

OUR PLACE *News*

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

MAY 2022

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Our Place - The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

Every month, we bring you news and features on; Health & Beauty, Money & Work, Leisure & Travel, Food & Drink, Arts, Crafts & Hobbies, Home & Garden, plus... our Charity of the Month!

Our Place was founded with a mission to connect the mature online community to a world of news, features, offers and life changing products they may have missed out on. Bring them all into one place, Our Place.

What makes us special is that we are a vibrant team of all ages, from 21 to 65 who are all passionate about living life to the fullest irrespective of age. We have built strong relationships with some of the best UK age related businesses with the aim of brokering discounted rates for our Over-50s community.

Become a Friend of Our Place and receive our exclusive newsletters. They are a great way of keeping updated with the latest news and promotions. We aim to bring a smile to your face every time you open your inbox by selecting exclusive vouchers and discounts just for you.

We welcome you and hope you enjoy Our Place.

The Editor - Our Place

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

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RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Tuesday 24th to Saturday 28th May 2022

Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London.

See vivid floral displays and innovative show gardens at the prestigious RHS Chelsea Flower Show from 24 to 28 May.

Although the show tends to sell out in advance, there are lots of other floral-themed events in and around Chelsea during May. Many hotels and restaurants also offer special afternoon teas and menus in honour of the show.



FA Cup Final - Chelsea v Liverpool

Saturday 14th May 2022. Kick off - 4.45pm

Wembley Stadium, London.

This season's FA Cup final which sees Chelsea and Liverpool lock horns at Wembley. The Blues are set to share centre stage with the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest on Saturday afternoon.

BBC scheduling issues around Eurovision has meant the FA Cup final has been brought forward - a seemingly crazy but true moment. Chelsea's visit to Elland Road on May 11 has been sandwiched by the first and second Eurovision semi-final - May 10 and May 12 - before the Grand Final on May 14. The song contest will be broadcasted from 6:15pm to 7:15pm on BBC Two, with coverage of the FA Cup final via BBC One until 7:15pm.

London Craft Week

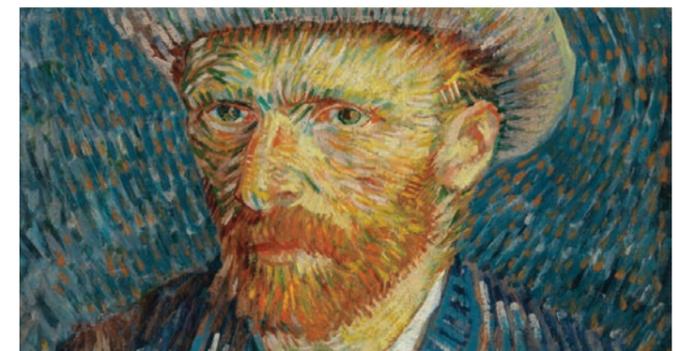
9th - 15th May 2022

Various venues in London.

London Craft Week brings together over 250 established and emerging creatives from around the world in a citywide programme that celebrates craft.

Mainly hosted in Bloomsbury and Mayfair, the event includes a range of talks, exhibitions, product launches and other immersive experiences that showcase a selection of work from both British and international makers.

The week-long event features activities across the city that aim to tell the complex stories behind crafted objects against a backdrop of performances and meeting places where visitors can listen, eat, drink and, in some cases, craft things themselves.



Van Gogh Self-Portraits

3rd February to 8th May 2022

Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House, London

Self-Portraits takes as its springboard Van Gogh's iconic Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear, one of the most celebrated works in The Courtauld's collection, and will bring together around half of the self-portraits Van Gogh created during his short years as a painter.

This will be the first time that the full span of Van Gogh's self-portraiture has been explored in an exhibition. Several works in the exhibition were last together in Van Gogh's studio and have never been reunited, until now.

An outstanding selection of 16 self-portraits will be brought together to trace the evolution of Van Gogh's self representation, from his early Self-Portrait with a Dark Felt Hat, created in 1886 during his formative period in Paris, to Self-Portrait with a Palette, painted at the asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in September 1889, one of his last self-portraits before his death in 1890. The myth of Van Gogh today is linked as much to his extraordinary life as it is to his stunning paintings. This exhibition will allow both aspects to be explored.



Strawberry fields forever: 6 amazing health benefits of eating strawberries and their tops

It's difficult to resist a perfectly ripe strawberry, isn't it? In fact, they're one of the most popular berry fruits in the world - but did you know it's not just the sweet red part that's good for us?

Atop each juicy strawberry is a leafy top, called the calyx. Each year, tons of strawberry tops are discarded and chucked away as waste. But this humble leafy crown is actually edible and may hold the key to unlocking some exciting health benefits.

This isn't just a nutrition issue either, but a question of waste - which is a hot topic right now. Three major WRAP studies, published in 2013 and 2016, estimated that 85% of avoidable food waste arises in households and food manufacture.

With this in mind, and to help us make the most of our produce Lily Soutter, a nutritionist speaking on behalf of Seasonal Berries, reveals some of the health benefits of munching your way through whole strawberries - leafy bottoms and all.

They're a rich source of antioxidants

Antioxidant-rich foods are important to help protect your cells against the effects of free radicals - harmful molecules produced from pollution, sunlight, smoke and even prolonged exercise. "Strawberries are a rich and diverse source of antioxidants.

However, what's less well known is that strawberry calyx contains antioxidants too," says Soutter. "One study, which looked at the fruits and leaves of blackberries, strawberries, and raspberries, found the leaves have a high ORAC value (a measure of the antioxidant capacity of different foods). However, it's important to note that as leaves become older, the ORAC value decreases, so the leaves of fresh strawberries are likely to provide the highest antioxidant value."

They support the immune system

Adding a punnet of strawberries to your shopping basket will help support your immune system too. "Not only is the whole strawberry rich in plant antioxidants, but the red fleshy part is also extremely rich in the antioxidant vitamin C," says Soutter.

"In fact, eating just eight strawberries (80g) can provide as much as 115% of your daily vitamin C intake. Many associate oranges with vitamin C, but strawberries are actually a higher source per 100g."

They may help with blood sugar regulation

Next time you're thinking of pasta for dinner, try following up your meal with a bowl of fresh strawberries for pud. Research suggests eating strawberries, alongside a carbohydrate-rich meal, may help to reduce spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels.

"Improving blood sugar control and insulin sensitivity can be helpful for preventing metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes," says Soutter.

"While it's not clear why strawberries may have this blood sugar balancing effect, some studies have suggested that it may be down to their rich content of polyphenols (antioxidants), which may influence carbohydrate digestion and absorption."

They may have antimicrobial effects

As well as being delicious to eat, strawberries could also have a beneficial effect on the reproduction of bacteria and parasites in the body.

"One study analysed the tops and leaves of 200 strawberry plants, and found their large and diverse range of polyphenols are defensive against harmful microbes, and may even have benefit to human health," says Soutter.

"While these results are certainly exciting, much more research into strawberry leaf polyphenols in relation to human health is required."

They may improve heart health

"Numerous studies have found an association between strawberry consumption and improved cardiovascular health," explains Soutter.

"It appears their high content of berry anthocyanins may play a role in reducing inflammation and oxidative stress, blood pressure, and even improving our cholesterol profile.

"While it's too early to state if strawberry calyx can actually lower blood pressure, one promising study showed potential vasodilatory (widening of blood vessels) effects," says Soutter.

"The study used water extracts of the strawberry leaf and showed an improvement in blood flow within isolated animal aortic rings."

They can help with weight management

Strawberries are one of the most guilt-free snacks going; they can satisfy a sweet craving, yet are surprisingly low in sugar and calories.

"With just 6g of sugar and 33 calories per 100g, they can provide the sweet fix we desire while keeping our waistlines trim," says Soutter. "And for an even more indulgent option, try dipping strawberries into antioxidant-rich dark chocolate and coconut flakes."



Easy ways to include more strawberries - and their tops- in your diet:

- Add both to smoothies.
- Make strawberry leaf tea using the stalks and leaves. Leave both to brew for a few minutes in boiling water.
- Create your own salad dressing by soaking the berries, including the tops, in balsamic vinegar for at least 48 hours.
- Infuse your drinking water by dropping sliced strawberries and their leaves into your jug or bottle.
- Whizz up your strawberries in a blender to create a compote that can be used as a breakfast topping.

(Article source: *Silver Surfers*)

A moment that changed me: I went to a party - and spent all evening with the host's puppy

After that fateful night, I bought McNulty, a King Charles spaniel who has been my constant companion for 13 years.



The Guardian reports that I am a ridiculously early person. If possible, I tend to be at least 30 minutes early for everything. These days, this is an excuse to get some extra reading time; it used to be an opportunity for a glass of wine to settle my nerves when jumping into a party.

On the night in question, I was almost an hour early and could not locate an open pub. I was in a part of east London that I had never visited, and I didn't even know the host of the party, Charlie. I only knew the guy who had invited me, and he wasn't likely to arrive for another hour or two.

So I went to Charlie's house. To get me out of the way while he finished setting up, he took me to the spare bedroom and introduced me to his new French bulldog puppy. I fell in love immediately.

I spent the entire night in the room with the puppy.

For seven years in my 20s, I worked as a European sales rep for a celebrity photography agency, travelling almost all of the time and barely spending enough time at home to switch laundry, let alone have a boyfriend or a steady routine.

But I had recently changed jobs and was working on a magazine; my hours had settled. That evening at the party, I realised I was finally ready for the one thing that I had always wanted: a pup.

I grew up with a springer spaniel named Lacy, who used to get jealous of the books I read and put her paw in the middle of the page to draw my attention. Towards the end of her life, at the beginning of my senior year in high school, she got into bed with me.

Upset by this unusual behaviour, I woke my mom; she reasoned that my bed was lower than the bed where Lacy had slept for my entire life and so was easier on the old girl's hips.

Lacy spent that final year that I lived at home sleeping with me every night. She died in my first weekend away at college and her gentle, silly ways have stayed with me.

To have a puppy of my own: that was the dream. But was it selfish? Could I handle the responsibility? The plan had a lot of things going for it. I lived opposite the Royal Veterinary College.

The house I lived in had a dog door in the back - and I had already settled on a name. My flatmate and I were obsessed with *The Wire* and I thought naming a dog McNulty would be a brilliant barometer for future romantic and platonic friends. I just had to convince my flatmate that I was ready for the imagined McNulty.

That night at the party, I decided that it was time. I was ready.

I found a breeder a few weeks later and was put on a waiting list. I met the mother dog and did all the health checks prior to meeting my pup.

My McNulty is a cavalier King Charles spaniel and a smaller version of Lacy - same colouring and markings. I didn't even realise I had copied her until my sister pointed it out.

It is now 13 years later. McNults and I have been through jobs, loves, my mother dying, my quitting booze and her enlarged heart. We have been through life together.

She is now in a dog buggy, as she can't walk for very long and it is the best way to keep her with me for as much of the day as possible.

We have come as a pair for the past 13 years. Yes, I am that crazy dog lady; when I say "we", I mean me and McNults.

Our social gatherings almost all shifted to dog-friendly venues and she is a "dogmother" to a friend's daughter. She has been on Sky News, she is a Moshling (for those of you who remember Moshi Monsters) and she makes a cameo in Dolly Alderton's book

Everything I Know About Love. She has been my absolute constant. We are inseparable. Adopting her is the best decision I ever made. McNulty got me through the worst period of my life, through grief, and now I will be with her as her life comes to an end.

We stop in my local pub every night as our landlady, Lisa, gives her lots of biscuits while I have a Diet Coke. She taps on the door as we walk by (even if the pub isn't open).

I know I don't have long left with her, but she has been so loved and treasured. She is irreplaceable. Oh, and yes, she has met the real McNulty (the actor Dominic West) - and the picture was my Christmas card. Not sure she was bothered.

(Story source: *The Guardian*)

5 ways to treat hay fever without medication

As shortages of some hay fever medicines begin to hit the UK, allergy experts explain best to keep your pollen allergies at bay.



Silver Surfers reports that some hay fever medicines are in short supply across the UK, owing to the lack of a key ingredient. Stocks of chlorphenamine maleate, the active ingredient in brands such as Piriton, have been affected - although other hay fever medicines are still available, Boots has reported.

So, what does this mean for people with hay fever?

Dr Stephanie Ooi from MyHealthcare Clinic says: "Hay fever can have a thoroughly nasty effect on our everyday lives, and leaves a lot of people dreading spring and summer.

"Sadly, there is no cure for hay fever and the best we can do is try prevent and manage symptoms, such as sneezing and coughing, an itchy throat and fatigue."

It's advisable to see your GP if you're really struggling with hay fever. But if you can't get your hands on the medication you usually use, or want to try managing your symptoms without popping a pill, there are some things you could try...

Shade your eyes

"Hay fever tends to fester in your eyes," explains Alex Ionides, ophthalmic surgeon at Moorfields Eye Hospital and co-founder of MTHK (mthk.com). "You're likely to experience burning, stinging and swelling in the eyelids and conjunctiva - the clear tissue that covers the surface of your eyeballs - which may give you a runny nose, constant sneezing, and even blurred vision."

It's one of the more annoying symptoms of hay fever, so Ionides says: "Sunglasses are great as a preventative measure for hay fever. Go for a wraparound pair to help reduce pollen contact with your eyes."

Work out more

Ionides suggests exercise could be a great way to help ease your hay fever.

If you do decide to get moving, he says: "Outdoor running and cycling are best done in the middle of the day, when the pollen count is usually at its lowest."

Eat low-histamine foods

Priya Tew, dietitian and TV presenter (upfield.com), suggests you might want to consider your diet too. "Almost all foods contain histamine, the chemical our bodies release in response to allergens.

The longer a food ages or ferments, the higher the level of histamine, and the increased likelihood of impacting the allergy symptoms," explains Tew. "So, high levels of histamine in our diet can intensify hay fever symptoms, like runny noses and headaches."

She suggests high-histamine foods include dairy cheese, fermented dairy cream, packaged meat and smoked fish, and recommends a diet "with lots of fresh produce like fruit and vegetables, which contain lower histamine levels".

Tew warns against making big diet changes too quickly however, instead saying: "Try adapting your diet to reduce histamine levels for just a couple of weeks, and monitor your resulting hay fever symptoms.

You can then reintroduce foods individually, to help understand what triggers your hay fever symptoms."

Some alcohol, like red wine and beer, contain a high amount of histamines, so they might also affect your hay fever.

Pop petroleum jelly below your nose

Ooi recommends using Vaseline as a pollen barrier beneath your nose. "This common petroleum jelly-based product can play a huge part in the battle against hay fever by keeping pollen out of the nose," she says.

"By dabbing a little around the nostrils, you can help prevent the tiny airborne substance from entering your respiratory system when you breathe in."

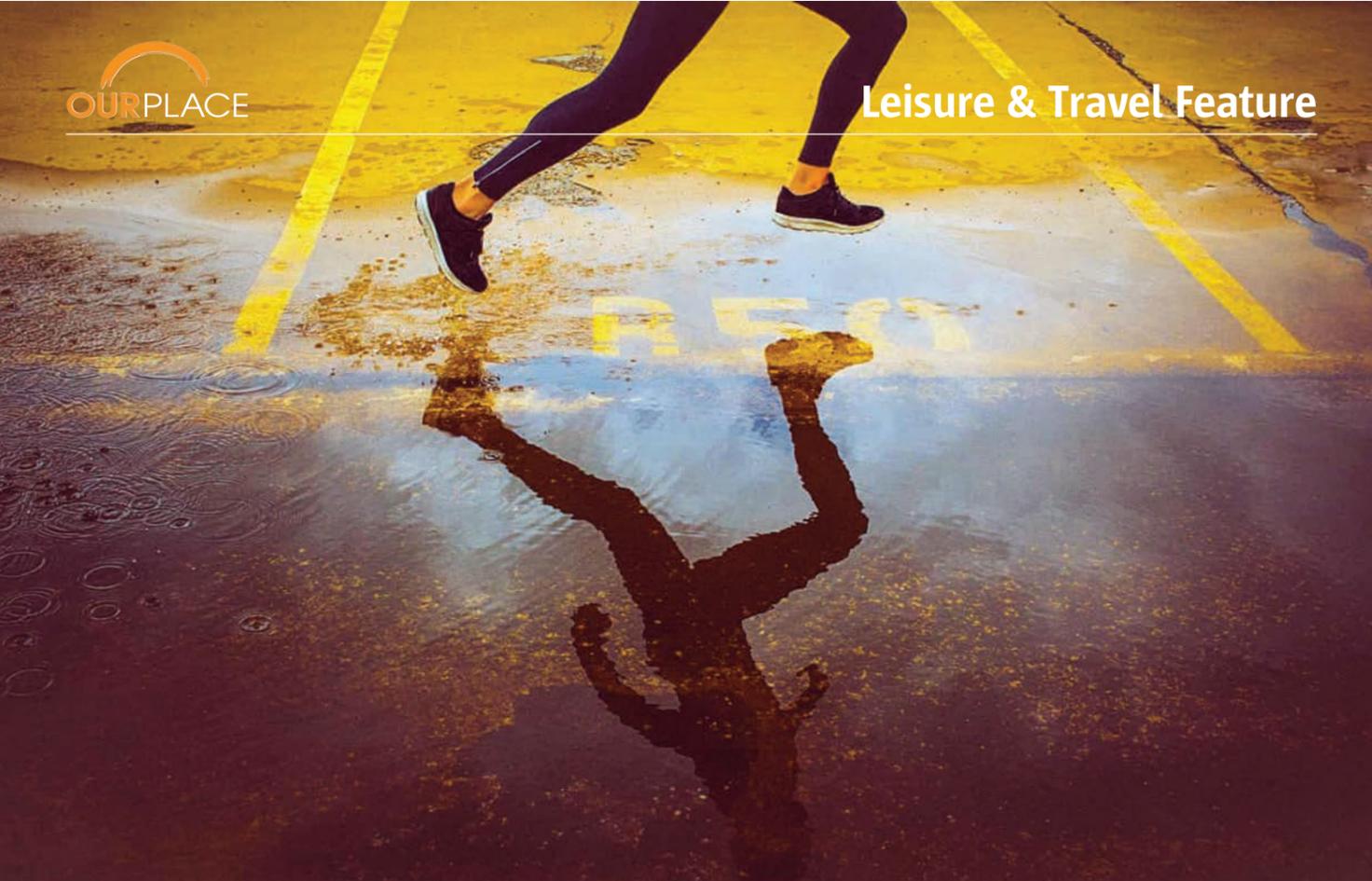
Stop smoking

"While quitting a smoking habit is good for your health all year round, it can also be a useful weapon in the war against hay fever," Ooi says.

"Cigarette smoke can make symptoms of hay fever worse, as it can irritate the lining of your airways."

(Story source: *The Guardian*)

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co



One down, 39,136 to go: The explorers who walk every street in their city

You don't really know an urban landscape until you've visited all of it on foot - from slums to beauty spots. Just ask the thousands of 'every-single-streeters'.

There's no better way to soothe the soul - and get to know a town - than striding through its streets. In my 20s, heartbroken after getting dumped, all I could do was march with the tide of London's rush hour until the city grew quiet and dark, and I was too exhausted to feel in shock any more.

A little lost in my early 30s, I spent a six-week cat-sitting stint in New York compulsively plodding around Brooklyn and Manhattan listening to Townes Van Zandt.

It was a strange and lonely time, but moving through an endless montage of concentrated history and humanity felt beautiful and instructive.

The pandemic has sharpened a collective appreciation of wandering our cities with fresh eyes, exploring the streets we shunned in the pre-lockdown days, when walking was merely about hurrying from A to B.

Increasingly, urban adventurers are taking this pastime even further and deciding to walk or run all of the thousands of streets that make up their warts-and-all cities.

There's even a website for tracking these epic runs or walks called CityStrides, which more than 45,000 people are using. "I can't even wrap my head around that - so many people," says programmer James Chevalier, who runs the site as a side project and uses the open-source site OpenStreetMap for his street statistics.

So far, he says, there have been 6,300 completed attempts in various cities around the world, none of which were by him.

He has covered only 45% of Holyoke, Massachusetts, but to be fair, he moved there having already done 21% of his nearby home city of Easthampton.

One of those who has the satisfaction of having drawn GPS lines over every street of their city - all 6,000 in Glasgow - is secondary school teacher Michael Shanks.

He lives in a block of flats with no garden and during the first lockdown, when only an hour's daily outdoor exercise was permitted, he says: "I felt I should do something more productive with it, rather than running around the same park."

While Shanks scoured the web for ideas, up popped the celebrated trail runner Rickey Gates, who, over 45 days in 2018, ran San Francisco's 2,237 streets, and wrote in his blog that, as well as being an excellent training incentive, the project encouraged empathy by "popping the bubbles we live in".

When Shanks first shared his GPS running data with CityStrides to see how much ground he had already covered in 15 years of living in Glasgow, it revealed he had only seen 8% of the city.



"We are all creatures of habit," he says, "and I had done thousands of runs in the same part of the west end of the city where I live."

He started his quest to experience the entire city by running from his home, but soon he was having to do 6 miles (10km) just to reach new streets.

Next, he switched to stopping off on his work commute to cover other areas. Because he hadn't meticulously planned his routes for maximum efficiency, he says, "I had to go back and redo little bits of streets, which was really frustrating, but I would definitely do that again because it felt freeing to run down random streets, and then see how many were ticked off at the end."

While some every-single-streeters, as they're sometimes called, plot long linear routes, Shanks preferred to wiggle around smaller blocks each session because for him, "rather than an athletic challenge, I was more interested in exploring and learning about the history as I was going".

The first thing he learned on this one-year, nine-month journey was how little he really knew Glasgow. "You realise individual communities make up a city - it is not one unified place," he says.

"But in another sense, you also realise how much we are all packed into quite a small place. It's been fascinating."

In the fairly recent past, Glasgow was cast as the murder capital of Europe, and while it still has some serious social problems, Shanks saw that things were changing.



"There wasn't anywhere that I wasn't comfortable spending some time chatting to people," he says, and these interactions unearthed an untold social history of the city (he is working on a book about it).

This eagerness of the public to share, he suspects, was enhanced by the boredom and camaraderie prompted by the pandemic. If he ran past someone in their garden, "they were really, really keen to stop and have a chat".

One man he spoke with in Drumchapel in the north-west of the city, says Shanks, "had been moved out after slum clearances, but then the house he had been moved to was subsequently cleared because it was deemed to be inadequate housing, and then a new block was also demolished.

He basically lived in the same place for 50 or 60 years but in all these different houses. Everything had changed but the community stayed the same."

Another surprise discovery was what Shanks calls "ghost streets", where postwar housing was demolished and nothing was built in its place, leaving street lights illuminating little but a street sign, rubble and scrub.

He photographed these, as well as whatever else caught his eye. Glasgow has more green space per capita than any other European city and, naturally, Shanks loved the parks.

Less so, the ubiquitous "no ball games" signs, promoting the idea, he thinks, "that children should be seen and not heard. As a teacher, I quite enjoyed taking pictures of those."

Continued on pages 10-11...



No one is yet close to completing all 39,137 streets of Greater London, but in 2014, before CityStrides took off, Noelle Poulson from Utah in the US blazed a trail by walking every street within London's congestion zone - about 400 miles, she says. Armed with a trusty A-Z, she was determined to become intimately acquainted with the city before her visa ran out.

For her, she says, "it was a lot about chatting with people, and going into little shops that I hadn't seen before, and taking photos and having picnics in the park and really engaging with the city."

"It was more magical than I thought it would be," she continues, "because I thought it'd be looking at pretty buildings and stuff but I would end up running into street sweepers and we would have a big chat and I learned about their family, or meet people in shops and learn about how they set it up. It became a lot more about a connection with the people that I was meeting."

Discovering hidden gems in the urban landscape provided further highlights, such as a community garden in a Bermondsey alleyway called Gibbon's Rent.

"There's a lending library there," says Poulson. "It was very human. You see all these places where people were finding a way to make sweet little nooks and comfy places, making it their own."

Every walk she did, she says, even in places she wasn't immediately inspired by, had something that made it worthwhile, "like, someone had taken the time to put poetry on the wall."

Around Elephant and Castle, there are a lot of council estates and many of the streets look the same, but you can still find pockets where people have put up art, or you meet an interesting person."



She found that London had an abundance of public spaces to explore and says it's always worth asking if you're not sure if you're allowed somewhere.

"See what happens," she says.

"Be curious. Ask: 'Hey, can I go up there? Can I see that thing? Can I go in this garden?'"

It's surprising how many times people say: 'Yeah, of course.'

Or they'll answer questions about it." Before Poulson says this, however, she acknowledges her privilege, as a white woman.

One CityStrider who blogged about running Seattle's entirety wrote that the achievement felt bittersweet because,

"When I told one of my friends, he pointed out that - as a Black man - he could never play this game."

Poulson, who now lives in Dili, East Timor, often encountered concern that her endeavour wasn't safe for a woman, but she says: "I never had any incidents."

Among the many positive responses to his blog that Shanks has received, he says he has had a few emails, mostly from women, politely pointing out that "while it's great that I've been able to do this, they wouldn't feel safe walking around some parts of Glasgow, which is a fair point".

But he also says you can get the benefits without having to be completist. "I spoke to a woman who's now running every single street in her immediate local community," he says.

"I've had some really lovely emails from people saying, 'You've inspired me to go for a walk in a different place."

And for me, it's that sense of adventure in the place where you live that's so important."

The every-single-streeters with very impressive stats deserve some credit, though. Top of the leaderboard is Berlin-based analytics consultant Denis Bafounta.

He just covered 100% of his 12th city and is within the final few streets of completing many others.

"I am on track to complete at least 40 towns around Berlin before the end of the year, or at least reach 99% - it is hard to know in advance if there will be inaccessible streets."

He has had to complete Schulzendorf four times in the past year because, he says, "new streets keep being built".

This can be a problem in Berlin, too, he adds. For him, the high point of his endeavour would be if he found a way to cover 100% of Berlin -he's currently at 99.81%.

Years ago, he says he felt uneasy running near known rightwing communities.

"I am Black and I run everywhere as long as it is not private property beyond any doubt, but running every street has helped me not to care about this any more..."

Admittedly, it is easier for me to forget about violent reactions because I live in Germany, where not too many have weapons."

There is a strong community spirit among striders and he says he looks forward to seeing my progress. Gulp.

I don't live too far from Bristol, but I've only ever met it fleetingly, swooping in for occasional events, and the city's topography makes it confusing to navigate as a newcomer.

I have decided to use CityStrides to get to know it better, and approach it in the whim-following style that Shanks employed in Glasgow - only I'll be walking, not running.

On the freezing spring morning I start my project, I'm not feeling it at all, as I skirt a vast, roaring roundabout, wearing an inadequate jacket.



I keep walking and looking, though, and everything eventually warms up. I ascend some pleasingly ancient-looking flights of steps, and creep around mysterious back alleys (I'm a sucker for a secret passage), and soon come upon a violin shop, then another, and then a shop dedicated to bows for stringed instruments.

My curiosity is piqued: I take a wildcard steep side street and end up in a blossomy park.

The chime of a bell leads me to the cathedral and I'm full of the wonder of holiday-style mooching and the healthy perspective that comes from drinking in all walks of life.

When I get home, I excitedly log on to CityStrides. Twenty-three streets! Out of 4,668. I know Bristol 0.48% better and I'm looking forward to doing a little celebratory dance when I reach 1%.

(Article source: *The Guardian*)



A right Royal knees up! 6 key tips for planning the perfect Platinum Jubilee party

Celebrate in style with fabulous food, decorations and entertainment. It's not often we're gifted an extra long weekend, but that's what's happening this year, with a Bank Holiday added on Friday June 3rd to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Plus, the usual late May bank holiday has been pushed back to Thursday June 2, meaning a four-day break at the end of spring for many of us.

If you're choosing to celebrate 70 years of Her Majesty's reign with a party, now's the time to start thinking about the food and drink, decorations and other plans for a right royal knees-up.

Here, experts offer top tips on how to organise and host a brilliant Platinum Jubilee bash...

Start the preparations early

"Whether you're planning a small gathering in your garden or arranging one of the thousands of street parties expected across the UK, the earlier you get organised the better," says Sarah Allsop, creative manager at Party Delights. "The more you plan, the less stressful things will be, and you can sit back and enjoy the fun with your guests."

Make sure you've got the go-ahead for any al fresco activities, she continues: "You will need permission from your local council if you and your neighbours are planning a street party and you want to close a section of the road to traffic. If you want to hold your party on external private land or green space, then the landowner will need to give their approval."

Getting these permissions in place is definitely not a last-minute job - check what the deadlines are in your area and make sure to apply promptly.

Get the invites out

Next up is the guest list and invites, which is key when it comes to planning other elements of the party.

Allsop says: "Having an idea of numbers will help you to decide on how much space you need, the seating arrangements, your food and drink and what type of entertainment you might like to have. Get your invites out at least a month before and make sure you ask guests to RSVP."

Choose your menu

Once you know how many you're catering for, you can decide on your food and drink selection.



"Most people will opt for a buffet or afternoon tea-style menu," Allsop says. "Afternoon tea is quintessentially British and fits perfectly with such a royal occasion."

Ameer Kotecha, author of *The Platinum Jubilee Cookbook* (Jon Croft Editions, £30) set up the Platinum Pudding competition to find a dessert to celebrate the occasion, the winner of which will be announced in mid-May.

"Obviously, I would recommend people serve up the platinum pudding as part of their street parties - the idea is it should be like a successor to the Victoria Sponge," Kotecha says. "Then I would say try and think of things that maybe have a connection to the Queen and to the monarchy. The way you can tell is because they've been given royal warrants."

For example, you could incorporate chocolate from Bendicks or Charbonnel et Walker, McVitie's digestive biscuits or classic summer tittle Pimm's.

Kotecha adds: "Try and feature Pimm's in your dessert somehow or [use] McVitie's digestives in a cheesecake. It's quite a fun way of showing off British produce and the great stuff that we have." For larger gatherings such as street parties, it can help to share the load, Allsop says: "Allocate each of your neighbours something to bring for a shared table. Traditional items such as sandwiches, cakes and scones are typical but really anything goes.

"You might want to have some hot options on hand too, like pizzas or a large pot of stew. When planning your menu, make sure you ask guests if they have any dietary requirements so you can cater for them appropriately."

Decide on your decor

"A party isn't a party without decorations - and for an occasion like this, there's no such thing as too much," says Allsop. "In terms of colour, a traditional red, white and blue theme with Union Jacks and crowns aplenty will certainly be the popular choice. But if you want something a little more subdued then purple, gold and white can all feel very regal."

For street parties, bunting is a must. "We have seen an incredible demand for it at Party Delights already and are selling thousands of metres a week," says Allsop. "You can also create your own decorations by looking for printable options online or make traditional paper chains with red, white and blue card."

Dress for the occasion

A dress code isn't compulsory, of course, but suggesting an optional theme can be a fun addition to the party - just make sure to tell guests in advance so they have time to plan their outfits.

"Ask guests to dress to impress in their finest clothing, wear a particular colour, or even come as their favourite royal," Allsop suggests. "For more of a light-touch dress code, jubilee party accessories such as hats, tiaras, wigs and masks are the perfect alternative."

Keep the kids entertained

"If there's going to be lots of children at your jubilee party, then you will want to make sure there is plenty to keep them occupied them all day," Allsop says.

"Invest in some garden games or a pinata. These are great fun for all ages, even the adults," she suggests. "Setting up an arts and crafts table with lots of jubilee themed activities can help keep little hands busy. Or, if the British weather is kind and the sun looks set to shine, set up the paddling pool or some garden water games to keep the kids cool as well as entertained."

(Article source: *Silver Surfers*)



Potty about pots? Here's how to pick the best containers for your garden

Metal, terracotta, resin or plastic? Shape and size? We measure up the options.

You want to perk up your patio with new pots, but which should you choose?

Obviously the setting will be key - if you have a traditional cottage garden you might not want to be accessorising with super modern pots.

But there's a wealth of other considerations including the size and shape of the container and which types of plants you're intending to display in it, along with factors including heat and moisture retention.

Here are a few pointers to take you through the basics.

Which size?

That depends on your space. If you have a big patio and a broad expanse of paving, clusters of small pots won't make much impact whereas one or more really large ones can have a much greater presence, reckons horticulturist Tom Harris, author of *Pots for all Seasons*.

But if you've a balcony or roof garden, make sure you consider the weight of the pot and its contents, especially when you've just watered it.

If it's going to be too heavy, take the plant out of the plastic pot you bought it in and place the pot upside down in the permanent pot, resting the plant on it. That way, you won't need to pack as much compost in.

Alternatively, bulk the base with polystyrene, which is often used for packs of bedding so you may have some to reuse, is light and will do the same job.

The bigger the pot, potentially the less you have to water it, as the more compost the pot can hold, the longer it takes to dry out. However, if you have a small space and available shelving, or even an old ladder which could be upcycled, you can create a fantastic display of plant collections in much smaller pots. Geraniums are ideal, as they don't take much watering, and collections of succulents also make excellent shows lined up in smaller pots.

Which shape?

Round pots are the most common and the easiest to arrange in large displays. Formal, square planters are ideal for geometric looks such as topiary. Square containers are great for creating a continuous line with some space between each container, perfect candidates for a boundary or a wide path. Use different heights of round planters in clusters, with the tallest at the back.



Which material?

This rather depends on the needs of your plants. Clay or terracotta containers look lovely in virtually all settings but tend to dry out quicker than plastic and can crack in frost if you don't buy the frost-proof versions, says the RHS.

Metal is popular, particularly in minimalist, more modern settings, but if your pot is placed in a sunny spot it will heat up quickly in summer and can damage the plant's roots. Metal containers can also become corroded, although some gardeners like the weathered look.

Plastic is a contentious issue, but if you buy a plastic container it should last a long time. They are lightweight, you can drill as many drainage holes in them as you need and compost will take longer to dry out in them. You can also paint them to match your colour scheme. But, they are generally not as aesthetically pleasing, despite the efforts of manufacturers to simulate the look of stone and terracotta.

Resin containers are another lightweight option which can look like stone or pottery and are resistant to frost and heat. Upcycled containers such as teapots, wellies, colourful tins and, if you live at the seaside, discarded lobster pots or little boats, can be a quirky addition to an outdoor space. Old salvage yards can offer chimney pots and clay drainage pipes which are great for trailers and herbs in more traditional spaces.

For a natural effect, stone and concrete containers are ideal, come in smooth or textured finishes and are long-lasting. The problem is that they are heavy, so once they're in situ you won't want to move them. Make sure your pot has good drainage holes and be aware they lose moisture through the sides, which will encourage moss and algae, providing a more weathered appearance.

Wood is popular - particularly half barrels in which you can potentially even grow a small tree - and can blend into many informal garden schemes. They will eventually rot, but you can make them last longer if you line them with plastic sheeting such as a pond liner and puncture it to allow drainage.

Which plants?

Consider where you want to place your container and which plant would look best. So, if your pot is in constant sun, you won't want a shade-loving hosta in it because the plant will just sulk.

Also, think about the balance of plants and the effect you want to create. If you have a tall, narrow pot, for instance, don't put a tall thin plant in it because it will look unbalanced. Instead, plant something which will trail over the sides.

Is your plant shallow-rooted or does it need plenty of depth for the roots to spread? Shallow containers are really only suitable for shallow-rooted plants such as herbs, bedding plants and alpines, while pots with a narrow opening aren't suitable for permanent plantings because you won't be able to remove the plant and its roots when you come to repot.



Some plants, such as roses, may start off well in large pots but remember they need plenty of food and water to keep them healthy, so you may want to consider how much time you have to tend your container plants. Good bets if you don't want to do a lot of watering include drought-tolerant pelargoniums, nicotiana, geraniums, lavender, verbena, cosmos and sage and rosemary.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

Please help us rescue and care for vulnerable hedgehogs - **Britain's favourite mammal**

A shocking study has revealed that hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, with numbers **HALVED** in the last 20 years.

I am delighted to tell you that Britain's hedgehog has won favourite mammal in a UK poll.

The UK's only spiny mammal won with 35.9% of the 5,000 votes, more than double that of the Red Fox, who came in second place with 15.4%. The Red Squirrel came third with 11.4%, out of a shortlist of 10 charismatic UK mammals.

Unfortunately, hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside as numbers have **HALVED** in the last 20 years, a shocking study has revealed.

Henry Johnson, hedgehog officer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) said:

"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

Threats to hedgehogs come mostly from us. In rural areas, our farmland increasingly lacks the diversity of habitats hedgehogs need and the invertebrates they feed on. In towns and cities green spaces are lost to development, paved over or increasingly fragmented. Hedgehogs are also very prone to road traffic accidents.

This is why we have launched this special Annual Appeal to protect Britain's favourite mammal.

At Hedgehog Rescue Rehabilitation and Care Centre we respond immediately to rescue injured hedgehogs. A vet is called in straight away and the hedgehogs are monitored and cared for. Once fit and well they are released back into the wild.

Hedgehog Rescue is now conducting its Annual Appeal. Only by continuing our huge effort and long-life commitment can we give these wonderful animals a safe, happy and contented life.



We care for many hedgehogs here at our rehabilitation centre. Hedgehogs just like these:

'Julie'



'Julie' (pictured left) came in last Autumn, quite small, out in daylight and had ticks. She stayed a few weeks, put on enough weight, and made a full recovery. She was released back to her own territory by the finder.

Baby Hedgehogs

These 2 hedgehogs came in as very small babies and had stayed with us a few weeks, gaining weight and giving us a chance to sort out their health issues. They had several ticks and needed worming. When they were 100% ready, we released them close to where they were found.



These hedgehogs are some of the lucky ones. Others are less fortunate.

As a friend who knows what a wonder animals can be, I hope you will support our Annual Appeal. Your kind gift will help us rescue and care for many more vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal.

To donate to Hedgehog Rescue, go to:
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hedgehogrescue>
 or write to: **Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB**



HEDGEHOG RESCUE
 REHABILITATION AND CARE CENTRE

Registered Charity No: 1126812 (England & Wales)
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