

Gold Club Membership Benefits

We want all of our corporate members to get the most out of their club membership. We aim to help with the resources needed to successfully run a club so here is a full list of the benefits of belonging to The Gardens Group **GOLD CLUB**.

Free expert talk

You are entitled to book a **free talk** each year on a subject from the updated list enclosed.

Once you have booked a talk it is important to check that the details are correct. Our event diary, 'what's on', can be found on our website www.thegardensgroup.co.uk This allows you to easily verify that we have the correct time and date for any talks and shopping events you have arranged with us. The inclusion of your event on our online diary confirms your booking. Please be certain to check this entry to ensure we have the correct details for you.

Speaker availability is limited during the last week in September and the first two weeks of October (while we create our famous Christmas Displays).

Changes occasionally have to be made to booked talks should a specialist speaker become unavailable. Notice will be given where possible and a choice of alternative subjects offered.

Discount shopping visits to our centres

Discount Shopping Visits to the centres are available between January and the end of September.

Evenings visits can be organised for a **minimum of 25** of your members or daytime visits if a **minimum of 15** of your members are attending. Entry time for afternoon visits is **2.30pm** and evening visits is **6.00pm**. Each visit will include...

- a short topical talk
- a cup of tea or coffee with biscuits
- **25% discount** off any full priced purchases excluding restaurant, farm shop, concessions and furniture
- **free delivery** of any purchases if desired

If you think you will struggle to bring enough members, we are happy to help arrange a joint visit with another club of limited numbers.

Vouchers for 25% off in January and February

During January and February, we offer an exclusive 25% discount on all products excluding those already discounted or on special offers and, excluding restaurant, farm shop, concessions and furniture. These vouchers will help your members get organised for the spring. The discount vouchers can be used as many times as your members wish during January and February. Everything can be delivered free of charge as well.

Vouchers for 25% off Spring flowering bulbs

These vouchers are available in July/August for members to use from August onwards.

Growing Competitions

We can sponsor a growing competition within your club, local school or community. A list of plug plants to choose from free of charge is available in October. Place your order to collect in March. If requested, we will even supply a Gardens Group voucher as a prize for the winner.

We can also supply another growing competition later in the year. Look out for the list of the Spring flowering bulb options in April, ready to collect in September.

The plug plants and bulbs are offered so that clubs can have a little competition which is completely free.

Compost pre-Spring ordering

There is an extensive range of composts, mulches, chemicals and fertilisers on offer as well as other gardening sundries to order during January.

Your members can take advantage of this offer by -

- Calling into Castle Gardens in Sherborne, Brimsmore Gardens in Yeovil or Poundbury Gardens in Dorchester with the form.
- Completing both pages of the order form and posting it with a cheque to The Gardens Group, Castle Gardens, New Road Sherborne Dorset DT9 5NR
- Contacting the Gold Club for a promotional code which will apply when you order on our online store. You can find the Gold Club special offers on www.thegardensgroup.co.uk

Show Cards

We can print entry cards and certificates for your annual garden shows in a variety of colours, free of charge. Talk to us to place your order for stationary at least a month before the event.

Newsletter

We email out an informative newsletter to keep you and your members up to date with forthcoming events and offers in the garden centres.

Website

Our website, www.thegardensgroup.co.uk has a 'what we do' section with all **THE GOLD CLUB** information available for you. A listing of our talk's diary can be found under 'what's on' so that you can verify that the talks and shopping events you have arranged have been booked correctly for you.

Corporate Support

We aim to help promote garden clubs by offering your club support when you undertake projects. This can be gardening advice, help developing a community area, even lending plants to brighten up an event. We can also share and promote your club events to other clubs who are part of our Gold Club mailing list. Get in touch if you would like some help.

Summer Party

We host a popular summer party every year, for all of our Gold Clubbers. It is usually – but not exclusively - arranged around a performance by the outdoor theatre company 'Illyria'. Another theme we have enjoyed over the years is has been 'A gardener's question time'.

Annual renewal meetings

A 'benefits check' forms an important part of your membership renewal meeting. We discuss any changes to the Gold Club package and any changes to your group. Every year we discover committee member changes and other club adjustments, there are groups who lose track of the benefits and miss out.

Meals and celebrations.

Meals and celebrations can be booked with our restaurants. Prices are included at the rear of this booklet.
No discount shopping is available at these events.

The Gardens Group Talks List 2025-2026

The majority of our talks use live plants and materials to demonstrate rather than slides. We prefer to speak for approximately 45 – 60 minutes and are delighted to field questions afterwards. We have a team of speakers and we share the bookings out with the most appropriate person available on a monthly basis. If you wish to book a specific speaker, please specify this when booking and we will endeavour to meet with these wishes although sometimes this may not be possible. Most talks can be booked for any time of the year.

(P) indicates that this subject may require you to provide a projector screen. The speaker will bring everything else including a projector.

Subjects marked * are specific to only one of our team of speakers. When booked a long time in advance there is occasionally a change of circumstances for the speaker, and we may need to invite you to select a different topic. Should this happen, we will gladly rebook the original subject for another day.

Garden Style

Trends and styles in gardening are evolving all the time so these talks are based on some of the more innovative trends using new techniques and new plants, without ignoring the best practice of the past and the best plants.

Container gardening

How and what to grow in containers including advice on pot choice, compost and many ideas on the plants that can be used and how to look after them.

Garden design

A look at the principles of garden design and practical tips on how to set about designing your own garden.

Gardening in climate change

With the changing weather conditions different ideas about what plants to grow and how best to look after the ones you have. This talk contains tips on how to get your garden in a robust state in order to cope with the challenges that climate change will pose. The talk discusses the challenges of gardening in a changing climate as well as soils, plant choice, watering, feeding, lawns, pests and how gardening can help in the battle.

Gardening for wildlife

A look into the reasons why one may wish to garden for wildlife and how to fit wildlife gardening into a conventional garden.

Low maintenance gardening

Is there such a thing as working too hard in the garden? Our tips on cutting back and freeing up time to relax and enjoy your outdoor spaces.

Patio gardens

A guide to growing plants on the patio.

Planning a border

The principles behind designing a border with practical tips and a live demonstration of putting together a border.

Plants

This group of talks are very much based around plants, which ones to choose, how to look after them and varieties you may not have considered before.

Climbing plants (P)

April - September

A guide to the selection of climbers and wall shrubs with many practical examples.

Exploring your garden

May – September

A visit to a garden of your choice, for instance one of your members with a guided tour picking out the highlights of the garden.

Growing fruit & vegetables on the patio.

Spring/Summer

Advice and tips on how to make the best use of your patio to grow fruit and vegetables and the best varieties to grow.

Home grown fruit 1

Oct - June

A guide to selecting and growing soft fruit – currants, berries and friends

Home grown fruit 2

Sept - April

A guide to selecting and growing top fruit - apples, pears etc and nuts.

Houseplants for Christmas

Mid October - December

Selection and care of houseplants including tips on what to grow where and what makes a good present.

Plants for specific places

Pick two garden situations that your members would like advice on - eg 'shady', 'sunny', 'wet', 'windy', North facing and we will put together a special talk for you based on the best plants for those areas.

Shrubs for the flower arrangers

A look at shrubs that will be useful to the flower arranger and how and where to grow them.

Success with houseplants

Selection and care of houseplants including tips on what to grow where.

Practical Talks

These talks are informative and instructive, without being boring! It does not matter whether you are a novice or an expert you will come away with new ideas and tips on how to do things.

Companion planting

An in-depth look at the way that plant communities and associations can have positive and negative results. Including some tried and tested tips for using combinations of plants to deter or control pests in the vegetable garden.

Composting (P)

How to create a good compost heap and why composting is so important.

Gardening for pollinators

March - Sept

The best plants to attract bees and butterflies into your garden as well as information about which garden chemicals it is safe to use without harming our bees.

Get your lawn in order!

A practical guide for all types of lawns including wildlife friendly and grass free lawns!

Hedges and Barriers (P)

Formal vs informal, planting, cultivating, wildlife, trimming and shaping, screening, breaking wind and everything else we know. Our speakers ensure this is not as dry a topic as it might sound!

Improving your soil*

As gardeners we are always looking for ways to get the best out of outdoor spaces and looking after your soil is a very important one. With this talk we explore the options available for improving different types of soil and the latest suggestions from the experts.

Organic gardening

A practical guide to the principles of gardening without chemicals and how to put these into practice.

Organic pest and disease control

A full guide to controlling pests and disease for the gardener who prefers not to use chemicals.

Pest and disease control

Starting out on prevention being better than cure, through non-chemical methods of control.

Propagation

January - March

A practical guide to raising your own plants from young plants or from cuttings.

Pruning your garden fruits

Sept - April

With an emphasis on getting the best productivity from the fruit trees in your garden.

Putting your garden to bed for the winter

Sept – Nov

Tips and information on how to over winter your plants successfully and what you need to do to get your plot in tip top condition for the Spring.

Seasonal colour and interest in the garden

Different every time! Even if your club has had this talk before, each speaker has their own favourites and with the constant introduction of new varieties of plants you will be assured of an interesting and informative guide through what to grow to get the best out of your garden at this time of year.

Seed sowing, pricking out and potting on

January - March

A practical guide to raising your own plants from seed.

Success with rockeries (P)

March - Sept

The siting, construction and planting of rockeries with lots of interesting plants to look at.

The Eco-friendly gardener* (P)

Being wildlife friendly is only one aspect of the value our outdoor spaces can offer. With this talk we step back a little and consider the environmental pros and cons of our gardening choices.

Weed control

A practical guide to the control of weeds including specific examples and many non-chemical methods.

What to do with an overgrown garden

Practical tips and advice on how best to manage an overgrown garden.

What to grow in your greenhouse

Spring/Summer

Tips on what you can grow in your greenhouse and how to look after your crops.

Talks with demonstrations

These talks are exactly what they say they are. We bring along everything you need and then show you how to do the job.

Pruning ornamental plants 1

A practical demonstration of pruning trees and deciduous shrubs, including with tips on timing

Pruning ornamental plants 2

A practical demonstration of pruning in the garden with an emphasis on climbing plants, hedges and evergreen shrubs with tips on timing.

Summer hanging baskets

March - June

A live demonstration with a huge number of practical tips.

Winter hanging baskets and primrose balls*

September - December

A live demonstration with a huge number of practical tips.

Talks with a wider appeal

This group of talks will appeal to a wider audience. They are all still horticulturally based but cover aspects of plants and gardens or horticulture at large that include something a little different.

Alternative plants, alternative places* (P)

Steve takes a fresh look at ornamental and edible plants with the intention of challenging the way we grow and appreciate them.

A quiz

A light-hearted horticultural and/or general knowledge quiz. They can be more serious if required!

From grower to garden centre*

Adam Wallis gives us an insight into how plants are grown and propagated commercial and what happens to them before they are delivered to the garden centre.

Garden friends and foes* (P)

Steve looks at some of the heroes and villains that crop up (pun intended) in our gardens.

Garden giants* (P)

In this talk we explore some of our favourite oversized plants and mention a few record breakers.

Gardening folklore*

Old and new gardening laws and the stories behind them.

Gardening folklore - the next instalment!*

Loads more old and new gardening laws and the stories behind them.

Gardening trends*

A look at the new trends in gardening including the latest developments and the plants that are in fashion.

How to build a Christmas display* (P)

This is a talk which takes you behind the scene of our Christmas Displays, how we build them, how long it takes, where we get inspiration illustrated with slides.

My seasonal shopping basket

A look at what great plants and products are available for the garden, a reminder of the seasonal chores and kit we may need to tackle them, plus plenty of discussion about plants that inspire us and deserve a place in our shopping basket.

Plants we love to hate* (P)

Some plants provoke an instant reaction when spotted. Neighbours go to war over horticultural incursions under (or over) the fence. Steve takes the time to look at a few of the 'trigger plants' from bindweed to leylandii.

Primitive plants* (P)

Steve investigates some of the first plants to develop characteristic features, including leaves, spines and flowers. Possible detours include the first vegetables and the first carnivorous plants...

Slightly naughty plants* (P)

Steve takes a fun look at plants that cheat, steal and deceive, followed by poisons, aphrodisiacs, perception altering and other uses the doctor wouldn't recommend.

Weeds* (P)

Some weeds are good news - they may be tasty, medicinal or great for particular kinds of wildlife. Other weeds are toxic, invasive and can have negative impact on wildlife. Yet more weeds are very pretty and have produced cultivated 'cousins' that flourish in our garden borders. With this talk we look at a few highs and lows in the world of weeds and consider some of the latest weed control strategies.

Sweet plants and sugar sources* (P)

Plants produce sugars. Some plants are famously sweet. With this talk we explore some of the traditional sugar/sweetener sources and how they can be grown and used in our gardens today.

The garden centre year*

A behind the scenes view of Castle, Brimsmore or Poundbury Gardens with an insight into the garden centre industry.

The lighter side of plants*

A light-hearted look at the side of plants that you do not usually see.

The story so far*

Mike takes a look back at what has changed over the years in Castle Gardens, Brimsmore Gardens and Poundbury Gardens - both within the garden centres and in the gardening world.

What's in a name?*

The background behind the classification of plants with light-hearted look at unusual name using lots of examples.

Portfolio of Speakers

Mike Burks B.Sc. Hons. Hort.

Mike Burks B.Sc. Hons. Hort. Mike is an honours degree graduate in Horticulture from the University of Bath. Mike is one of the founders of The Gardens Group. Brought up on an organic market garden, nursery and the garden centre, horticulture is in his blood. Mike was Chairman of the Garden Centre Association from January 2020 until 2022 and is on the industry Growing Media Taskforce representing garden centres in the transition away from peat and is a director of the Responsible Sourcing Scheme. Mike speaks on a wide range of subjects with his favourites including trees and shrubs, border design, pest and diseases, climate change and organic gardening. He is the Managing Director of The Gardens Group.

Louise Burks B.Sc. Hons. Hort.

Louise is also a graduate from the University of Bath where she was awarded the Aberconway Medal by the Institute of Horticulture. Louise also founded The Gardens Group. Her favourite subjects include hanging baskets – both winter and summer. She is the director in charge of bedding plants with the group and is the inspiration behind our amazing Christmas displays.

Adam Wallis

Adam started working at Castle Gardens the autumn of 2003. He has been in charge of various departments including trees and shrubs before being made Manager at Brimsmore Gardens in 2007. Adam has a National Diploma in Horticulture. He speaks on a variety of topics including trees, fruit and hardy plants.

Brian King

Brian is the shop manager at Castle Gardens. He joined in 1992 and quickly rose through the ranks to his present position. He has extensive gardening knowledge and is our pest and disease guru. He is also our quiz specialist – so for some fun and to challenge the little grey cells book a quiz!

Steve Fry

Steve has worked at Castle Gardens since the mid 90'S. Over the years he has been involved in running various plant departments and currently divides his time between all three garden centres, supporting the team and also keeping an eye on our IT systems, including the online shop.

Malcolm Mills

Malcolm is a Retail Plant Care Award Gold Medal winner and our “plantsman extraordinaire”. He has been associated with The Gardens Group for many years at all the centres. He is a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker on a range of subjects including hardy plants and fruit.

Meals and celebrations

Following are the prices per person for meals booked as a club by members from January 2025. Booking is to be made directly with the relative restaurant. Menus are available on request. Contact details are at the bottom of the page.

Please note, no discount shopping is offered at these events.

MEALS

Two Course Dinner – for £22.50 pp – to include a meal and coffee to be discussed with the club.

Contact;

The Apple Tree Restaurant on 01935 403158 or email food@thegardensgroup.co.uk

The Engine Room Restaurant on 01305 257251 or email kelly@thegardensgroup.co.uk

The Walled Garden Restaurant on 01935 814345 or email walledgarden@thegardensgroup.co.uk