-experiments/build-a-better-veg-planner-2>

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/what-we-do/citizen-science-and-research/members-experiments/resilient-greens>

7. "Flood Risk"

Dr Anton Rosenfeld discusses whether our gardens are more at risk of flooding and what we can do to mitigate its effects. If you'd like to create a similar flood garden in your growing space, head to:

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/expert-advice/watering-guide/rain-garden>

8. "Growing our own", page 40

The march of ultra-processed foods and intensive food production continues, says Professor Tim Lang, so is it time gardening became a government-mandated necessity?"

https://issuu.com/cplonegroup/docs/organic_way_-_autumn-winter_2025_-_issue_241?utm_campaign=15247300_Autumn%20TOW%20electronic%20mailing_17.11.2025&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Garden%20Organic&dm_i=4UO,92SW4,9FHQDR,11Z023,1

9. Is there a disconnect between seed security and food security at policy level? Do we need to scale up community seed saving initiatives...or find ways for professional and amateur growers to work together to ensure better seed choices for future generations? These are some of the questions we'll be debating in a panel discussion at this year's Oxford Real Farming Conference. Our head of the Heritage Seed Library, Catrina Fenton, will join Charlotte Allender, head of the University of Warwick's UK Vegetable Gene Bank, Elaine Bradley from Irish Seed Savers Association and our Garden Organic president and chair Professor Tim Lang at a discussion, entitled 'Putting our future food security on ice'. Join them on Thursday 8 January, 11am-12pm at the Sanctuary, St Colomba's United Reform Church, in Oxford. Find out more and buy tickets at <https://orfc.org.uk/event/oxford-real-farming-conference-2026>.

GM news (just a snapshot!)

1. New: Precision Bred GMO Field Trial Tracker

Beyond GM has added a new feature to its website. The Precision Bred GMO Field Trial Tracker aims to bring much-needed transparency to the growing number of open-air field trials of genetically modified and precision-bred (PBO) crops in England. With the passage of the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act 2023 and the subsequent regulations in 2025, the number of field trials of precision-bred GMOs has begun to rise rapidly. **Right now there are 22 active trials of experimental genetically modified PBOs in England.** You can read more at <https://beyond-gm.org/beyond-gm-launches-pbo-field-trial-tracker/>

2. GM Freeze told us they've wrapped up a couple of significant publications and just had time to send these round before the end of the year. In November, the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Regulations became law. This opens the gates for new GMOs to enter our food and farming systems without having been assessed for environmental, health or socio-economic risks. They've detailed all the problems with the newly deregulated system in their report "A disaster by design: the UK's new rules for new GMOs" which will be available at our next meeting. In their newsletter, "Thin Ice", they unpack the problems and expose a regulatory regime that is not fit for purpose. But on the hopeful side, they also highlight the movements for Food and Seed Sovereignty: alternatives that reject technocentric fixes to systemic problems, bought to life by small and medium-scale food producers across the world. Looking to the year ahead, they plan to work for freedom of choice along supply chains, from seed breeders to consumers.

3. European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) denounces "strategic error for Europe's food and seed sovereignty". Now the European Parliament must save GM labelling – GMO-free industry association. "Germany did not agree to the ill-conceived and economically and consumer-damaging abolition of mandatory GMO labelling in the EU" – VLOG. Catch up here at <https://www.gmwatch.org/en/>

Members' contributions

1. The Essex Biodiversity & Regenerative Food Festival is launching on Saturday 9 May (Promenade Park, Maldon, 10:30-16:00). We have received an invitation to exhibit at this event, which we will discuss at our next committee meeting early in January. Find out more at <https://www.regenerativefoods.co.uk/events/essex>

2. What does the UK Precision Breeding Act mean for organic? The Government's new Precision Breeding Act came into force in England in November, creating a framework to allow the commercial use of gene-edited crops and, later, farm animals.

https://www.soilassociation.org/news/2025/november/19/what-does-the-uk-precision-breeding-act-mean-for-organic/?dm_i=6LRU,1AG72,6FGN0R,6005W,1

3. "Edible neighbourhood" surrounded by fruit trees in the Netherlands

Architecture studios Felixx Landscape Architects & Planners and De Zwarte Hond have arranged the Rijnvliet housing development in Utrecht, the Netherlands, around 1,000 fruit trees and 220 species of edible flora. Described by the studios as an "edible neighbourhood", the development on the outskirts of Utrecht contains 1,000 homes surrounded by parks, rivers and forestry with the aim of including as much food producing plants as possible.

<https://www.dezeen.com/2025/11/20/edible-neighbourhood-rijnvliet-utrech-felixx-de-zwarte-hond-netherlands/>

4. A new survey shows smaller plot sizes, wildlife areas and pollinator friendly planting are making allotments fit for the future.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/news/allotment-biodiversity>

5. New data suggest that insect life continues to decline, despite a hot summer. The troubling extent of insect declines has been highlighted once again by the results of the 2025 Bugs Matter citizen science survey published in November.

<https://www.buglife.org.uk/news/new-data-suggest-that-insect-life-continues-to-decline-despite-a-hot-summer/>

6. Fordhall Farm is extremely excited and proud to share the news that the beautiful West Town Farm, based in Devon, is being donated to the Fordhall Community Land Initiative in 2027, thanks to the incredibly generous Andy Bragg.

<https://www.fordhallfarm.com/devon-farm>

7. How UK society copes with food crises

Since World War II, the UK has experienced what to previous generations would have been a revolution in food. Diets, supply and tastes have changed and become more used to more plentiful, diverse and seasonal food. Where the British buy from and what is purchased has changed. So have tastes and expectations. At the same time, access to food has become more dependent on fewer, larger suppliers, while still being subject to the vagaries of unequal incomes and living standards. This report considers what would be entailed for the public if the status quo were disrupted. What would public reactions be? How prepared for food shocks are the British? Specifically, it sets out a challenge: the necessity to take food shocks more seriously and how to improve civil food resilience.

<https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/publications/just-in-case-7-steps-to-narrow-the-uk-civil-food-resilience-gap/>

8. Has anyone seen this film yet? The film, simply titled *The Pickers*, takes viewers on a journey across southern Europe as workers harvest oranges, strawberries, olives, and blueberries. Across Europe's fields—from sun-drenched groves in Italy to wind-swept vineyards in Greece—*The Pickers* brings us face to face with the migrant harvesters whose hands bring our fruit and veg to the table. Without contracts, safety, or fair pay, Seydou, Bahija, Kirti, and others navigate precarious lives. Through their voices, we uncover the human cost of our year-round produce: homes sacrificed, bodies worn, traditions fading. From dawn pick-ups to moonlit harvests, the film moves with a rhythm, each row of produce carrying stories often left unseen. But alongside this hardship, activists like Pape in southern Italy breathe hope into fields, pioneering ethical farms and the FAIR PICK campaign: a call for justice, dignity, and sustainable bounty. With perceptive observation, *The Pickers* unearths the human cost beneath every supermarket aisle and invites us to imagine a food system where care, not cost, defines our harvest.

<https://youtu.be/D8lr3Q7VZnl?si=6lD2u3ALVVActMFk>

9. A wonderful article written by Spencer Christy (Lauriston Farm) for the Star & Furrow magazine, it goes into Spencer's 21 years on the farm and how it's progressed into a flourishing and busy multi-enterprise farm where we are now hosting hundreds of people a year and sharing the person centric philosophy of biodynamics.

<https://www.biodynamic.org.uk/product/star-furrow-autumn-2025-no-144/>

10. To: Kier Starmer and Steve Reed, Save our farmland. Stop building on it and grow our own food! Our farmland is being built on at a rate of knots. We should be heading for sustainability here and protecting the environment by growing our own food. Put money back into our land before it's too late. Let's have food that tastes of something instead of imports that have been in cold storage forever.

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-our-farmland-stop-building-on-it-and-grow-our-own-foodgrow-our-own-food>

11. Synthetic chemicals in food system creating health burden of \$2.2tn a year, report finds.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/dec/10/synthetic-chemicals-food-system-health-burden-report>

12. "It's really important and precious land. I think it's been a stark reminder-Covid and the war in Ukraine-how precarious our food production now is in this country."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgexqelw93po>

13. NEWS ARTICLE, 5 December 2025, Directorate-General for Environment, 2-minute read, first EU law on soil set to enter into force. Soil degradation is an issue in every EU country, with 60-70% of soils in an unhealthy state. The EU's first law on soil monitoring and resilience entered into force on 16 December, a huge milestone that will help restore soil health.

https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/first-eu-law-soil-set-enter-force-2025-12-05_en

14. Can population crops help us forge a more resilient farming future? Moving away from monocultures has myriad benefits-so why is the industry so resistant to variety? asks Nick Easen.

<https://wickedleeks.riverford.co.uk/features/can-population-crops-help-us-forge-a-more-resilient-farming-future/?uc701=7513312836>

15. New mega-alliance calls on UK Government to create a joined-up healthy food & sustainable farming plan. Can a collaborative approach from the UK's leading food and farming organisations drive policymakers to make better, braver choices as part of the National Food Strategy?

<https://wickedleeks.riverford.co.uk/news/new-mega-alliance-calls-on-uk-gov-to-create-a-joined-up-healthy-food-sustainable-farming-plan/?uc701=7513312836#comments>

16. An alarming article in the Observer on 14.12.25 concerning the state of agriculture in Nebraska USA, specifically what is happening to soya bean production. How did the Chinese react to Trump's massive tariffs on American imports? They haven't just sat back and accepted it but they have looked to replace them in South America and Africa, and they are now consolidating this switch further. Not only this but Trump's anti-immigrant police ICE have raided work places and taken many into custody, even those who've been there for years providing cheap and good quality labour. The result is that many smaller farms are going out of business so Big Ag is getting bigger and more powerful than ever with its reliance on GM, pesticides and chemicals. More and more wealth will flow to the top 1%. Trump has also instigated cuts to food stamps and health benefits. This is not a propitious time for rural America but at least we know that PANNA USA (the sister arm of PAN UK we support with a monthly donation), is working hard to lead the counter attack and trying to establish new innovative and sustainable ways to cultivate the land.

<https://www.panna.org/>

17. Pesticide Action Network North America review 2025, 17/12/25

"The ripple effects of state-level change"

"Strong and effective movements use a variety of strategies and seek opportunities to use them at the local, state, national and global levels. PAN North America has had strong roots in California from its beginning. Our state-based policy work continues to build momentum even as national-level protections were walked back by an administration more interested in giving benefits to corporations and billionaires. California is leading the way for states seeking to protect farmworkers and strengthen pesticide regulations"; e.g. "Sustainable Pest Management (SPM)-state-level to help transition away from toxic pesticides and toward agroecological methods"

"PAN's vision for a food system built on agroecology includes returning control of our food and farming systems to the people who Grow, Produce and Consume food and away from megacorps"

hence "We must continue to share accessible scientific research, shine a light on 'corporate malfeasance' and equip people with action steps to cultivate change"

<https://www.panna.org/>

18. Radio 4 22/12/25, Farming Today. In light of the above, we can look to the Batters Report on farming, just published. It could be a beginning here for a national food and farming strategy for the future, for food and national security. DEFRA may listen and act this time (there have been many previously-from Henry Dimbleby etc over time), for resilience and to prevent imports that do not meet our standards, ensure affordability and profitable farms. We should be part of the ripple and pressure to secure our food, farmers and nature-it all goes together.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002ntvn>

19. Client Earth 2025 review webinar 11/12/25

Our theory of action is to use the law for planet earth, be strategic, be an important tool for tipping points, always working in partnerships and coalitions, we see climate consequences with us now-not just the cost of food, more infectious diseases BUT 80% of people want climate change.

2025 A Dramatic Rollback BUT-

Agata Szafraniuk (Head of ClientEarth Poland) reported from Poland where a 15-year campaign has secured landmark legal cases to turn the smog and most polluted country in the EU from coal to renewables when coal is now uneconomic. There are rules for renewables, there are energy coops; the primeval forest Bialowieza and the wetlands saved, intensive logging stopped and Polish people have a say in their forests; greenwashing by the coal lobby misleading, Nestle greenwashing plastic changed laws, change practices, BUT 15 years to get this far.

They won, it is a fundamental right to have a safe home and farm environment and conditions also for future developments. This collaboration came from university scientists being involved.

Other thoughts about working inside corporates; question about pursuing "ecocide"; knock on from Poland into Romania, Bulgaria and able to take on cases across Europe. Marine issues also addressed and being worked on.

These are positives when so much seems bleak but we persist. It is long work and pressure to ensure safer healthier futures so we continue to engage, pressure and enlighten to help and show why change is needed and is possible.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GasAnfi1gsg>

20. What the Planning and Infrastructure Bill tells us about the government's approach to nature recovery

<https://greenallianceblog.org.uk/2025/12/01/what-the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill-tells-us-about-the-governments-approach-to-nature-recovery/>

21. Country diary: Once a plain old field, now a thriving forest garden | Gardens | The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/nov/26/country-diary-once-a-plain-old-field-now-a-thriving-forest-garden>

22. New report: Government backing of organic could deliver huge social and economic returns

<https://www.sustainweb.org/news/dec25-bridging-the-gap-report/>

23. Japanese Knotweed top hotspots in Essex this December

<https://www.echo-news.co.uk/news/25718941.japanese-knotweed-top-hotspots-essex-december/#Echobox=1766478840>

24. You can find the recording and the presentations of the speakers of the information talk on 4 November on the maize patent and political implications of patents on classical breeding under this link:

<https://www.no-patents-on-seeds.org/en/maize-info>

25. Can I draw your attention to an article in The Grazer, written by Charlotte Hollins, General Manager of the Fordhall Community Land Initiative (FCLI), Market Drayton, Shropshire? The article is called "Community Covenants: Redefining local power."

"In Market Drayton, Shropshire, something quietly transformative is taking place." Are we that out-of-date around here? Here is the link: <https://www.right-here.org/>

26. "Reflections on Agrarian Land Reform"

<https://www.fordhallfarm.com/news/reflections-on-agrarian-land-reform>

27. "Flood after drought-affect on soil"

The rivers are low, the earth baked and the grass crispy-2025 has certainly plopped us right into drought conditions. We've extracted this article from The Grazer, the Friends of Fordhall Newsletter, Autumn 2025.

www.fordhallfarm.com/RiverFriendly

28. In this special edition of This Natural Life, His Majesty The King tells Martha Kearney about his lifelong passion for nature and the environment. As they walk together through the walled garden at Dumfries House in Ayrshire, the King reflects on how his love of the natural world began in childhood and discusses topics ranging from school farms and marine conservation to the art of topiary and the joy of secateurs.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m002ntq6>

29. 27/11/25 Tree Council webinar -Trees on Farms, National Tree Week. This involved representatives from the employee owned Riverford Organic Farms, Cornwall County Council and the Soil Association. They included wire mesh cages for urban planting giving 85% survival rates; producing "Trees on Farms guide for Agroforestry", silva pasture, alley cropping; browsing blocks of woodland; leguminous trees and trees in arable fields; willows to accumulate cobalt lost in drought; living barns; agroforestry grants; but a real need for longer tenancies to make these investments meaningful for tenant farmers.

30. 26/11/25 Garden Organic zoom "Resilient Greens", the 50th year of Heritage Seed Library and the tradition of citizen science. Looking for resilient crops given that average summer temperatures were up two degrees and July had only 56% rainfall; 75% crop biodiversity lost over 70 years and 60% global seed with Big 4 and their agrochemicals. They are looking at three kales and the place of perennial kales like Daubenton and its place in forest gardens. Participate if you can.

<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/search?q=Resilient+Greens>

31. The (5/12/25) World Soil Day celebration highlighted the World Urban Forum concerns, housing the world; protect and restore urban and peri urban food systems and green livelihoods along with natural water management and heat reduction. Soil sealing easy to do, hard to undo. As part of the European Green Deal is a Soil Strategy and Soil Monitoring Law, a framework, and concrete steps to cover:-

- 1) Erosion, floods and landslides.
- 2) Loss of soil, organic matter, salinisation, contamination, compaction and sealing.
- 3) Loss of soil diversity.

Also highlighting the "soil doctors" programmes in Central Asia and Africa; the Glingka World Soil Prize for mapping the soil of Russia; Gaudi Zang for Chinese soil taxonomy; the French Soil Sciences Society to measure, monitor and manage soil via a soil college and soil literacy; the global Soil Partnership highlighting "tiny soil detectives", "urban soil detectives" who explore the hidden world of underneath; "Soil in One Minute" films from Australia, Brazil, Singapore and India delving into the invisible shield protecting cities.

These all deal with initiatives that are ongoing and are positives for challenging the effects of the climate crisis, illustrating it is not being ignored, people are working for a better future. Most have been recorded to enable revisiting.

32) Finally, members may like to know that SEEEOG has recently made donations under the Big Give scheme which will double your money to Garden Organic and the Soil Association; also to Trust Links to support them in repairing damage to The Gunny Basildon, which was attacked by a group of young thugs.

News from Simon and Mary Wallace, SEEEOG members (Gozo branch!)

1. Season's Greetings from Gozo! Nice permaculture video here! Visit Wade Muggleton's back garden and learn how he's used permaculture tools to grow herbs, no dig veg, and fruit trees, as well as capturing rainwater, including wildlife habitats and chickens and ducks.

<https://www.permaculture.co.uk/articles/tiny-and-abundant-backyard-kitchen-garden/>

2. Malta Vision, a Plant-Based Food Strategy, a Sustainable Vision for Malta's Food & Agriculture
https://foemalta.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Malta-Vision-2050-Proposal-6_compressed.pdf

Soil Association news

Throw back to World Soil Day 2025, Ambassador Michael Kennard features on his Six Inches of Soil podcast talking about soil health, human health, and how microbes link everything together. Listen in for discussions around connections between soil and gut health. Michael is a self-confessed soil nerd. He is a Regenerative Soil Consultant, a hero composter in Sussex, an experienced grower and is now regenerating Meliora Farm. Listen out for Michael's podcast coming in 2026. Here's the full episode 10: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1L3phlashX5vjglom1hSe?nd=1&dlsi=a5b7f724b5cf4de2>

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