



National Trust

News and events
Spring 2020

South West Edition

Near you

Issue 105

A splash of colour



Camellias and other spring flowers in the Potting Shed at Godolphin, Cornwall

©National Trust Images/Chris Lacey

As we leave winter behind, camellias bring a welcome splash of colour to National Trust gardens. Introduced from the Far East, camellias have become firm favourites here in the South West, with 450 different varieties on National Trust records. And these spring flowering plants remain popular for very good reason.



Ian Wright, our South West Lead Garden Adviser, says 'Camellias are such great value. You can get an abundance of flowers from November through to May or even June, and after flowers fade you still have the glossy, dark green leaves creating a perfect backdrop for other plants.'

You'll find camellias in many gardens in the South West at this time of the year, from the walled camellia garden at Greenway to Killerton and Lanhydrock, which has about a thousand camellia plants and more than 220 varieties.

'My favourite? That's a tricky one, but I'll go for the beautiful but unusual two-tone *Camellia japonica* 'Lavinia Maggi' with its cerise stripes.'

Ian's top camellia tip – even in a small garden you can grow a camellia in a pot, but do use a compost for ericaceous plants as camellias grow well in acidic soils.

Every year National Trust gardeners carry out a Valentine's Day flower count, giving us an idea of what gardens are going to look like throughout the year, and indicating how spring flowers are affected by climate change. We also want to know what's blooming in your garden or local park, so keep an eye on social media in the run up to Valentine's Day to get involved.

Find camellias in National Trust gardens across the South West, and particularly so in these places: **Trengwainton, Lanhydrock, Killerton, Greenway, Kingston Lacy, Coleton Fishacre, Cotehele, Knightshayes and Trelissick.**



Camellias at Trelissick, Cornwall

©National Trust Images/Hilary Daniel



Ian's favourite - *Camellia japonica* 'Lavinia Maggi'

©National Trust/Ian Wright

News in brief

In the footsteps of monks

Stone steps that may once have been trodden by medieval Cistercian monks have come to light during repair work on Buckland Abbey's kitchen garden on the edge of Dartmoor.

Over the winter, an archaeological dig got underway around the old walls of the kitchen garden. Led by Trust archaeologist Jim Parry, the SW archaeologist team painstakingly excavated the foundations to discover the hidden steps and some very neat stonework with holes either side of these steps.

Jim now needs to piece together all the evidence, including pottery, to work out what the area was used for in medieval times.

Jim says 'A new archaeological find is always exciting, and this recent discovery has uncovered tantalising new evidence of buildings probably relating to the 16th-century monastery, its demolition after Henry VIII's dissolution, and redevelopment as a home whose occupiers included Sir Francis Drake.'

Wellington Monument, the tallest three-sided obelisk in the world, is entering a dramatic new stage in its restoration. About eight miles of specially designed scaffolding is now encasing the 53-metre monument so that the stonework at all heights can be expertly repaired.

Visitors on pre-booked tours will be able to reach a viewing platform eight metres up, from where they will get uninterrupted views out over the Somerset countryside.

This striking landmark stands as a tribute to the Duke of Wellington and his victory at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. The National Trust has cared for it since 1934, and now a major repair is underway through a £3.45 million project supported by the community and by an ongoing fundraising campaign. (nationaltrust.org.uk/appeal/wellington-monument-appeal) This major work will ensure that the monument stands proud well into the future and can be enjoyed by many more people to come.

A monumental task

One of the conservation team inspecting the inside of the monument



Visitors exploring the garden

Mind and body

In the past, country house living was often livened up with a bit of sport, thoughtful pursuits and the excitement of social occasions.

Whether staging amateur theatricals, deciding what to wear to a ball or stitching something beautiful, both mind and body could be fully occupied.

From this February 'Active minds and busy bodies', a new exhibition at Killerton House in Devon features fashionable ballgowns and sportswear from the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as early swimming costumes. On show are some of the best pieces from Killerton's extensive fashion collection, revealing just how people dressed for a range of pursuits that helped beat off any boredom.



Work progressing on the Old Staircase

Taking shape

The first phase of the ambitious two-year £2.4 million project to restore and revitalise the 17th century house at Dyrham Park will be uncovered this spring.

Visitors will be able to see work on both the Best and Old Staircases which has included structural work and decoration to bring back authenticity to the house. New exhibition spaces are also taking shape which will include a tasting kitchen to sample flavours from the past. During the year the rich woodwork in the Great Hall will be lovingly re-grained and lighting will be updated throughout the house to showcase Dyrham's collection.

The work in the house is part of a larger £10 million project across the site to include works to the garden, play area, parkland routes, tea-room, carpark and shop. Dyrham Park remains open throughout the work.

Rooted in Japan

This year, the hidden Devon paradise of Overbeck's is celebrating Japanese plants and gardening. In early spring you're likely to come across Japanese-style straw 'hats' made by the garden team to shelter their more tender plants.

'Hanami' is the Japanese traditional custom of enjoying the transient beauty of flowers, and here we've chosen to celebrate the sumptuous beauty of magnolias – particularly *Magnolia campbellii* 'Overbeck's', often in full flower in February.

Then in April, the Japanese magnolias (*Magnolia stellata*) reach their peak, alongside delicate Japanese maples. In this country we share the Japanese passion for gardening, and as the year unfolds you'll find exquisite displays of Japanese plants to both admire and inspire.

A new life

A dilapidated workman's cottage set in woodland behind Dartmouth Castle has a fresh lease of life.



The sitting room in Compass Cottage

©National Trust/Mike Henton

With glorious views over the Dart estuary, walks from the door and the foodie town of Dartmouth close by, Compass Cottage is now an appealing new addition to the choice of National Trust holiday cottages.

Alex Sproson, National Trust Senior Building Surveyor led the two-year project and says 'Although not a listed building, Compass Cottage is of historic importance as it's a classic example of a workers cottage in the area. The main challenge for the project was trying to maintain as much of the building's original features and character as possible whilst introducing modern comfort and extra space.'

The team raised the roof to extend the building upwards and built a new staircase. Old fireplaces, doors and windows were restored. Some original lime plaster was uncovered and left to be seen.

There's new insulation and underfloor heating in the ground floor, and the cottage has been re-plastered, re-plumbed and re-wired. Parking includes an electric car charging point.

Original ships' lighting and prints by local artists reflect Dartmouth's boating history, and shades of blue and aqua draw the outside in. Iron bed frames and 19th-century furniture mix with cosy modern sofas – respecting its former life while adding contemporary comfort.

If you're looking for that special Devon retreat, this three-bedroom cottage is in easy reach of beautiful beaches and historic houses such as Greenway and Coleton Fishacre. Or simply relax and watch the boats drift by.

Find out more at nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays

Noticing nature

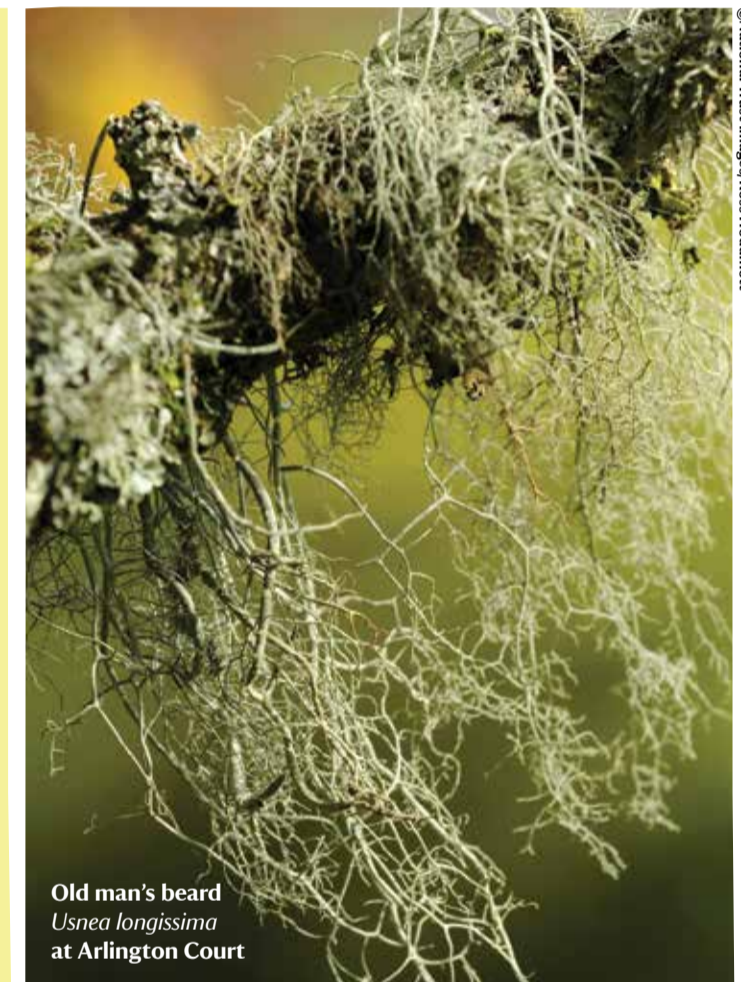
In 1888, one of the Trust's founders, Octavia Hill, said '...the sight of sky and of things growing, seem human needs, common to all and not to be dispensed with without great loss.' In today's world, this acts as a timely reminder to pause, pay attention to the natural world and notice the effect it has on us.

You don't have to travel abroad to find natural wonders. In our mild, moist landscape are some of the rarest temperate rainforests in the world. And in these undisturbed, often ancient woodlands you'll discover a miniature world full of wild treasures such as lichens. But this magical world can easily go unnoticed.

Clinging to tree bark or mossy boulders, lichens are an extraordinary partnership between a fungus and alga or so-called cyanobacteria. They are not only home and food to many tiny creatures but also indicators of good air quality. This is all because they absorb moisture and nutrients straight from the atmosphere rather than the soil.

So next time you're wandering through one of our old woods or parkland, glance up into the branches and look out for the aptly named old man's beard lichens, or notice green leafy lichens on tree trunks and stumps or on a mossy boulder. And that's just the start. There are hundreds and hundreds of different lichens in all shapes and sizes – including the squat 'jam tart' lichen and dog lichens.

Good places to start your lichen hunt are Horner Woods on the Holnicote estate, where you can follow the ancient trees walk, the parkland at Arlington and Lanhydrock, and Whiddon deer park near Castle Drogo. And when you stop and spot these hidden treasures, a simple magnifying lens can help to bring this tiny world into focus.



Old man's beard *Usnea longissima* at Arlington Court

Curator's choice



©National Trust



Visitors in the Spanish Room

©National Trust Images/James Dobson

Each issue we'll be taking a closer look at our places and collections from the perspective of one of our curators. Here, Dr Kate Bethune, Curator for the Kingston Lacy Estate, hopes to entice you to Kingston Lacy with one of her top things to see.

'The Spanish Room (formerly the Golden Room) is perhaps the greatest achievement of William John Bankes (1787-1855), who inherited Kingston Lacy in 1834. The room is also the most complete expression of his design intentions for the mansion house. It can be read - and experienced - as a total work of art; an opulent set piece comprising a gilded, coffered Venetian ceiling, painted leather wall panels, and an assemblage of Spanish paintings and ornate decorative surfaces.'

'The room, which was created to display William John's collection of Spanish paintings, epitomises his desire to create an overall richness of effect rather than shining the light on individual works of art. Each and every element was consciously acquired and displayed, but with the whole in mind.'

'Although William John was primarily concerned with creating a total effect, he nevertheless collected individual works of art with a keen eye and discerning judgement. Most of the Spanish paintings which decorate the walls were acquired during his service with the Duke of Wellington in the Spanish Peninsular War (c.1812-14). He consciously collected a representative selection of works by the great 17th-century Spanish artists, including Velázquez, Murillo and Cano.'

'The Spanish Room's walls and ceiling are equally noteworthy, both for their individual significance and for adding to the overall effect of the room. Painted and tooled leather panels of scrolling foliage clad the walls. They are a mixture of old panels that William John acquired from Venetian palaces and new ones that he commissioned to match.'

The Spanish Room is arguably one of the most rich and sumptuous rooms of any house in the National Trust's care.

Search 'Kingston Lacy Spanish Room' for a fuller version of this article on our website.

Search 'Curator's choice' on the National Trust website for other places and things to see.



A sculpture of a lion stands proudly atop the sundial

Memories of Barrington

Four volunteers from Barrington Court have completed a two-year oral history project, with the recordings now being lodged in the British Library Archive. They interviewed people with memories of Barrington going back nearly eighty years.

Back in 2017 Barrington Court staff in Somerset gained a bursary for equipment and training. National Trust former Deputy Chairman, Sir Laurie Magnus, gave money to develop oral history at Trust properties, with training supported by the Oral History Society/ National Life Stories at the British Library. Volunteer Ros Murphy explains 'The training taught us how to conduct a good interview, putting people at ease. Asking open-ended questions like: 'What was Christmas like?' to encourage memories and talking.'

Together, the interviews create a vivid picture of life at the Court during the sixty years that three generations of the Lyle family were tenants.

Sybil Taylor is the daughter of Charles Newbury, who was Colonel Lyles's butler. She remembered the young Andrew Lyle locking her father in the pantry; someone drove 50 miles to Bristol to get another key cut.

James Ayres' father Arthur was an architectural sculptor who worked on the renovation in the 1920s. Probably under 21, he was greeted by Lyle's architect James Forbes with: 'You're a bit young.'

Some interviews have shed light on the development and management of the garden. Others reveal a relaxed and informal lifestyle, and that the Lyles were generous to estate workers - children had free run of the gardens, and families were welcome to swim and play tennis. A big tea-party in 1937 celebrated the coronation of George VI.

The volunteer team of Ros Murphy, Del Wiggins, John Hall and Tricia Thomson is rightly proud that the team's work will live on in the British Library. Barrington Court now has a wealth of new information to enrich its story.

For the love of books

A shepherd's hut at Lodge Park, a fish cellar 'Book Nook' in Glendurgan Garden, an old ice cream parlour at Watersmeet... over the past year some quirky second-hand book shops have been popping up at National Trust places across the South West.

There are now 50 second-hand book shops in the region, and the number just keeps growing – reflecting people's love of a good book and browse of a book shop.

Thanks to supporters like you, the book shops take thousands of pounds annually. Last year over £310,000 was raised across the South West. At each location, every penny goes back to looking after that place.

At Lodge Park the books outgrew their shelf in the café and took over a renovated shepherd's hut, leading to a big increase in sales. All the money raised helps to fund the restoration of the Charles Bridgeman landscape.

Down in the valley garden at Glendurgan, a 'Book Nook' has been created in the old fish cellar, which is now run by a team of 40 volunteers. Since opening last year they've raised well over £2,000, all of which helps to maintain the unique living maze.

Volunteers are central to the success of these book shops. They manage everything, from sorting through donations, stocking shelves and sharing their love of books with visitors.

Glendurgan 'Book Nook' volunteer Kathy Warren says 'I've always enjoyed getting lost in a good book, old or new, finding a good buy or hidden treasure on the book shelves.'



Browsing inside the shepherd's hut at Lodge Park, Gloucestershire

'I was thrilled when this opportunity came up right on my door step. What better way to share my passion for books within the countryside I love.'

On a slightly bigger scale, the established second-hand emporium at Trelissick has taken over four rooms, and some real gems have come to light. Dedicated volunteers have unearthed everything from 50 years' worth of pristine copies of *The Beano* to a photo album of

pre-First World War alpine skiers – depicting women in ankle-length skirts scaling the mountains.

So if you're having a clear-out do bring in your preloved, good quality books and we'll find them a new home. Or if you're looking for a holiday read or following up on a favourite subject then give yourself some time in our second-hand book shops and refuel that passion. Your Handbook shows which places have book shops.