

Climate Change Gardening

Newsletter #4 December 2025



Welcome to our final Newsletter of 2025!

As we approach the shortest day of the year, with limited time for gardening, we are delighted to release our latest newsletter.

Following an extremely hot and dry summer we thought to ask gardeners what they would do if they knew next summer would be the same as the one just past. Inside you will find the results of our short survey focusing on this question. We also highlight the recently published and exciting RHS State of Gardening Report which for the first time captures the importance of gardens and gardening. Together with seasonal tips for your garden, an announcement of our new Instagram venture, and details of forthcoming events, we are sure you will find much of interest.

Even small changes in how we garden, can make a huge difference to nature and the changing climate.

Climate Change - we're all in it together

Extreme weather hit hard this summer, affecting both domestic gardeners and experts alike. Two prestigious gardens summarised their experience as follows:

University of Bristol Botanic Garden. The Garden Blog (Sept 2025):

“It’s been so dry..... Who knows what will happen next year; it feels like we’ve reached a stage of hyper unpredictability... Normal is changing.”

Cambridge University Botanic Garden, Friends Newsletter (Sept 2025):

“These increasingly hot, dry summers are a real challenge for the Garden. We also have rainwater harvesting... and those tanks were empty by April this year.”

To help us understand how the broader gardening community is reacting, we run occasional surveys, and the responses to one of this summer’s questions have been summarised below:

“If you knew that the weather next summer would be the same as it was this summer*, what changes would you make in your garden?” *le 2025 – persistently hot and dry.		
<u>Topic</u>	<u>% of respondents suggesting changes</u>	<u>Selected responses</u> (84 respondents)
Planting	79%	‘Drought resistant perennials.’ ‘Give up on annuals.’ ‘Plant only in autumn.’ ‘More leafy ground cover plants to protect roots and trap moisture.’
Rainwater storage	51%	‘Store MORE rainwater!’ ‘Another water butt to catch rainfall off garage roof.’
Mulching	32%	‘Less <u>digging</u> if possible, more mulching to keep in water.’ ‘Mulch everywhere heavily.’
Wildlife	23%	‘Put in another little pond.’ ‘Consider ‘rewilding’ poor lawn areas.’
Plant pots	13%	‘Fewer pots to water.’ ‘To save watering tubs, I’ve planted succulents in them.’
Other	17%	‘Pergola with shade.’ ‘Cut the grass higher to stop it dying.’

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who took time to answer this question. As always, it’s really interesting to see what was mentioned, but also what wasn’t. Almost all gardeners indicated that they would change their planting, shifting towards drought-tolerant ‘Mediterranean’ plants. Some gardeners also recognised that autumn planting can avoid the challenges of spring droughts. Not surprisingly, increased rainwater harvesting was very popular, but what was surprising, was that it wasn’t mentioned *more* often, although space for more water butts may be a factor. It was really encouraging to see that the benefits of mulching in enabling gardens to tolerate dry spells, were widely recognised. Almost a quarter of respondents intended to make changes to help wildlife, especially creating ponds. Finally, it was good to see that several gardeners recognised the value of creating shade, to keep gardens and homes cooler during the increasingly prolonged heatwaves.

It’s a real privilege for us to engage with the gardening community in this way. The feedback is so useful in helping us understand the current situation, and enabling us to focus our effort where its most needed. Thank you!

We're now on Instagram!

We're very excited to announce that we now have a presence on Instagram! It's a work in progress, but do have a look: [climatechangegardening_uk](#)

In the winter garden ...

Our increasingly mild winters provide the opportunity to remain active in the garden right around the year. Here are a few ideas to help your garden remain attractive, and beneficial to wildlife and the climate:



- Now that we've had some rain, mulch the beds with well-rotted compost or leaf-mould. This will help retain moisture, improve soil quality, and suppress weeds. In Cambridgeshire, free mulch is available at several council sites, if you collect it yourself. Other counties may have similar schemes.
- Resist the temptation to cut back the seedheads of herbaceous plants and grasses, at least until Feb/Mar. As well as providing structure to the winter garden, the dead stems, foliage and seed-heads, provide habitat for overwintering beneficial insects, and food for a variety of birds.
- December has been mild so far, so the soil is still warm enough to consider planting shrubs or trees. Many attractive and beneficial trees are now available on dwarfing rootstocks, so are suitable for almost any garden – small or large. Fruit trees especially offer so many benefits including flowers, fruit, and shade, as well as enriching wildlife and providing interest.

- Fallen leaves are nature’s way of recycling carbon. By all means rake them off pathways and the lawn, and use them for leaf-mould. However, the leaves on borders and wilder areas should be left to rot down naturally and feed the soil – they will have gone by the Spring.



The RHS State of Gardening report 2025

This autumn, the Royal Horticultural Society published its first ever State of Gardening report. In its 35 pages, this groundbreaking document sets out to capture and analyse the importance of gardening today. Thanks to its extensive use of illustrations and graphics, the detailed information is really accessible and a pleasure to read.

Gardens used to be considered the private domain of each individual household. However, with the realisation that the UK’s gardens cover 4.6% of the landscape, and with 41 million people gardening at least one a month, all that has now changed. As the report states: *“gardens are not just private spaces, gardens are a massive but overlooked ecological asset, that buffer the effects of climate change and bring joy to millions”*. If we had to select one simple statistic from the report that underlined this message, it would be that private domestic gardens contain a total of 19 million trees – a massive urban forest. One of the key take-aways therefore, is the collective importance and positive impact of gardens and gardening.

There is so much in this report, that we can’t hope to summarise it all now. We therefore plan to cover selected sections in future newsletters. However, if you really can’t wait until then, you can dive straight in and enjoy the full report here: [RHS Gardening Report 2025 | UK trends and impact](#)

Review of our recent events:

We have had a very busy autumn taking our stand to seven events including Helmingham Hall Autumn Plant Heritage Fair and the Apple Day at the University of

Cambridge Botanic Garden. Every event is an opportunity for us to find out more about what gardeners are doing to help mitigate climate change and increase biodiversity. We continue to give talks to many gardening clubs and community groups and have engaged with over 1,750 people face to face during 2025. To this can be added the number of people visiting our website and engaging with us via Instagram.

Also, in October we were delighted to be invited to the Bury St Edmunds Literature Festival, where we were 'in conversation' with the well-known organic gardener Sally Morgan where we discussed her two books - 'The Climate Change Garden' and 'The Resilient Garden and Allotment Handbook'.

Over the last few weeks, we also attended both the South Cambridgeshire Climate Conference at Eddington, Cambs. and a Sustainable Communities Action Day in Kesgrave, Ipswich. These gave us a great opportunity to meet other environmental groups undertaking valuable work across the counties.



Our final outreach event was running a workshop for apprentice gardeners in Cambridge. A great deal of lively and enthusiastic conversation was had. An inspiring way to finish the year.

Upcoming Climate Change Gardening events

Our confirmed public events up to the end of March 2026, are listed below. There will doubtless be additions, so do please check our website for up-to-date information. It would be great to meet you.

19 January 2026

Fressingfield Community Gardeners, The Pavilion, Fressingfield, Suffolk IP21 5PT. Talk on climate change gardening.

29 January 2026

Green Ixworth event. Methodist Chapel, High St, Ixworth, Suffolk IP31 2HJ. Talk on climate change gardening.

4 February 2026

Willingham Library, 65 Church St, Willingham, Cambridge CB24 5HX. Talk on climate change gardening.

12 February 2026

Ardleigh & District Horticultural Society, Village Hall, Ardleigh, Essex CO7 7RS. Talk on climate change gardening.

24 February 2026

Bottisham Gardening Club, Bottisham Sports & Social Club, 31 Downing Close CB25 9DD. Talk on climate change gardening.

27 February 2026

Sustainable Hadstock, Hadstock Village Hall, CB21 4PH. Talk on climate change gardening.

10 March 2026

Histon & Impington Gardening Club, Histon Methodist Church, CB24 9JD. Talk on climate change gardening.

12 March 2026

Clare & District Horticultural Society. Clare Old School Community Centre, Callis Street, Clare, Suffolk. See website for details.

14 March 2026

St Ives EcoCafe. See website for details.

19 March 2026

Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Woodbridge, Suffolk. Talk on climate change gardening. See website for details.

19 March 2026

Four Colnes Horticultural Society, Atlas Club, Earls Colne, Essex CO6 2SB. Talk on climate change gardening.

If you'd like us to talk to your community group, then do get in touch. We'd be delighted to hear from you!

National events

In addition to your local events, here are two national meetings that are well worth considering:

- ‘Wilding Gardens’ conference at the University of Manchester, 15-16 January, 2026. This is organised by the folk responsible for the Knepp Rewilding Project. We are definitely attending, so perhaps we’ll see you there? [Wilding Gardens](#)
- The Beth Chatto Symposium, in Colchester, 27-29 Aug 2026. This year’s theme is ‘Connections through Time’, and aims to explore how plants, people and landscapes are shaped by temporal relationships: seasonal, generational, historical and future facing. More details to be announced soon, on their website: [The Beth Chatto Symposium 2026](#)

Fancy joining in?

Our Climate Change Gardening charity is growing fast, and we have a lot going on. All help is welcome, whatever your skills and availability. As well as practical support, administrative skills are extremely welcome too. So, if you do feel able to help, even if only from time to time, then do get in contact via the ‘Contact’ button on our website www.climatechange gardening.org . We’d love to hear from you.

Pass it on

Feel free to forward this newsletter to your colleagues and friends. Anyone can request to be put on the newsletter mailing list, via the ‘Contact’ button on our website: www.climatechange gardening.org

More news soon but in the meantime,
Seasonal Good Wishes
from the Climate Change Gardening team.
Together, we can make a difference in 2026!

Climate Change Gardening is a registered charity (no. 1208653). We are grateful for the generosity of South Cambridgeshire’s Zero Carbon Communities fund, and 101Smart Ltd

