G club

The G Club magazine from greenwood

JULY 2023

PLANTING INSPIRATION

Creating a Sensory Garden

Our Sustainability Progress

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY

Tangmere Community Garden

NURSERY FOCUS

Taking Cuttings for Propagation at Fresh Acres

Beekeeping at Fresh Acres Nursery

PLANT FOCUS

Skimmia

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We are delighted to have been awarded £2.7 million of funding by National Highways to grow three million native trees from seed, over five years.

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Fungi play an incredibly important role within the plant kingdom.

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This year has seen a very strong start to our progress towards a more sustainable future, as we make excellent headway towards Net Zero.

The Benefits of G club

We are pleased to highlight the benefits of G Club, our client loyalty programme that recognises and rewards our clients.

The table below details the exclusive Gold, Silver and Bronze tier benefits - including bonus credits, complimentary and enhanced delivery service, and for some clients, a complimentary trip to Greenwood Holland.

On top of the G Club rewards, you will benefit from excellent service from the dedicated G Team; access to our innovative tools, like the Tender Tool; private tours of Fresh Acres HQ on request; and opportunities for continued professional development through the Greenwood Academy.

	G club GOLD TIER	G club SILVER TIER	G club BRONZE TIER
Credit bonus based on quarterly spend	3% Credit bonus	2% Credit bonus	1% Credit bonus
Complimentary delivery	all orders over £500	all orders over £750	all orders over £1000
Hiab, Moffett, FORS, and split deliveries (chargeable)	●	●	●
Dedicated G Team	●	●	●
Access to Tender Tool	●	●	●
Fresh Acres HQ tour	●	●	●
Consultation and advice	●	●	●
Greenwood Academy CPD	●	●	●
Bespoke photography (on request)	●	●	×
Complimentary trip to Holland (two people, once a year)	●	×	×
Sustainability and community partnering	●	×	×
Annual Business Planning Session	●	×	×

Business Updates

Greenwood awarded National Highways contract to grow three million trees

We are delighted to have been awarded £2.7 million of funding by National Highways to grow three million native trees from seed, over five years. National Highways has committed to planting at least three million trees by 2030, as part of its 'Environmental Sustainability Strategy', and Greenwood has been contracted as the sole supplier for this huge project. The G Team at our Willaston, Acresfield, and Fresh Acres nurseries are already nurturing the first batches of these important trees and we look forward to monitoring and updating you on their progress. ***"We are really proud to be supporting National Highways in their goals of reaching Net Zero and improving biodiversity across the country, principles that are very close to our heart here at Greenwood***", said Melanie Asker, Managing Director.

Letter from MP for Arundel and South Downs

Since our last issue, we have received an encouraging letter from our local MP for Arundel and South Downs, Andrew Griffith, on the progress we are making in our transition to peat-free compost...

"I was delighted to receive your letter in support of Defra's proposal to make an exemption on the peat ban until the end of 2026 for tree and plant growers in the UK. I am impressed with the progress that Greenwood Plants has made to become fully peat-free by the end of this year - setting the bar on what is an achievable outcome for all growers and working with global and domestic partners to deliver a sustainable business model.
It will be my pleasure to share your letter with the Secretary of State, to highlight your support and excellent work in this area. I will continue to keep a close eye on developments in this sector and welcome your further updates. Please send my regards to all at G Team."

G Club trip to Greenwood Holland

In April, we hosted our first G Club trip to visit Greenwood Holland and some of its local suppliers. Our G Club members were invited to join the complimentary excursion, which is offered as a benefit of achieving gold tier status. Melanie Asker, Taryn Baker, and Wesley Elkins accompanied clients from Graduate Landscapes, Kennet Landscapes Solutions, Millstone Landscapes, Coblands Landscapes, and Naio Landscaping. The friendly and informal trip enabled the members to tour Greenwood's impressive operation in Holland, to see the vast array of high quality stock that we can supply, as well as having some time to socialise. The feedback was really positive and we look forward to our next G Club excursion.

G Team Focus: Ania Slabik

Ania is our Production Planner and her role involves ensuring that Greenwood has the available stock to fulfil our clients' needs. Ania collaborates with the Sales Team, Production Team and Nursery Managers to ensure competitive pricing and preferred lead times with orders. She also oversees our contract growing service, Watch It Grow.

Outside of work, Ania is a talented landscape and portrait photographer, and her photos have been awarded and published in local newspapers.

Greenwood Community: do you have a good cause that we can help?

Helping out our local communities and enhancing biodiversity is a priority to us, and we are proud of the many projects we've donated plants to so far, including charities, schools, and other community organisations. We aim to reach 24 community projects this year and are making great progress towards this goal - we would love to extend our plant donations to gardening projects that are meaningful to our clients. Please get in touch if you have a local community project that would benefit from a plant donation - email hello@greenwoodplants.co.uk.

Planting Inspiration: Creating a Sensory Garden

Nature provides many species of plants that can be enjoyed in our gardens. From tiny herbs to exotic shrubs to towering trees, there are plants to suit every garden. However, it is not always easy to recognise those that are best suited to the available space and the environmental conditions in which a particular garden stands.

***Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'**

Choosing the most suitable plants for your garden will allow you to optimise the care and maintenance of the outdoor space and of the plants themselves, without risking them underperforming, or compromising the aesthetic element of the green space.

Outdoor spaces are places to relax and find tranquillity away from the stresses of a busy life and a hectic routine. To create successful gardens that stand the test of time, it's crucial to understand the botanical characteristics of the plants—their origin, form, adaptability, climate, soil and moisture preferences.

You can choose to concentrate on the flowering months to provide a strong visual impact over a shorter length of time, or you can opt for plants which have seasonal variation and provide year-round interest. The shapes, colours, and fragrances of the plants can help to create style and personality in your green space. One idea for a planting theme within gardens is to focus on sensory plants.

A sensory garden is designed to stimulate the five senses of sight, smell, sound, touch, and taste. This type of planting not only encourages connection with nature, but also heightens awareness of surroundings, supports the practice of mindfulness, and enhances a sense of well-being and calmness. To create a sensory garden, you should first think about the design, taking into consideration the space available.

Using the five senses, we have created a sensory planting plan made up of a variety of species. The flowerheads of *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' (8) provide pops of colour dotted through the border, whilst *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' (11) gives vertical interest with its vibrant flower spikes. *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna' is a compact, mound-forming perennial with grey-green leaves and dark stems bearing upright racemes of violet-blue flowers in summer.

Rosa 'Nice Day' (2) is a small climber with neat, dark foliage. Its loose sprays of dainty, fragrant, salmon-pink flowers bloom in summer and autumn. We have also included *Lonicera periclymenum* (1)—a vigorous, shrubby climber which is sweetly scented, with oval-shaped, green foliage and highly scented, tubular, white, purple flushed flowers in summer. Lastly, *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote' (6) has both aromatic foliage and scented flowers so it is perfect along paths where it will be brushed past. *Mentha spicata* (12) and *Rosmarinus officinalis* (5) both have aromatic foliage that smell and taste delicious; they can both be used as culinary herbs. The soft, furry leaves of *Stachys byzantina* (10) and *Phlomis russeliana* (4) feel lovely when touched. *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' (7) has bristly flowerheads that add soft texture to a border. The tall flowerheads of *Stipa gigantea* (3) provide texture and movement as they nod in the breeze. *Briza media* (9) provides a calming sound as it rustles in the breeze, with its narrow, grey-green leaves and green flowers with a purple hue on upright stems.

Having a sensory garden provides numerous benefits, including therapeutic enrichment to patients with neurodegenerative disorders, including Alzheimer's disease or senile dementia. In fact, it is not uncommon for some nursing homes and hospices to include them within their planting. The sensory garden also provides excellent benefits for children, especially in the age group of 3-12 years. In the sensory garden, children can develop their sensory perceptions whilst playing and taking care of the plants.

Look out for more planting inspiration plans in future issues of G Club magazine.

Lonicera periclymenum

Client Focus: The Launch of G Range

***Epimedium* × *versicolor* 'Sulphureum'**

We are excited to now be able to offer the "G Range"—our new, carefully curated list of 175 of our most popular varieties, in their recommended sizes.

Plants and trees within the G Range come with a brand promise of guaranteed three-day delivery all year round. This new concept has been created in response to the increasing demand we are experiencing for fast deliveries to site. As well as speedy delivery, Greenwood also ensures that the plants meet the "Greenwood Specification" of defined pot sizes and recommended heights.

In a fast-moving international horticultural market, plants are grown and sold quickly; they need time to develop and become established. However, there are several factors that can affect market supply, such as seasonal temperatures, growing conditions, and rate of plant growth. The G Range has been designed to provide a solution to the frustrations around seasonal plant size, appearance, and availability.

Over the course of many years, we have had numerous conversations with clients about the viability of some plant requests, such as height sizes incongruent with the related pot size, or height sizes that are unobtainable due to the given temperatures and growing conditions at that point in the year. The G Range gives certainty on what to expect at defined points in a plant's development, ensuring that expectations for plant size versus pot size are met throughout the seasons.

Alongside our G Range, we have also been developing the Greenwood Specification. We originally created our 'Every Plant Matters' internal handbook for the G Team, that garnered a lot of interest from clients. This inspired us to create our comprehensive guide to specifying plants for the commercial landscaping industry. The Greenwood Specification presents key information on our most popular plant and tree varieties, and includes a plant guide to aid landscape architect practices, garden designers, and commercial landscapers in their plant selections. If you're keen to get hold of a copy of the Greenwood Specification, register your interest by using the following link and entering your details: **https://rebrand.ly/gwspec**.

We pride ourselves on our fast and flexible national deliveries, our client-first approach, and our international supply chain, and we are incredibly excited to bring the G Range and Greenwood Specification to our clients as we truly believe they will take our effortless client experience to the next level.

***Heuchera* 'Caramel'**

Our Sustainability Progress

This year has seen a very strong start to our progress towards a more sustainable future, as we make excellent headway towards Net Zero. In 2022, we made a commitment to become 100% peat-free, 100% self-sufficient with water, and increase the electric machinery at Fresh Acres nursery, by the end of 2023. We are coming on leaps and bounds with these ambitious goals.

In February 2022, we started trialling a range of peat-free mixes, and we are pleased to share that three out of six nurseries are now growing completely peat-free and the remaining sites are successfully transitioning over. This is an exciting achievement for us and takes us even closer to the next milestone. Peat-free growing media comes with additional challenges; for optimal growth, peat-free plants should be closely monitored to ensure they are receiving the correct volume and frequency of both water and nutrients. Our extensive trials have involved tweaking the composition to get the pH, nutrient levels, and structure right, as well as altering our irrigation programmes to suit the growing media.

We've made great progress towards our goal to be 100% water self-sufficient by the end of this year, and to help us to reach this, we've invested in a brand new 727,000 litre water storage tank at Highleigh nursery.

Our new water tank at Highleigh nursery will be invaluable, especially during the summer months. This time of year is particularly challenging as we experience significantly less rainfall and higher temperatures.

Some members of our G Team have been taking part in a beekeeping course this year, and we have now set up a dedicated beehive area at Fresh Acres, behind House 3; an exciting new addition to our nursery. We hope to have our first harvest of honey before the end of August. Watch this space for beekeeping updates!

Our G Cycle scheme has seen a few changes this year; Greenwood's Recycling Centre has been re-established at Highleigh nursery, and a new pot washing machine has arrived.

This will help us to re-use pots and reduce our plastic waste. We are also currently trialling a 'Dutch method' of crate building which has stronger corners and will help us to reduce waste.

A big challenge for us is the use of plastic wrap and we aim to significantly reduce this, or find an alternative. We have tackled this issue within Greenwood Choice by transporting plants across the nurseries with our new trolley jackets, but the next challenge is to find a sustainable alternative for plant deliveries. We will keep you updated on our progress as we trial a range of products.

We have recently had two new electric charging points installed at Fresh Acres nursery to help reduce our carbon footprint as a team. Our goal is to increase the number of electric vehicles across the G Team, who will hugely benefit from being able to charge their car whilst at work.

We are constantly analysing all areas of the business to continually improve our green credentials. Some of our future plans in the pipeline include bird feeding stations to help with pest reduction and introducing solar panels at Fresh Acres to provide a clean and renewable energy source to power the offices and glass houses. We are excited to see how we progress this year as we head towards a greener future.

Nursery Focus: Taking Cuttings for Propagation at Fresh Acres

Here at Greenwood Plants, our nurseries have been taking cuttings and propagating plants for many years. Over time, we have increased our propagation area to allow for growing demand and to help us achieve our ambitious growth targets, and with our team preparing 900-950 cuttings per hour, this space is constantly filled with a variety of young plants. Taking cuttings and propagating are effective ways for growers to improve reliability and quality of stock, whilst reducing issues related to pests and diseases.

The process starts with our Production Planner, who provides a detailed list of plants which will need to be propagated, based on demand and the time of year. The next stage involves checking which sites the plant varieties are currently housed, and choosing the healthiest and best examples of our stock, as well as doing thorough checks to ensure they are pest and disease free. These plants will provide excellent cutting material for strong and healthy plants for the future. Depending on which plants are required, each nursery has a dedicated team who collects the required plant materials and organises transportation to Fresh Acres nursery.

The time of year is an important factor to consider for plant cuttings, as all plants have a specific calendar we work to. Some plants have an optimum time of year in which cuttings are taken, and therefore, have higher success rates when propagated at this time.

In order to grow most efficiently, young, propagated plants require a higher moisture level and high humidity conditions of over 90%, as well as a regulated temperature of around 21°C to 25°C. It's important for our G Team to be vigilant and regularly check our 126 trays for any pests or diseases, as these conditions are unfortunately ideal for their development.

Once our Propagation Team receives the plant materials from our various nurseries, they select the plants to take cuttings from. Our best practice methods ensure cuttings are taken from an area where the middle of the stem is not too hard or too soft. Cuts are made below one leaf bud, and another above a second leaf bud. Specific equipment and tools are required for taking cuttings, and the G Team always adhere to hygiene best practice guidelines to ensure their tools are clean at all times. Once the cuttings have been made, they are then stored at a lower temperature to keep them fresh for up to two hours, until they go on to be prepared in our standard trays of 126. Whilst the cuttings are kept fresh, our "Plant Paper" machine is busy creating small plugs of compost for our plant cuttings to be inserted into.

Once the cuttings have been placed into 126 trays, they are transitioned into our propagation area and positioned onto heated tables, where the temperature, humidity, and moisture levels are highly regulated by our Tomtech computer—a state-of-the-art system that controls these elements and provides the perfect growing conditions for our plugs.

Plugs are very sensitive to their environment, and any cold and damp conditions can lead to lower success rates and disease. Once they start to grow roots, the humidity level can be reduced to around 80 to 90%. As the compost dries, this gives the roots a good chance to develop further. Many plants root effectively on their own; however, plants with woodier stems or trunks, or those which are being propagated during the winter months can benefit from a root hormone, which we use in these instances. Root hormones can help to increase the chance of root initiation, as well as improve the speed and strength of the roots.

Once the newly propagated plants are ready, they are then transitioned into 28 trays. During spring and summer, this usually takes around six weeks, but in autumn or winter, it can take around eight to ten weeks. This timeframe can also change depending on the plant species, as *Verbena* and *Vinca* only need around two to three weeks, whilst *Pittosporum* requires around ten weeks before it can be transitioned into 28 trays.

The expansion of our propagation area is an important element in helping us to provide an effortless client service. Our increased capacity to grow high quality plants is a key factor for the delivery of our contract growing service, Watch It Grow, where clients can pre-select their plant varieties and quantities, within a specified timeframe.

- Marzena Kandora
Young Plants Manager

Beekeeping at Fresh Acres Nursery

An exciting, new sustainability initiative for Greenwood

During April of this year, the new beekeeping team took delivery of our first two beehives, complete with bee colonies. Jacob Grace, Wes Elkins, and myself, have been training with the Worthing Beekeeping Association to learn about honeybees, including how to keep them happy, healthy, and producing honey. There has been a great deal to learn and discover, in order to successfully keep bees, and we are still at the very beginning of our journey; we will keep learning over time as we become more experienced beekeepers. We've been given excellent support from the Worthing Beekeeping Association and can call upon their expertise at any time.

Bees are the world's most important pollinators, and without them, our lives would be very different. They play a key role in food production and pollinate 80% of flowering plants. They support the growth of plants which provide food and shelter to many other species of wildlife. It's believed that they contribute a staggering £690m to the UK economy every year. Unfortunately, bee populations around the world have been in decline for some time, and they are facing huge threats from habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use, and a reduction in plant variety. As one of the beekeeping team members, I am delighted that Greenwood is supporting beekeeping and truly hope we can keep bees successfully, for many years to come.

Initially, we have started out with three beehives at Fresh Acres, but we aim to increase our numbers over time and if suitable, would love to introduce beehives to some of our other sites. Watch this space for more beekeeping updates.

- Kevin Merritt
Greenwood Choice Manager

Bees truly are amazing creatures – here are a few fascinating facts about them:

- **Only female bees can sting.**
- **Bees can fly up to 15mph.**
- **A honeybee has to fly around 145,000km to produce 450g of honey.**
- **Bees are unable to see the colour red.**
- **Bees perform a "waggle dance". This action tells other bees how far away a source of pollen is, which direction they should travel, as well as the quantity and quality of pollen.**
- **During summer, a queen bee can produce over 2,000 eggs each day.**
- **A normal sized beehive can contain up to 60,000 bees in midsummer and can produce 11-13kg of honey per year.**
- **When bees are moved to a completely new location, as we have demonstrated, the first bees to emerge from the hive perform circular orientation flights. Soon after, they can fly a few miles away and navigate their way home. They also communicate this to other bees within the hive; better than any sat nav!**
- **Honey is a food that can remain edible indefinitely.**

Plant Focus: Skimmia

Native to Eastern Asia, *Skimmia* is a genus from the plant family *Rutaceae*. Interestingly, the *Rutaceae* family of plants also contains citrus trees, and if you crush the leaves of a *Skimmia* plant, they release a pleasant scent of citrus. *Skimmia* is an easy to care for, slow growing, versatile shrub and an incredibly showy species as it boasts lush foliage, berries, and flowers. *Skimmia* can range from 50cm to 1.5m in height, depending on the species and variety, and provides great structure with its upright and neat growth habit.

The rounded shrub has leathery, oval-shaped, dark green leaves and clusters of highly fragrant white, cream, or green flowers in spring. When in bloom, *Skimmia* is exceptionally striking as its dark green foliage contrasts beautifully with its showy blooms. Some varieties of *Skimmia* produce small, decorative, long-lasting berries in autumn and winter.

Skimmia varieties are either male, female, or hermaphrodite. Female varieties will produce berries in autumn and winter if a male variety is in close proximity. Male varieties produce flower buds. Hermaphrodite varieties are ideal for small green spaces as they produce berries without the need for both male and female varieties. However, there are only a limited number of hermaphrodite varieties; one example is *Skimmia japonica* 'Reevesiana'.

Fun fact

Even though hermaphrodite Skimmia varieties produce berries without the need for both a female and male plant, they will go on to produce a more impressive show of berries if a male partner is nearby.

***Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella'**

Adored by both butterflies and bees, *Skimmia* provides an abundance of benefits to wildlife and biodiversity, such as food and shelter, and a rich source of nectar for pollinators. *Skimmia* works well in a number of different planting themes, including wildlife, cottage, and woodland gardens.

Skimmia japonica is a particular species of *Skimmia* that originates from China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. It's a dome-shaped, dense, evergreen shrub that grows from 50cm to 7m in height, although cultivars usually reach a maximum of 1.5m. Its foliage is aromatic, leathery and dark green in colour, and in spring, it blooms white, pink or red flushed flowers. Male plants have large, sweetly-scented flowerheads, whilst female plants have smaller flowerheads, followed by bright red fruits in summer, autumn and winter, if pollinated by a nearby male. There are many different varieties of *Skimmia japonica*, but some of our favourite varieties are *Skimmia japonica* 'Fragrans', *Skimmia japonica* 'Kew White', *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella', *Skimmia japonica* subsp. *Reevesiana*, and *Skimmia* × *confusa* 'Kew Green'.

Skimmia japonica 'Fragrans' is a male variety that grows up to 1.5m in height, and is a particularly fragrant variety that forms a compact, low dome, with obovate, dark green leaves and white male flowers in spring. It's great for containers or adding structure to borders. *Skimmia japonica* 'Kew White' is a compact, female variety with elliptic, rich green leaves and highly scented white flowers. It forms striking, snow white berries if pollinated by a nearby male, and works well in containers and borders. *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella' is a compact, male variety that has deep green foliage with red margins. In autumn, it boasts dark red flower buds which open to clusters of scented, white flowers in spring. *Skimmia japonica* subsp. *reevesiana* is a hermaphrodite or self-fertile variety with narrow, dark green, evergreen leaves; pink or red tinged, white flowers in spring; and bright red berries in autumn. Lastly, *Skimmia* × *confusa* 'Kew Green' is a compact, dome-shaped evergreen shrub with clusters of creamy white flowers which bloom from spring to summer. It thrives in full sun, so is a great choice for sunny borders.

Skimmia can be planted at any point during the year, except for times when the ground might be excessively dry, waterlogged, or frozen. For the most ideal establishment, planting is recommended in autumn or spring. *Skimmia* usually prefers light shade, but can cope with full shade. Most other varieties will struggle in sunny spots and the leaves will turn pale and yellow. *Skimmia* thrives in neutral soils, and can also tolerate alkaline soils.

Skimmia is fairly low maintenance and easy to look after once established. Water thoroughly during the first 12-18 months—especially during dry spells. Once it's established, it's pretty drought tolerant. Ensure to keep watering regularly if it's in a sunny position or container. You can also mulch the ground with a biodegradable mulch to help the soil retain its moisture. *Skimmia* doesn't generally require plant feed, but if it doesn't appear to be thriving, we advise using a general fertiliser in spring. It's not necessary for *Skimmia* to be regularly pruned.If you need to reshape by pruning any shoots, carry this out in spring to avoid frost damage to its branches; however, pruning female varieties can prevent the growth of berries during the next winter.

Skimmia can potentially be struck by leaf yellowing or horse chestnut scale. Leaf yellowing is normally caused by too much sun exposure, or considerably dry soil, so it's best to move it to a shadier spot. Ensure to also feed with a general fertiliser, mulch the plant and water during dry weather. Horse chestnut scale is a sap-sucking true bug that usually has a 'scale' appearance on plant foliage or stems; this leads to the production of honeydew. This can result in a sooty mould developing and is incredibly unsightly, but the plant is generally unharmed. Their egg masses can eventually be scraped off by hand and destroyed.

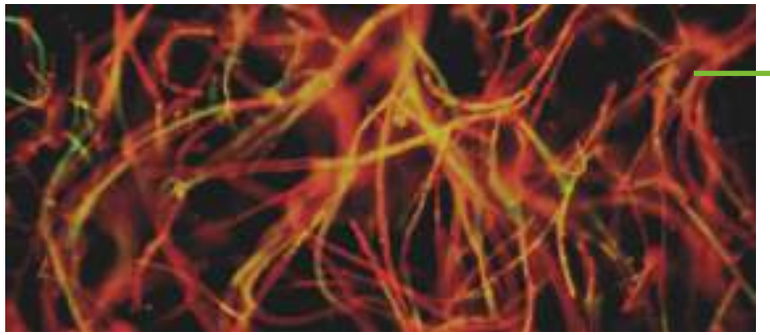
Overall, we think *Skimmia* is a truly fantastic, low maintenance shrub, with its showstopping foliage, fragrant flowers, and colourful berries, providing multiple seasons of interest; a delightful addition to any landscape.

- Lara Matthams
Content Marketing Executive

***Skimmia japonica* 'Fragrans'**

The Importance of Soil Fungi

How symbiotic relationships benefit plants



Mycelium as revealed by microscopy
Christian Scheckhuber, CC BY-SA 4.0

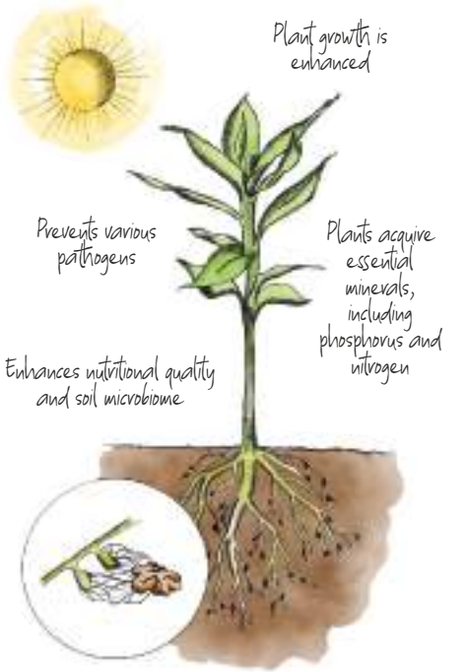
Plants are a truly fascinating and essential part of nature, but below the surface of soil, there's a wealth of interesting fungal activity that is constantly working hard to keep our plants healthy and thriving.

Fungi have existed for over one billion years and they are well equipped to adopt various forms to react to any difficult conditions. Within soil, fungi are tiny, plant-like cells which grow in long strings, known as hyphae, and collectively create a mass called a mycelium. Mycelium has the ability to absorb nutrients from a plant's roots, soil, or organic matter.

Fungi can only survive on or within their hosts, and are unable to cope with extensive periods of time outside of this environment. They produce many different types of enzymes which allow them to break down deceased animals and plants and cleverly convert them into a source of nutrients for plants; this is known as decomposition. Without the existence of fungi, we wouldn't have soil.

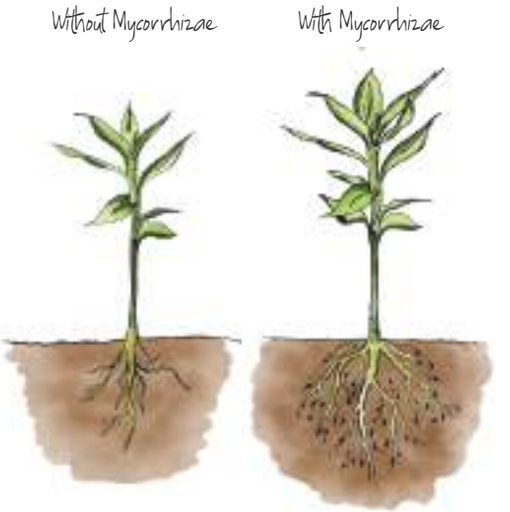
There are different types of fungi; some deliver nutrients which aid in plant growth and vigour. Whereas, others act as a plant protector, by producing chemicals which defend the plant from harmful insects or bacteria. Beneficial fungi break down organic matter within soil, which the plant then uses as a food source. This type of fungus can also control populations of soilborne pathogens which helps with preventing disease. There are also pathogenic types of fungi; these can result in a range of devastating plant diseases, including root rot, mildew, leaf spot, and dieback.

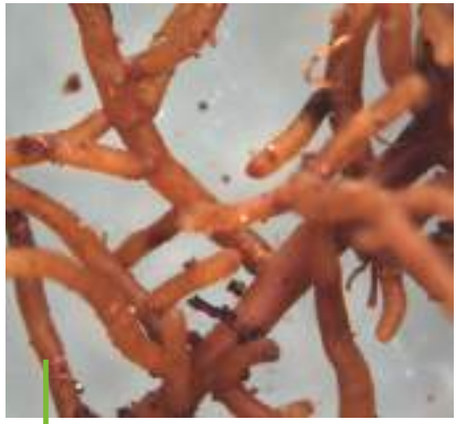
Fungi play an incredibly important role within the plant kingdom. They are capable of decomposing organic matter within soil, which enhances its nutritional quality and benefits the soil microbiome. Organic matter is then converted into carbon dioxide, biomass, and organic acids. Fungi decrease the levels of nitrogen in soil and transform it into a protein source for plants. Some fungi species have the ability to absorb contaminants from their environment, such as copper, mercury, and zinc; a process known as biosorption.



When a mutually beneficial association is formed between a fungi and a plant, it is known as a mycorrhizal symbiotic relationship. Mycorrhizae are beneficial fungi and a form of symbiotic relationship between fungi and plant roots. Symbiotic relationships are close associations which are formed between two species. Mutualism is a type of symbiotic relationship where all species benefit in some way. Mycorrhizae play a big part in maintaining ecosystems, throughout gardens, forests, and farms.

When mycorrhizae are present, they bring advantages to both fungi and plants. Plants use a process called photosynthesis, where sunlight converts water and CO_2 into energy and oxygen, to absorb excess sugars (glucose) through their leaves and send them to its roots. Mycorrhizae have the ability to extract these sugars from plants. In exchange, they provide nutrients, such as phosphorus and zinc, to the plant's roots. In essence, mycorrhizae act as an extension to the root system and significantly enhance a plant's absorptive area using their hyphae. The sugars which the plants provide keep mycorrhizae alive, whilst mycorrhizae enable plants to grow healthily and thrive, and provide greater yields of flowers and fruits. The majority of plants could not survive in their environment without the presence of mycorrhizae in its soil—especially under difficult conditions. Mycorrhizae also provide plants with greater resistance to drought, root rot, and nutrient deficiencies. This is incredibly important as we notice big changes to our climate, with regards to higher temperatures, less predictable rainfall, and longer periods of drought.





Mycorrhizae as revealed by microscopy

You would be unlikely to see mycorrhizae with the naked eye, as they are incredibly small. However, occasionally toadstools can be spotted, especially below trees. These can be a sign of ectomycorrhiza, which means mycorrhiza that is living outside of a plant.

We can help mycorrhizae by adopting sustainable practices, including mulching soil with organic matter, composting, allowing leaf litter to remain upon soil, and avoiding the use of chemical pesticides, fungicides or fertilisers; these can harm valuable and beneficial fungi.

With over 90% of plant species forming this symbiotic relationship, it's clear to see how important soil health is for plants and encouraging this natural process to take place.

- Lara Matthams
Content Marketing Executive

greenwood Community

Tangmere Community Garden

Encouraging wildlife to a community garden in Tangmere

The dedicated volunteers enjoyed planting their wildlife friendly plants at Tangmere Community Garden

As part of our Greenwood Community scheme, last month a donation was made to Tangmere Community Garden, located in West Sussex, which I have been a member of for thirteen years. This garden means a lot to me; it's a happy place to relax in and wind down after a busy week. Tangmere Community Garden has been developed over the last fifteen years on land owned by the Parish Council. The garden is focussed around growing fruits and vegetables, as well as encouraging knowledge, skills, community, and friendship for its members.

The area first began as an unpromising, rough plot of land on the edge of an airfield, but with the dedication and foresight of a group of local volunteers, it has developed into a fruitful, calm, and restorative space that is welcome to all. An especially exciting event for us was back in 2015, when the garden was featured on a TV show "Mary Berry's Absolute Favourites"; as a result of this, we gained many new members.

As part of the donation, a selection of wildlife friendly plants were chosen, as well as bulk bags of compost for planting. The plants included *Hebe*, *Lavandula*, *Nepeta*, *Salvia*, and *Erysimum*; these species are highly valuable for butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Attracting pollinators to green spaces helps plants to thrive and flourish, and provides the soil with a range of essential nutrients, as well as promoting biodiversity—preserving our fragile ecosystem.

Throughout the years, we have had to be resourceful in achieving our goals. There is always a need for funds which have been raised through memberships, open days at the garden, and participation in local events, including village fetes and Christmas fayres. Every year, we host an open day and welcome villagers to come along for the local produce; it's a great social event for all.

We always welcome new members to try their hand at gardening. There is something for everyone—digging, sowing, picking fruit and vegetables, and assisting with tea breaks! Every Saturday morning, the team get together to share out the tasks, and some members also visit the plot throughout the week. We take it in turns to bring and share meals to cook on our vintage barbecue or clay pizza oven. We also enjoy the freshly grown produce from our very own garden.

We are always grateful to the local businesses who support our efforts, as without their help and interest, it would not be thriving at the same level it is today.

Please get in touch if you have a local community project that would benefit from a Greenwood Community plant donation - email hello@greenwoodplants.co.uk.

- Monica Garcia
Procurement and Supply Chain Manager

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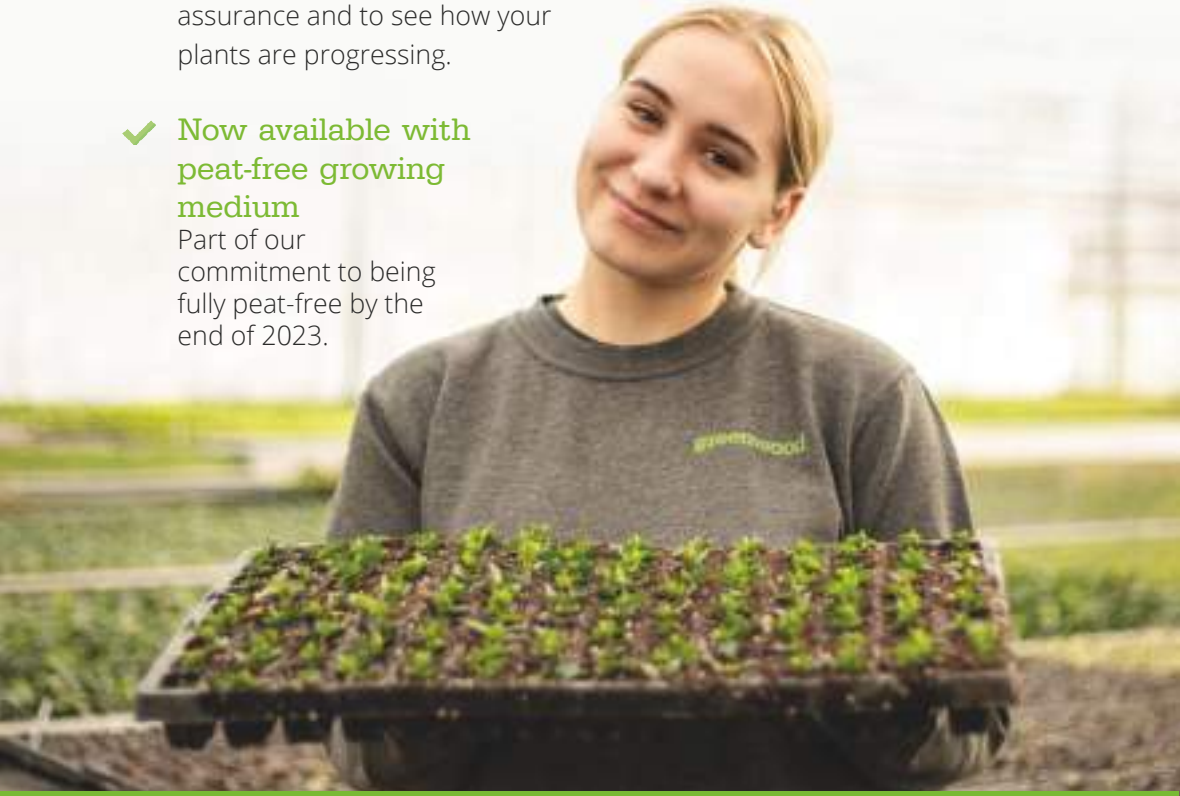

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