

East Reading Horticultural Society

NEWSLETTER

January 2026

The trading shed opens: Sat and Sun 09:30 to 11:00 (but only Sat in July & August), and Wednesdays in April and May from 18:30 to 19:30.

Note: Shed helpers are not all young, big and strong so, if you need to get heavy items, please try to bring someone with you to help with the lifting.

Shed mobile number: 0738 463 2903. Web site: www.erhs.org.uk

Facebook Group: "East Reading Horticultural Society"

Editor: Tel: 07794 233361, Email: ERHS@hotmail.co.uk

{Get your newsletter early (and in colour): Ask to be added to the ERHS email list, but please include your membership card number.}



PROGRAMME EVENTS



TUESDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2025

The Christmas Social. 37 members had a very enjoyable evening that was full of fun and frivolity. There were some super Xmas jumpers on show, and a lovely and real boa was worn too. I was delighted with the recital of 7 excellent limericks. They were all so good that no one was an outright winner, so they all received a prize.

We listened attentively and amusingly to several members' Xmas stories and then had to endure the chairman's woeful Xmas cracker jokes.

Torkill Fozzard played the piano beautifully and Alan Waite crooned us with his delightful ukulele performance.

Margaret put together another lovely raffle, and several happy members chose from her table.

The quiz, tabletop faces, flags and Christmas Scramble challenged everyone as well and we all enjoyed a delicious buffet accompanied by some lovely wines and fruit juice.

After the members' vote for the best of 5 'White Christmas' table decoration entries we had a glorious collective performance of some well-known carols that rounded off a splendid evening. Good wishes were conveyed to one and all. John Peacock

TUESDAY 20TH JANUARY 2026

Longstock Water Garden spans six acres of crystal-clear water, islands and woodland in the Test valley, Hampshire. It has more than 100 different trees and 40 different waterlily species. The International Waterlily & Water Gardening Society called it "The finest water garden in the world". So, we are really pleased that **Elaine Harmsworth**, the Gardens and Grounds Manager, will give us an illustrated talk on its history and plants.

Check it out and get an advance taste at <https://leckfordestate.co.uk/longstock-park-water-garden>



A taste of what to expect.

The talk, as always, is in St. Peter's church hall, Church Road. There will be refreshments and a raffle.

Come at 7:15pm for a 7:30 start.

The autumn show on Saturday 5th September

Schedules will be sent to members on the email list and put on our web site as soon as possible, hopefully before the end of 2025.

If you are not on our email list, you can ask for a copy to be emailed to you; contact me, Neal Stockwell, on ERHS@hotmail.co.uk and I'll send it to you as soon as I can.

Copies are expected to be in the trading shed by 31st January.

Other scheduled events 2026

Tue 17 Feb 84th Annual General Meeting
Tue 17 Mar Talk "Humble hedges - many benefits"
Sat 5 Sept ERHS autumn show

TRADING MATTERS



Trading shed: Always worth a visit.

Happy Christmas to all our members, customers, helpers, unloaders etc. I look forward to seeing you all in the new year. Seed potatoes should be ready by the 3rd week of January. We are well stocked with farmyard manure and various composts. Trevor Wilson

Trading Shed Reopening

Please note that the trading shed will reopen on Saturday 10th January 2026.

MISCELLANEA

Next Committee Meeting:

7:30 p.m. on Monday 12th January at the Crescent Resource Centre. (Warbler Drive, Earley, RG6 4HB)

A Word from our Chairman

As we now move into 2026 the committee, including Jackie Leslie, our talks organiser, hope for your support at the January and March talks, and the president, chairman and treasurer really hope that you can attend our AGM on Tuesday 17th of February. Please put the date in your new diary, phone or calendar.

John Peacock

Shed stewards and assistants this month.

17 th	John Peacock	Carole Peacock
18 th	Jackie Leslie	Ray Possewhite
24 th	Kay Bridges	Colin Green
25 th	Derek Press	Tracey Minell
31 st	Jeff Gardner	Tracey Collins

Things to do this month



Improve your soil

Soil cultivation and digging over can be hard work, but it need not be backbreaking if you use the right tools. If you have clay soil you should dig in a bulky organic matter such as farmyard manure to improve drainage. Only work on this soil type if the weather has been dry, otherwise it will be a bit of a sticky mess.

If you have sandy soil, dig in plenty of organic matter as above to aid water retention.

In chalky soil, which can often be full of stones, again add organic matter to increase the soil depth, aid water retention and improve the nutrient content as nutrients will be locked up in the soil and become unavailable to plants if not improved.

Start to sow seeds

The arrival of the New Year brings the opportunity to sow some seeds indoors for the year ahead. Although sowing early will require a little patience, you can prevent certain issues by cleaning everything that will meet seeds or seedlings. Ensure you use a good peat free compost such as John Innes Seed compost or a very fine peat compost. Seeds such as Sweet Peas, Dahlias, Delphiniums, Chillies, Basil, and Aubergines can all be sown indoors.

Tidy your shed

January is a great time to tidy up your garden shed, throwing away any rubbish that has accumulated over the year. Clean, sharpen, and oil your gardening tools so that everything is in good working order when you come to use them. Sharpening blades on tools such as secateurs and hoes makes a huge difference in how easy they will be to use.

Greenhouse and garden pot cleaning

Clean used flowerpots, seed trays, and even plant labels. You can easily set aside a day for the task of cleaning as there is much to do. Remove all the plants and place them in a sheltered area with fleece or bubble-wrap if necessary while cleaning is carried out. Then brush all the debris out of the greenhouse and dispose of it. Next, clean the structural parts of the greenhouse with a disinfectant of your choice. Clean all the windows inside and out and remove any dirt trapped between the panes of glass. You can also take this opportunity to replace any broken parts such as vent controllers or glass panels.

Prune apple and pear trees

Winter is the best time to prune your apple and pear trees as the leaves have fallen. Ensure you have a sharp pair of secateurs and a pruning saw for the job and aim to take about 10-20% of the overall canopy off, then work around the tree evenly, careful not to over prune, as the more you prune the stronger the regrowth will be. Pruning too much means your tree is likely to produce vigorous upright branches called watershoots which is not ideal.

Prune Wisteria and roses

January is a good time to prune back Wisteria to remove wispy growth and old wood. Prune back to two buds, as this hard pruning will control leafy growth later in the season. Less leaf growth allows the beautiful lilac sweet, scented flowers to show off their glorious colours. Roses should be cut back to remove dead growth, watershoots and dead flowers. Be sure to use a slanting cut away from the healthy buds to avoid diseases.

Remember to keep putting out food and water for the birds

January gardening also includes putting out extra food for garden birds. This will be a huge and important contribution to supporting wildlife through the winter months.

WANTED / FOR SALE / FREE

Members' advertisements are free of charge. Just telephone or email the editor (see newsletter heading)

[Copy deadline for the next newsletter: Sunday 25th January](#)

Nothing received this month.

[Unless otherwise stated, where items are free, a donation to the Air Ambulance \(when you next visit the trading shed\) would be appreciated.](#)

Kindly
Printed by



MAIDEN ERLEIGH
SCHOOL