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## Letter from the Editor

Hello again and welcome...

To spring! It's a wonderful time of the year when trees begin to blossom and the villages begin to look lovely and green again! Even though there may have been a bit of confusion, thanks to Mother Nature. Even though the first day of spring occurs in March, it often feels like we are still in the middle of winter! I love the sweet smell in the spring air, the sounds of the birds, and the hints of warm summer to come.

When I woke this morning, it was to the brilliant sunshine – at last a warm day! I'm really hoping the winter has now gone for good and that spring will be allowed to shine in all its glory. We'll hear the sound of laughter again; people will begin to smile, replacing those frowns which we all seem to wear during the cold months.

Another reason to smile is 'Mothering Sunday' will soon be with us. I guess you mums will be smiling at the thought of being spoilt. Maybe chocolate, maybe breakfast in bed – who knows?

Sunday, March 29th marks the start of BST – Don't forget to put your clocks forward 1 hour, because if you are waiting in bed for your breakfast – well, it just may be a long wait.

*And the thought I will leave you with this month:-*

*"It's nice to be important  
But it's more important to be nice"*

Until next time...

*Sheila*

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## Get in touch...

The Village Breeze is a local community magazine and business directory distributed monthly to 8,000 homes and businesses in Appleby Magna, Donisthorpe, Linton, Measham, Moira, Oakthorpe and Overseal.

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# Jason's journey

Once the fresh-faced teen heartthrob in 'Neighbours', Ozzie import Jason Donovan is now celebrating more than 35 successful years in showbiz.

After Jason Donovan's triumphant *Doin' Fine 25* tour of the UK and Ireland, the multitalented star has announced a 16-date extension. *Doin' Fine Encore* is a spectacular celebration of his long career in music, theatre, film and TV, taking place this February and March.

## ROAD TO FAME

Jason landed his first acting role aged nine, with his big break coming in the Australian TV series, *'Neighbours'*. His character Scott Robinson's romance with Charlene, played by Kylie Minogue, made him a global star. The pair went on to release the 1988 hit, *'Especially For You'*, which featured on his debut album, *'Ten Good Reasons'*. It was the biggest-selling album of 1989, generating two other UK number one singles, *'Sealed with a Kiss'* and *'Too Many Broken Hearts'*.

He was born in June 1968 to actor Terence Donovan and Sue Menlove, in Malvern, Australia. But his parents soon separated, and Terence took charge of Jason in 1972. Jason has stated that he has since had no contact with his birth mother and he has spoken frankly about his battle with drugs.

## FAMILY FIRST

One of his favourite stage roles is that of Frank 'n' Furter in *'The Rocky Horror Show'*. It was during a UK touring production of the show in 1998 that he met Angela Malloch, a stage manager. But they went their separate ways, only for Angela to discover she was pregnant. An ultimatum followed. *"If I was going to have any involvement in the life of our child, I would have to give up the self-indulgent hedonistic lifestyle of the 90s and take greater control of my life. And I did,"* recalls Jason.

Jason quit drugs after the birth of their first child, daughter Jemma, in 2000. Son Zac was born the following year.

The couple married in 2008 and welcomed Molly in 2011.

*"My kids are very aware of what I've done in my life, or rather what I shouldn't have done,"* Jason, 57, has revealed. *"You can only lead by example. I educate my children to hopefully make the right choices. If they don't, I will support them along the way."*

Based in the UK, Jason makes regular return visits to his homeland. When on tour, he tries to get home at weekends and not spend more than four weeks away at a time.

*"I have reached a point of great contentment,"* he says. *"As long as I have my family and my health, as long as I have my work-life balance, I'm happy."*

*Jason Donovan's Doin' Fine Encore 2026 tour finishes on 19 March at Indigo at the O2, London. For tour dates and venues, visit [www.jasondonovan.com](http://www.jasondonovan.com)*





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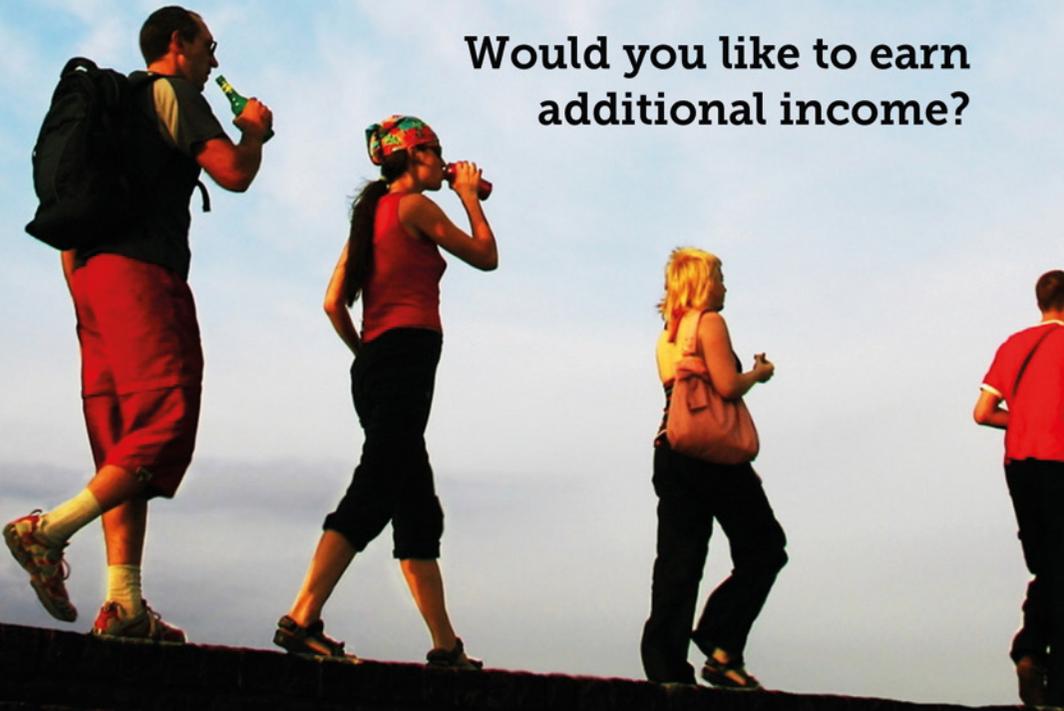


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**DIGNITY**

# Choose white

**Bring freshness and simplicity to your home with different shades of this most neutral of colours.**

Among many colour-of-the-year announcements, one always stands out: the prediction from the Pantone Color Institute. This time, its colour of the year is a white hue called Cloud Dancer, described by Pantone as 'airy', 'ethereal' and 'billowy', 'a whisper of calm in a noisy world'.

Follow our guide to find out how best to use white to enhance your home.

**Why white?** Using white extensively, from walls and ceilings to furnishings, window treatments and perhaps even floors, is an easy way to create harmony and provide cohesion from room to room. White rooms feel bright and spacious. They also make a great backdrop for art, books, plants and decorative accessories.



**Where to use it** A white scheme can work well in both period and modern houses, and can help with small or dark rooms. Brilliant white paint used extensively, however, can make a space feel stark, especially when the room is north- or east-facing. Choose a knocked-back off-white (like Cloud Dancer) instead. Shades of white with an undertone of yellow or pink feel warmer.

**Choosing your shades** Whites and near-whites cover an enormous spectrum. Each one will look different in various lighting conditions, so try out sample pots, painted onto swatches of paper which you can move around. Another consideration is the surface finish. These vary from chalky, matt emulsion to shiny gloss, and your choice will depend on the surface, how durable you need the paint to be and personal preference. Be guided by the manufacturer's

information and remember that combining different finishes of the same shade achieves a gently layered, sophisticated effect.

**Use layered textures** Textures bring an all-white room to life with subtly pleasing contrasts, from the grain of limed floorboards to the soft weave of linen, the gleam of glazed ceramic to shaggy sheepskin. A successful white scheme carefully combines hard and soft, rough and smooth textures. For cosiness, add a soft rug to a hard floor or a woollen throw to a leather sofa. To emphasise light and space, consider elements such as satin-varnished floorboards, gloss-painted cupboard doors, sheer curtains and silk cushions.

**Create interest** Natural materials such as wood, wicker and terracotta complement pale hues, while brass, bronze or copper hardware adds warmth and shine. Wall art in matching frames, vases of flowers (dried or fresh) and plants with interesting shapes complete the look.





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# Spring Time

Yes, it's true – the boring sales conference in Los Angeles, earlier in the week, has definitely taken its toll on me.

Gratefully, I sip my freshly-

brewed coffee and gaze out of the window. Is it my imagination or does the day seem lighter and brighter this morning?

Breakfast over, I wash, put on an old baggy woollen jumper and a pair of faded blue jeans – it is Sunday after all – and return to the kitchen.

*'Mum! You're not wearing THAT, are you?'* cries Chloe staring at me in mock horror.

I flash my daughter one of my haughty glares. Cheeky madam!

*'Just going outside to get some fresh air and clear my head,'* I announce. I really love our beautiful garden. It's my pride and joy!

*'Don't be too long, darling!'* Chris shouts after me.

As I wander down the meandering pathways admiring my handiwork, everywhere feels so calm. The watery sun shines benevolently; the birds are chirping cheerfully in the budding trees; and the gentle scent of new blossom permeates the air. Isn't that a Red Admiral fluttering near the Buddleia? A butterfly emerging from its winter sleep?

After a while, I turn and reluctantly re-join the family.

Chris is still reading. The children – surprise, surprise – are preoccupied on their mobiles, checking out their social media! They all seem extremely well-dressed today. I wonder why.

Chloe looks up. *'Mum, you really can't go out in those clothes!'*

*'Go out?'* I say. *'What do you mean?'*

*'Dad's booked a table at The Bulls Head – for one o'clock . . . a welcome home meal!'*

*'Oh!'* I reply. It had slipped my weary mind. I check my watch. *'But I've plenty of time to change into something more, err, suitable. It's only a quarter past eleven!'*

*'No, Lizzie!'* says Chris in exasperation. *'The time is after midday – TWELVE-FIFTEEN.'*

What on earth is he talking about?

*'Do you know what day it is?'* he asks. *'Sunday, March 29th.'*

*'So?'*

*'BST – The start of British Summer Time.'*

*'Last night, we turned the clocks FORWARD one hour! "Spring forward" and all that!'*

*'Now, hurry up and change into your glad rags – or we'll never make it to the pub on time!'*

I slowly open my eyes. The clock on the bedside table shows: 3.15am. The middle of the night! I am just about to turn over and go back to sleep when I notice sunlight streaming in through a chink in the floral curtains. Clearly, something is wrong. Very wrong!

I shake the clock, and sigh. The battery's flat! A quick look at my watch confirms it's TEN o'clock in the morning. And I still feel tired! I reach out across the bed. No husband. Chris is up early. We usually have a lie-in on a Sunday.

Through the closed bedroom door, I hear the sounds of our two teenage children talking and laughing. Not yet on their iPhones!

Time to get up, I suppose. I draw back the curtains. It is, indeed, a lovely sunny day. I throw on my dressing gown – the silk one my children gave me for Christmas – and go downstairs into the kitchen.

Chris looks up from his newspaper. *'And what time do you call this, Lizzie?'* he says, smirking. *'Catching up on your beauty sleep!'*

*'Hello Mum!'* chorus Hugo and Chloe. *'Glad you could make it!'*

I yawn. *'You lot are up early!'*

*'Not really,'* replies Chris. *'Anyway, I've got time to make you a nice cup of strong coffee!'*

*'And I'll butter you some toast, Mum,'* chips in Chloe. *'Thanks.'*

*'We left you to have a lie-in – reckoned you'd be worn out after your red-eye flight,'* says Chris.



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# Mushroom & Watercress French toast

This quick and easy any-time-of-day savoury dish isn't just delicious; it combines the healthy super-ingredients mushrooms and watercress for maximum oomph!

Detail...

Serves 1

Preparation time 10 minutes

Cooking time 10 minutes

You will need...

- 1 egg
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 slices thick crusty bread
- Butter
- 50g Swiss cheese, grated
- 1 clove garlic, minced (optional)
- 100g mushrooms, wiped and halved
- 80g watercress, chopped

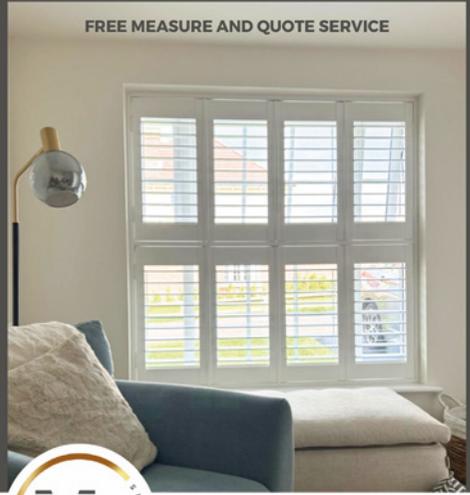
Method...

1. In a bowl, beat the egg and add a little salt and freshly ground black pepper. Dip in the slices of bread, covering both sides in the mix.
2. Heat some butter in a frying pan over a medium heat and fry the egggy bread for a couple of minutes, flip it and sprinkle the grated cheese over the side that is cooked so it melts.
3. Meanwhile, heat a knob of butter in a clean pan over a medium heat and add the garlic, if using, and the mushrooms. Add the watercress as the mushrooms start to brown and cook for no longer than a minute, so the watercress has just wilted.
4. Serve the mushrooms and watercress heaped on top of the cheesy toast and finish with a generous grating of black pepper.

*For more recipes, visit [www.watercress.co.uk](http://www.watercress.co.uk) and for further information on the health benefits of watercress, visit [www.thewatercresscompany.com](http://www.thewatercresscompany.com)*

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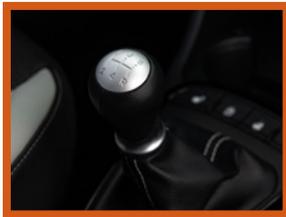
# TOP TIPS FOR NEW DRIVERS



It's handy to have a few hints to help you when you put those L-plates on and get behind the wheel.

Pick a reputable driving school or instructor

Shop around and check reviews to see how the instructor teaches and what kinds of lessons they offer. With a private instructor, there will likely be just one car, whereas driving schools usually have a fleet. Many companies offer a block of ten driving lessons for around £300 to £400.



## Practice the theory test

The theory test comprises 50 multiple-choice questions covering various driving scenarios.

To pass it, you

need to score at least 43. There is also the 'Hazard Perception' test, which involves several computer-generated driving scenarios where you have to click on every potential hazard ahead. To pass, you must score at least 44 out of a possible 75 points.

Familiarise yourself with the questions in the theory test and learn any answers you get wrong. There are plenty of mock Hazard Perception tests available online.

## Buy a car to practice in

If you can afford it, try to buy a car while you're learning to drive, so you get more practice.

Obtain some quotes for insurance first, to make sure you're not caught out by the price. Having your own car means you can get provisional insurance to allow you to drive with a passenger who has had a driving licence for more than two years.



## Manual or automatic?

If you're not a confident driver, an automatic car may be a good choice, as it's easier to use. The downside is that it only qualifies you to drive vehicles with two pedals. If you want to drive a manual, you'll have to retake your test in a manual car. This means it's almost always best to learn to drive in a manual, as you'll be able to access all types of transmission once you've got your full licence.

## Learn 'show me, tell me' questions

One of the first parts of the practical driving test is the 'show me, tell me' questions, in which the examiner will ask you two vehicle safety questions before you drive off.

A typical question might be, "Tell me how you would switch your headlight from dipped to the main beam and explain how you'd know the main beam is on."

Your driving instructor will normally run through questions you might encounter on the day, so it's best to get to know the vehicle you're using, practice where everything is and revise some of the likely questions.

## Learn the driving test routes

Your instructor should know the different test routes, so ask them to take you out so you can familiarise yourself with them, as it will make you a lot more confident on the day of your test. You're also more likely to pass on a route you've learnt through driving lessons.



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# KIA EV4



**Kia has been quickly expanding its line-up of electric vehicles, so what can the EV4 do differently? Jack Evans drives it to find out.**

## WHAT IS IT?

Kia now has an electric-car range spanning the compact EV3 SUV right the way up to the seven-seater EV9. Next to enter the gang is the EV4. It's not another high-riding SUV or crossover, but is offered in hatchback and eye-catching saloon-like 'Fastback' body styles.

## WHAT'S NEW?

The EV4 shares a modular platform with the EV3, so you'll find similarities when it comes to range and interior architecture. However, with the EV4, you're getting a more traditional shape – with the hatchback, at least.

## WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

You can get the EV4 with either a 58.3kWh battery or an 81.4kWh version; we're driving the former. While it can't eclipse the 362 miles you'd get from the big-battery model, this variant manages 273 miles from a single charge. You get a decent maximum charge speed of 127kW, too, taking the batteries from 10% to 80% in under half an hour.

## WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

In the entry-level 'Air', with its 17-inch wheels and big, squishy tyres, the EV4 shrugs off lumps and bumps well, though there's a bit of a wobble through the bends. It also remains hushed at motorway speeds. While it goes from 0-60mph in 7.3 seconds, it's the comfort and refinement which shine through.

## HOW DOES IT LOOK?

Our EV4 has a classic hatchback shape. However, with its tall roofline and boxy dimensions, it still has quite a lot of presence. The Fastback version has a completely different look but also stands out, though its sloped roofline has an impact on rear-seat headroom.

## WHAT'S IT LIKE INSIDE?

There are plenty of good materials and even this base-spec 'Air' car has well-finished areas that feel solid. There's a great blend of physical and digital controls, too, so that everything feels intuitive. The boot stands at a very impressive 435 litres.

## WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?

Prices for the EV4 start from £34,695 for this small-battery car in Air trim. For the bigger battery and longer range, prices begin at £37,695 – and we're expecting a lot of people to opt for this version. We'd argue that Air trim level is a great place to be; a 12.3-inch infotainment system, heated front seats and steering wheel, and front and rear parking sensors are included.

The range-topping GT-Line S, with features like an upgraded Harmon Kardon sound system and ventilated front seats, comes in at £44,795 in big-battery form.

## VERDICT

The Kia EV4 does a great job of standing out from the electric vehicle crowd. On the one hand, it's practical, with a large boot and plenty of space inside, but it also has all the features you need.



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## Where there's a Will...

Pets are beloved family members, so it's good to know that it's possible to make arrangements for them in your Will if you're no longer around.

### LEGAL BEAGLE?

In England and Wales, and in Scotland too, pets are legally classed as personal property – or chattels – similar to furniture or cars. This means they won't automatically go to the person you might choose to look after them unless you specify this clearly in your Will. But it's very important to discuss it with the potential future caregiver first, to ensure they're willing and able to take on the responsibility.

### MONEY MATTERS

You can leave a financial gift to the person you designate to care for them, to help with costs such as food, insurance and vet bills. However, it's worth considering what should happen to any remaining funds if they aren't used up on your pet's care.

Some people prefer to create a trust dedicated to ongoing pet-care expenses. This can be helpful for animals with high maintenance costs or long lifespans, such as horses.

### CHARITY CARE

If you don't have anyone suitable to name, certain charities offer pet rehoming schemes that can be written into your Will to ensure your pet is safe and looked after. These include Cats Protection and The Cinnamon Trust. Ultimately, the best way to protect your pet's future is to plan ahead and think of them when you're drawing up your Will.





# 48 hours in Amsterdam

With its world-class museums, an eclectic food scene and canalside charm – all just over an hour's flight from the UK – Amsterdam is the ultimate European city break. Compact, picturesque and effortlessly walkable, you can easily soak up the highlights in one weekend. *Here's how:*



## DAY 1 morning

After arriving, the best way to get a feel for the city is to take a stroll. The Dutch capital is defined by its canals, and the city's Grachtengordel, or Canal Belt, dating back to the 17th century, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Wander along Herengracht, Keizersgracht and Prinsengracht, looking out for the crooked, narrow canal houses and houseboats.

## DAY 1 afternoon

Walk into the Jordaan and spend an afternoon exploring this charming district's bustling independent boutiques and quirky museums. Stop for lunch and try the city's famous apple pie at *Winkel 43*. Just down the road lies the city's most visited museum, the *Anne Frank House*. Preserving the secret annexe where Anne Frank wrote her diary during the Second World War, this museum is a huge draw for many travellers. Be sure to book your tickets in advance.

## DAY 1 evening

End your first day with a peaceful walk along the canals and dive into one of the lively bars in the

*De Pijp* neighborhood. A popular haunt for stag and hen parties, Amsterdam has an infamous after-dark reputation. You can get a taste of its rebellious side by wandering through the Red Light District – *De Wallen*.

## DAY 2 morning

Start in Amsterdam's Museum Quarter, home to three of the city's most famous museums: Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh Museum and Stedelijk Museum. You probably won't have time to visit all three, but you can't go wrong with whichever you choose. While the Rijksmuseum houses masterpieces such as Rembrandt's *'Night Watch'* and Vermeer's *'The Milkmaid'*, the Van Gogh Museum displays the artist's world-famous *'Sunflowers'*.

## DAY 2 afternoon

One of the best ways to explore Amsterdam is on two wheels – just like the locals. It's one of Europe's most cycling-friendly cities, but the sheer numbers of cyclists mean you'll need to be confident with city cycling to get about safely. *The Vondelpark* is always a pleasure to cycle around; this large green space has a handful of restaurants and cafés – perfect for a lunch stop.



## DAY 2 evening

For your final evening, book a candlelit table at a canalside restaurant and sample some of the Netherlands' finest cuisine. And why not top off your trip with a twilight canal cruise? Absorb the city's nighttime energy from afar, as you soak up the soft glow of the canal bridges and watch the city's lights dance on the water.

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# Come rain or shine

March marks the start of spring and, as we look forward to warmer days, here's a round-up of books and media on the weather and climate change.



## BOOK - The Climate Book by Greta Thunberg

Activist Greta Thunberg gives us a crash course in how we can save the world as we face an environmental crisis. Produced in partnership with more than 100 climate-change experts, Thunberg's commentaries and updates reflect the latest research – and why we must act now.

## BOOK - Very British Weather by The Met Office

Do you know your drizzle from your mizzle? Ever wondered what rainbows are really made of? The Met Office shares the best of almost 170 years of forecasting for the first time in this beautifully illustrated book.



## BOOK - Cloudspotting for Beginners by Gavin Pretor-Pinney and William Grill

Although aimed principally at upper primary school children, this book, artfully illustrated by William Grill, will inspire curious minds of all ages. Clouds come in all shapes and sizes. Learn facts, secrets and stories of all the major types, as well as discovering parts of the sky where they like to hang out, how they play with sunlight and much more.

## BOOK - There Is No Planet B by Mike Berners-Lee

This is the big-picture perspective on the environmental challenges of our day – but what's most pressing and what can any of us do as individuals? In this updated edition, carbon-footprinting expert Mike Berners-Lee offers new material on protests, pandemics, wildfires, carbon targets, biodiversity and more.



## BOOK - In All Weathers by Matt Gaw

Matt Gaw embarks on a series of walks across Britain to explore our weather in all its wild and stormy forms, examining where it comes from, the ways it's changing and how we can embrace it as a positive presence in our lives.

## BOOK - Part One - The Legend of Luna Bell Forest by Sam Higgins

A four-book children's fantasy adventure series - that steps through rich, magical lands full of fantastical characters, overcoming fears and embarking on a wondrous adventure that combines learning wholesome, family values alongside uncovering a great mystery that lies within the Heart Stars.



## PODCAST - Weather Geeks

Listen to this podcast for the agony and the ecstasy of the one story that the entire world participates in, and the science behind it. From the people behind The Weather Channel TV network.

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# Royal seal of approval

The best thing about spring for garden-lovers is the thought of adding some beauty to the borders. You probably know what you like, but how do you choose a variety or cultivar of a particular species?

One way to decide is to look for plants that bear the RHS AGM (Royal Horticultural Society Award of Garden Merit) logo. The familiar marker with its cup-shaped design evokes a feeling of trust and acts as a stamp of approval. These plants have been judged by the RHS to be reliable performers.



## Tried and tested

Testing and assessment take place during a trial period that can last several weeks, months or even years. These trials are often carried out at RHS Wisley in Surrey.

There are currently more than 7,500 plants carrying the RHS AGM and more are being added to the database all the time. Some, however, leave their glory behind if they are shown to have deteriorated or even become invasive. The AGM is subject to regular review and, since its inception in 2002, more than 3,000 plants have been dropped from the list.

## Some popular choices

During March, when many Camellias are in glorious bloom, some are more revered than others. A selection of those granted the RHS AGM include:

- The bright pink, semi-double Camellia 'Leonard Messel' (left)
- Bi-colour Camellia 'Tom Thumb', with compact growth, glossy foliage and small, rose-pink double flowers with white edges
- Semi-double, crimson-flowered Camellia 'Mars'
- Camellia 'Silver Anniversary' with its peony form of white flowers and bright yellow stamens

*A surprising number of Rhododendrons have earned the coveted RHS AGM, including:*

- Rhododendron 'Scintillation', an evergreen, compact variety with free-flowering purple-pink flowers with a golden blotch
- Rhododendron (also known as Azalea) 'Golden Eagle', a deciduous variety with fiery orange-yellow flowers and attractive autumn foliage
- Rhododendron 'Cunningham's White', (pictured left) a reliable evergreen with glorious trusses of snow-white flowers
- Rhododendron 'Horizon Monarch', loved for its beautiful yellow flowers with pink streaks

One particular early-flowering shrub seems to have fallen from favour. It may be that Forsythia lacks structure or the fact that the flowers contain little in the way of pollen or nectar. But its bright yellow blooms bring a welcome splash

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of colour at a time of year when we need it the most.

- Forsythia 'Lynwood Variety' (pictured below) was the prestigious RHS AGM. Its tiny but profuse yellow flowers offer emergency food during a time of scarcity and attract insects, which are an important part of the food chain.



The range of plants that carry the RHS AGM is extensive, from perennials, shrubs and trees to fruit and vegetables. You can search for particular plants or browse the lists at [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk)

## COMMUNITY GARDENING GROUP

### DON'T KNOW ONE END OF A SPADE FROM ANOTHER?

Whether you do or not, you would be welcome at our friendly community gardening group.

Formed initially as one of Measham Medical Unit's Social Prescribing groups, we aim to offer exercise and social contact as a means to bolster physical and emotional well-being and improve our public spaces at the same time.

**We currently look after 3 sites in Measham, meeting on a Monday at 10am, to work until 11.15am or so, when we head to the Age UK Cafe on Measham High St for tea and biscuits. (Own cost : £1)**

Some members also tend an allotment in Appleby Magna — organic, zero air miles, fruit and veg!

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# All about GOUT



Sometimes called the 'disease of kings', gout is very painful and very common, but it's important to sort the facts from the fiction.

## **FACT 1 : Gout is a kind of arthritis**

Gout is the most common inflammatory arthritis. It's caused by too much uric acid in the blood, leading to the formation of uric acid crystals. These can get into a joint, triggering inflammation and causing swelling, intense pain, redness and tenderness. The big toe is most frequently affected, but you can also get gout in your foot, knee, ankle, elbow, hand or wrist.

## **FACT 2 : It's becoming more common**

When Henry VIII was diagnosed with gout, declaring you had it became fashionable. It's no longer trendy, but more people are developing the condition. One in 40 people are affected, according to the most recent study into its prevalence in the UK, with most sufferers over 60. More recent NHS figures reveal that 234,000 people were admitted to hospital with gout in 2021-2022. You're more likely to have a flare-up in spring.

## **FACT 3 : Gout is not caused by drinking too much port**

In one in ten cases, there's a family history, but what about the rest? Our growing obesity problem and greater use of diuretics to control high blood pressure are factors. A 2023 UK report found gout flares are also more likely if you're male, black, or have heart failure, chronic kidney disease or cardiovascular disease. High cholesterol and crash diets can increase risk. Postmenopausal women are

also susceptible, but gout is much less common in females.

The port-swigging idea is a hangover from history. That said, it's true that alcohol raises your risk and it's also a factor in flare-ups, along with eating a large meal. But beer and spirits, along with sugary drinks, are more likely than port to trigger an attack. Offending foods include red meat, offal, oily fish and shellfish.

## **FACT 4 : It's important to take gout seriously**

Gout is often treated as a joke, but it's no laughing matter. Not only is it agony, but if you're unlucky enough to have more than one or two attacks of gout, the intervals between them can become shorter, the bout can last longer and affect more joints. Ultimately, joint damage can occur. This means it's important to have gout treated early on. Treatment is usually with non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, like ibuprofen, or steroids, but uric-acid-lowering medicine is likely to reduce the number of future attacks and the damage caused.

## **FACT 5 : Lifestyle changes are not enough**

Losing weight, drinking less alcohol and eating a healthy diet can certainly help – a small study found that a plant-based Mediterranean diet brought some improvement. Avoiding trigger foods might make further flares less likely. But the scientific consensus is that diet and lifestyle alterations on their own won't make your gout go away and you could need uric-acid-lowering medicine for life. It's also important to keep taking it even when your gout is not playing up.

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**Ytoti Shah will help us better understand and look out for the signs of Prostate Cancer at our next talk on 24th March, at Ashby Congregational church, Kilwardby Street, Ashby LE65 2FQ.**

Doors open at 1.30pm, for a 2pm start. Please come along for the presentation and stop afterwards for a hot drink, biscuits, and chat - members and prospective members all welcome.

For more details visit [ashbyu3a.co.uk](http://ashbyu3a.co.uk)

# Conveyancers: making moves happen

**When you're buying or selling a house and it's taking forever, it's tempting to blame the conveyancers. Not all conveyancers are great communicators, but they do handle a myriad tasks you might not be aware of.**

## Conveyancing caseload

A conveyancer is a lawyer who's there to protect your interests as a buyer or seller. They'll handle the sale process, which includes exchanging contracts, dealing with stamp duty and capital gains tax, the transfer of mortgage funds and legally recording the change of ownership with the Land Registry. Conveyancers also have a legal duty to carry out anti-money laundering checks.

However, it's the stages before the final sale that often seem to drag on. This is when your conveyancer will be looking for anything that could cause legal problems. This includes scrutinising the title deeds, making sure the seller really does own the property and checking exactly where the boundaries lie. If it's a leasehold property, they'll also examine the lease for any concerns.

Conveyancers look for 'restrictive covenants'. These are restrictions on land use, often dating from the property's construction, that automatically transfer to new owners. These can often seem irrelevant, such as a ban on putting up advertising hoardings, and unlikely to be enforced. However, conveyancers must still make you aware of them.

## Other searches

Other searches include environmental risks such as mining in the area, potentially dangerous gases and flooding. The conveyancers are often

waiting themselves for government authorities, so it can be difficult to know who – if anyone – is dragging their feet.

A conveyancer isn't responsible for a property survey. This isn't actually part of the legal agreement for a house sale, as the building's condition comes under the 'caveat emptor' (buyer beware) principle.

## How to choose

For most buyers, it doesn't matter where your conveyancer is based, as long as they're qualified in the relevant legal system (Scotland has its own legal system, for example). Larger national chains may be cheaper, often using junior staff for admin, while senior solicitors handle the legal elements and declarations. They may also offer online portals that let you access status updates.

On the other hand, you may prefer a local company which is more accessible and can give you more personal attention. This may also be a good option if local issues, such as mining, apply.

Look for conveyancers registered with the Solicitors Regulation Authority or Council of Licensed Conveyancers in England and Wales, and the Law Society in Scotland. Technically, you can hire anyone as a conveyancer, or even do it yourself, but this is ill-advised given the legal consequences of getting anything wrong. In practice, if you have a mortgage, your lender will almost certainly insist on a licensed and qualified conveyancer.



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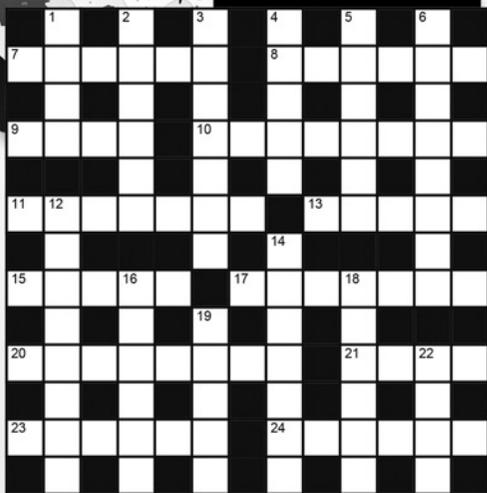
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# Coffee BREAK



## CROSSWORD



### ACROSS

- 7 Swap over (6)
- 8 To be on a ship (6)
- 9 Not new (4)
- 10 Outside (8)
- 11 Angry (7)
- 13 Funeral fires (5)
- 15 Almost two pints (5)
- 17 Below (7)
- 20 Observing (8)
- 21 Story (4)
- 23 Educational establishment (6)
- 24 Required (6)

### DOWN

- 1 Female sheep (4)
- 2 Recording room (6)
- 3 Burglars (7)
- 4 Belief (5)
- 5 Every sixty minutes (6)

### DOWN cont.,

- 6 Widest (8)
- 12 Inconvenience (8)
- 14 Combining (7)
- 16 Calculate (6)
- 18 Respect (6)
- 19 Foolish (5)
- 22 Vegetable (4)

Each letter in this puzzle is represented by a number between 1 and 26. The codes for three letters are shown. As you find the letters enter them in the box below.

CODEWORD

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26		

## SUDOKU

		1	7	4		9		
8		9				3		7
	7		5	8				4
		5					2	
1					7	2		3
3			6				4	2
		4		5	8	1		



CODEWORD...

7	9	4	2	5	8	1	6	3
3	1	8	6	9	7	4	5	2
5	6	2	3	1	4	7	8	9
1	4	6	9	7	2	8	3	5
9	8	5	4	3	6	2	7	1
2	7	3	5	8	1	6	9	4
4	5	7	8	2	9	3	1	6
8	2	9	1	6	3	5	4	7
6	3	1	7	4	5	2	8	9

SUDOKU...



ANSWERS...

5	4	7	26		13	24	11	4	5	2	24	15
4		1		11		9		18		24		5
19	23	22	18	18	20	18		2	18	11	19	18
22		8		21				18		5		19
15	24	17	26	11	24	7	26	11	5	18	19	S
7			5		18		7	7		7		12
18	24	11		14	11	24	10	1		3	26	22
25		18		18		13		18				14
	26	2	18	11	16	1	18	15	8	5	4	14
7		18		24			18		7			15
16	26	11	19	7		8	5	19	7	24	6	18
26		19		26		24		19		15		11
19	7	18	18	11	5	4	14		18	3	18	19

# Individual Savings Account (ISA)

As we approach the end of the tax year, don't forget to take advantage of your annual ISA allowance. To help you make a more informed decision on ISAs, here are some FAQs:

## What is an ISA?

An ISA is a tax-free savings or investment account available from banks, building societies, asset managers and investment providers. There are many different types, including cash ISAs and stocks & shares ISAs.

## What are the Benefits of an ISA?

For UK residents, ISAs are an excellent way of saving – they should be your first savings choice to avoid paying tax unnecessarily on your investments.

- The primary benefit is the tax advantage allowing individuals to profit from savings or shares without paying income or capital gains tax on that return
- The secondary benefit is that you are saving some of your income

## How much can I invest in an ISA?

For the 2025/26 tax year and the 2026/27 tax year, the overall ISA allowance remains at £20,000, which can be split

across different ISA types. New limits will take effect in April 2027, when the Cash ISA contribution limit for under-65s will drop to £12,000, while the £20,000 total allowance and Stocks & Shares ISA limits remain.

## How many ISAs can I have?

You can have as many ISA as you like, however you can only pay into one Stocks & Shares ISA and one Cash ISA in a tax year - your yearly allowance can be split any way between these two.

## Can I withdraw from my ISA?

You can withdraw tax-free from your ISA at any time. If you request a withdrawal from an investment ISA, it typically takes around 7 working days to sell your investment and transfer the money to your bank account.

We would recommend you seek the advice of a Qualified Financial Adviser who will be able to assess your situation and advise you accordingly on the type of ISA that best suits your personal situation and attitude to Investment Risk.



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