OURPLACENews

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

MAY 2021

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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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Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Anyone can spread the virus

Full guidance on staying at home and away from others

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

Details

When we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we will reduce the spread of the infection. That is why the government is now (23rd March 2020) introducing three new

- 1. Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited
- 2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
- 3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Every citizen must comply with these new measures. The relevant authorities, including the police, will be given the powers to enforce them - including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

These measures are effective immediately. The Government will look again at these measures in three weeks, and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Symptoms and what to do

Do not leave your home if you have coronavirus symptoms

Do not leave your home if you have either:

- a high temperature this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home.

Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do.

Advice for people at high risk

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

Coronavirus can make anyone seriously ill, but there are some people who are at a higher risk.

For example, you may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- · are having certain types of cancer treatment
- have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia
- have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe
- · have a condition that makes you much more likely to get
- are taking medicine that weakens your immune system
- · are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

If you're at high risk of getting seriously ill from coronavirus, there are extra things you should do to avoid catching it. These include:

- not leaving your home you should not go out to do shopping. pick up medicine or exercise
- stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people in your home as much as possible

Ask friends, family or neighbours to pick up shopping and medicines for you. They should leave them outside your door.

Self-isolation helps stop coronavirus spreading

Do not leave your home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does. This is called selfisolation.

If you are self-isolating, you must:

- · not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day - but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from
- not go out to buy food or collect medicine order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your
- not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home

You can use your garden, if you have one.

STAY AT HOME!



Health & Environment News

Covid: Vaccine uptake among over-50s hits 95% in England

The percentage of over-50s vaccinated has hit 95% in England, NHS data shows.



BBC News reports that the take-up among those aged 45-49 is at 59% after they started being offered the jab earlier this month.

But uptake among care home staff - one of the first groups to be offered the jab - is still around 80% despite attempts to get more to come forward.

It comes as figures show that coronavirus was not the leading cause of death in England and Wales in March, for the first time since October.

Covid had been the leading cause of death every month between November and February, according to Office for National Statistics data.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said he was "delighted" 95% of over-50s in England had been vaccinated.

He tweeted that the government was on track to offer the vaccine to all adults by the end of July and added that it was "safe and effective".

Meanwhile, the last scheduled flight from India to the UK has landed ahead of new coronavirus curbs being placed on arrivals from the country.

Public Health England (PHE) confirmed on Thursday that a further 55 cases of the virus variant first identified in India were found in the UK in the week to 14 April.

A further 18 people in the UK have died within 28 days of testing positive for Covid, bringing the total by that measure to 127,345. There have also been a further 2,729 lab-confirmed cases of the virus in the UK.

The latest vaccination figures show more than 33 million people in the UK have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine with more than 10 million having received both doses.

Government data shows that a further 117,909 first doses were given on Wednesday as well as 416,784 second shots.

But despite efforts to increase uptake among care home workers NHS England said 80.4% of eligible staff working at older adult care homes had received the jab by 18 April. While 72.3% of staff working in independent Care Quality Commission-registered younger adult care homes and domiciliary care providers have received their first dose

Ministers have launched a consultation on whether care home workers should be required to receive a Covid vaccine, with Mr Hancock saying it was "something many care homes have called for".

On Thursday, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said there had been 168 cases up to 14 April of rare blood clots in the UK in people who had the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine - resulting in 32 deaths.

With an estimated 21.2 million AstraZeneca jabs given across the UK by that date, the overall case incidence is 7.9 per million doses, the MHRA added.

People aged under 30 are to be offered an alternative vaccine to AstraZeneca, but the medicines regulator said the benefits of the vaccine still outweigh the risks for the vast majority of people.

(Story source: BBC News)

People urged to protect butterflies this spring and boost their mental health

Dr Amir Khan has backed a campaign to help butterflies and moths after people reported spending more time in nature during the pandemic.

Silver Surfers reports that people are being urged to take steps to help butterflies and moths this spring as part of a project which experts said could boost the mental health of those who take part.

The campaign by charity Butterfly Conservation to prevent further declines in species of butterflies and moths comes after research found last year's lockdown saw an increase in the amount of people spending time in nature.

The University of Cumbria study revealed 83% of respondents said they had taken time to notice butterflies and bees. A short amount of time spent in nature can alleviate stress and make people feel happier and more energised, according to Butterfly Conservation.

Dr Amir Khan, Butterfly Conservation ambassador, said: "As we head into spring again, we must remember how our increased connectedness with nature during the warmer months of last year really helped us.



"Like a butterfly that exists as a tiny egg over winter, the promise of spring has been with us during the winter months and now it's back there's plenty we can do to feel inspired by and part of the wildlife around us."

The Nature for Nuture project in partnership with Dobbies Garden Centres aims to provide householders with tools and information that can help boost numbers of pollinators.

Dr Kate Dent, director of engagement at Butterfly Conservation, said: "As spring finally arrives, we can all do our little bit towards helping butterflies, wherever we live, in the knowledge that it's helping our mental health too. "Whether it's caring for herb seedlings in a window box, planting wildflowers in your garden or learning afresh how to breathe and feel the gift of nature in our local green spaces."

Butterfly Conservation warned that 76% of the UK's butterfly species have declined over the 40 years while numbers of UK larger moths have declined by more than 30% in the last 50 years. The charity says the continuing decline of butterflies and moths is worrying for wildlife as a whole. As well as being important pollinators, the insects are part of ecosystems which support birds and mammals.

Marcus Eyles, horticultural director for Dobbies, said: "We are proud to support Butterfly Conservation with this important campaign and hope people of all ages gain valuable insight from the advice and recommendations we share over the coming weeks." Those interested can find more information at Butterfly Conservation.

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

Smell test for Parkinson's and Alzheimer's could help diagnose patients 10 years before symptoms

A breakthrough in smell test technology means they are cheaper and more accurate and could be used for mass screening programmes.

Inews reports that a smell test that could help diagnose Parkinson's Disease up to 10 years before the main symptoms appear is on the horizon after a breakthrough in sniffing technology.

Health & Environment News

The new tests use capsules of aromatic oil which can be crushed and pulled apart easily to give a precise amount of oil to deliver just the right odour potency.

They are much cheaper and more accurate than the traditional 'scratch and sniff' tests, which are typically used to assess a person's sense of smell more generally and where the amount of odour released largely depends on the strength and number of scratches.

As such, the new technology has the potential to be widely used to screen for a number of diseases that cause an early loss of smell, such as Alzheimer's Disease and acute respiratory infections such as Covid.

More than 90 per cent of Parkinson's patients suffer from loss of smell and previous studies suggest that the right smell test could identify those at high risk of developing the disease up to 10 years before symptoms appear.

Taking a smell test could give early warning of the disease, so that those deemed at high risk could be monitored and tested with traditional diagnostic tools.

Because the tests are cheap they could be offered as part of a routine checkup at the GP. Meanwhile people concerned that they may have a condition associated with loss of smell could report to the doctor for a test.

"You might think that testing your ability to smell is something easy that you can do yourself - but surprisingly, many people do not even notice when they lose their sense of smell," said Dr Ahmed Ismail, of Queen Mary University of London, adding that only 15 per cent of Covid-19 patients noticed a deterioration in their sense of ability to smell, even though that is a common symptom.

"We have developed the encapsulation technology and the smell testing kit, but now we need to refine the odours used and their threshold for each disease in which the loss of smell is a key symptom. It might be that for each disease there is a (smell) threshold and so the power of the aroma is related to the disease you have."

The new smell test technology was tested on Parkinson's patients in a study published in the Journal of the Royal Society Interface.

Claire Bale, Head of Research at Parkinson's UK, said:

"It is vitally important that we develop tests that can help to diagnose Parkinson's earlier and more accurately. Currently, getting a diagnosis can take time, and some people may be misdiagnosed at first. This period of uncertainty can be extremely stressful and frustrating, and delays peoples' access to vital treatment and support to manage their Parkinson's symptoms." "We know people with Parkinson's may experience changes in their sense of smell, and that these changes can occur very early - often long before more recognisable movement problems emerge."

"Developing new approaches to assess changes in a person's ability to smell is an exciting route towards tools that could be used to detect Parkinson's in the future."

(Story source: BBC News)





Atchoo! Top tips for hay fever sufferers this Spring and Summer

Spring, although longed for by many, is a mixed blessing for others. As hand in hand with the change of season comes pollen.

Pollen is the male fertilising agent of flowering trees, plants, grasses and weeds and is usually in the form of a very fine powder. Many people have an adverse immune reaction when they breathe in pollen, this is what is commonly known as hay fever.

Pollen contains proteins that can cause the eyes, throat and sinuses to become irritated and inflamed, so common hay fever symptoms are a runny, itchy and/or blocked nose, sneezing and itchy eyes.

Who does hay fever affect?

Hay fever is an allergy to pollen that affects around 1 in 5 people and as such is one of the most common allergies in the UK.

Usually beginning in childhood, hay fever can affect all ages. You are more likely to suffer from hay fever if you have a family history of allergies, especially asthma or eczema. More boys tend to be affected than girls but it seems to equal out with age.

Pollen is the male fertilising agent of flowering trees, plants, grasses and weeds and is usually in the form of a very fine sufferers as they get older.





Health & Lifestyle Feature

When is the UK hay fever season?

Hay fever is usually worse between late March and September, especially when it's warm, humid and windy. This is when the pollen count is at its highest and is when the majority of people will suffer.

However, severe sufferers may struggle all year round. This is known as perennial rhinitis.

Every person is different and will react to different types of pollen so when you suffer depends on the type of pollen you are allergic to.

When is specific pollen released?

Late March to mid-May - tree pollen is released
Mid-May to July - grass pollen and flower pollen is high
Late June to September - weed pollen is at its most potent



What are hay fever symptoms?

Hay fever symptoms include:

- · Red eyes that may be watery and/or itchy
- Runny nose
- An itchy nose, roof of mouth or throat
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- The feeling of mucus constantly running down the back of the throat
- tiredness

Top tip for sufferers

There is no cure for hay fever but there are some precautions that you can take to avoid exposure to pollen and some treatments that may help to alleviate symptoms:

- Wash it off a shower and a change of clothes after being outside will help to remove pollen from your body and hair
- Wrap-around sunglasses these are useful to stop pollen from getting into your eyes

- Keep an eye on the pollen count weather forecasts these days include pollen counts, so if they are especially high then take care to spend more time indoors and keep your windows and doors shut
- Stay away from animals especially on days with a high pollen count. Our pets can carry pollen on their fur so wash them regularly, especially before they come in the house



- Keep the washing indoors pollen collects on clothes so avoid drying your washing outside when there a high pollen count is forecast
- Create a barrier protect your nostrils and trap pollen grains by applying a small amount of petroleum gel (Vaseline)
- Gardening avoid spending time in the garden when the pollen count is high and stay away from wind-pollinated plants such as sunflowers, dahlias and ragweed
- Stay by the coast sea air blows pollen in-land so pollen counts are generally lower by the sea
- Over the counter antihistamines will help to prevent an allergic reaction and steroid nasal sprays can reduce inflammation and swelling.

If symptoms are extreme or persistent then a visit to your GP is recommended as they can discuss further options.

Immunotherapy may be recommended as an option; this requires exposure to small amounts of pollen over a period of 3 years to build resistance, but in most cases, hay fever can be controlled by making behavioural changes and by taking over the counter medication.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

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Special Feature



With summer on the way, you might be looking for ways to keep your white or rose wine chilled for longer. Ice cubes are an obvious choice but will water your wine down. An alternative way to keep your wine cool without watering it down is to freeze grapes and use them as ice cubes - plus you can always eat them afterwards!

Extra tip: Frozen grapes or cherries on their own also make for a great snack to cool you down during the warmer months.

Fix scratches on wooden furniture using a walnut

Furniture gets scratched and scuffed over time, and many people assume that they will either have to live with the damage, or sand down and re-varnish the entire piece of furniture. But did you know that you can cover up dings on wooden furniture in a matter of minutes, by rubbing the area with a walnut?



Simply rub the walnut over the scuff or scratch a few times. Then rub the area with a soft cloth to help the wood absorb the oil from the nut. You might be surprised at how well this works!

Make a mindfulness jar

DIY mindfulness jars are quick to make and can offer you a distraction from any negative thoughts. They can make a great addition to your office desk or your bedside table. All you need is a jar, some hot water, and some clear glue, which can all be bought on Amazon quite cheaply.

Use a dustpan to fill up a bucket if it won't fit in your sink

It can be frustrating when you go to fill up your bucket and realise that it won't fit in your sink. If you've got a dustpan, then by positioning it in your sink in the right way, water will be able to follow across your dustpan, down the handle and down into your bucket. Have a watch of the quick video below to see how it's done.

hout watering Can't make a decision? Flip a coin

Flipping a coin is an effective way of making a decision - not because it can make the decision for you by landing either heads or tails side up, but because you will often decide what you really want while the coin is in the air. Often, it's in that split second when we feel that a decision is about to be taken out of our hands that our gut instinct kicks in, and we know what we need to do. Why not give it a try? If you find yourself praying that it won't land on a particular side before it even hits the ground, then you'll already have your answer.



Use beeswax to make your canvas shoes waterproof

Did you know that by rubbing beeswax over any pair of shoes, you can make them waterproof? You'll need a bar of beeswax or a candle, and a hairdryer.

Use dental floss to perfectly cut cakes

Cutting a crumbly cake with a knife does the trick, but it often doesn't produce as clean or even a cut as most of us would like. Then before you know it there's crumbs everywhere, and one of your guests is asking why they got a smaller slice than Jeff over there.

A simple trick for solving this problem is to cut your cake using unflavoured dental floss. All you need to do is cut a long piece of floss, hold it over the top of the cake at the point you want to make the cut, and make a sawing motion back and forth as you press down into it.

The number of cuts you make will depend on how many slices you want to get out of the cake. You can also use this technique to create a layered cake, for example, when making a victoria sponge - or it can be especially helpful if you want to cut a crumbly cake into a top and bottom half.

Continued on pages 10-11...



Problems solved! Simple tips and tricks that can make life easier

Often we become so used to our routine and doing the same daily tasks, that we don't consider how we could do them any differently. But there are plenty of quick tips and tricks out there that could help to simplify your life, while saving you time and money.

We've come up with a list of life hacks that will hopefully help you to start thinking creatively about how to solve your everyday challenges in new and creative ways! They can be fun, satisfying, and will hopefully make things that little bit easier!

Use a trouser hanger to hold your recipe book (pictured above)

This is by far one of my favourite hacks! So many times have I had a recipe book shut on me when I've got hands covered in flour or something else, and can't open it back up to see the next step. This useful tip will stop you losing your page and your flow when you're getting creative in the kitchen. Simply hang your hanger from one of your kitchen cupboard handles and clip your book to it for a stress-free, hands free cooking experience.

Use toilet paper tubes to make seed starter pots

If you've got seeds that you've been meaning to plant but nothing to plant them, then consider using toilet paper tubes to make seed starter pots. They're biodegradable, take just a few minutes to make and will be sturdy enough to allow seeds to start putting down roots, before you upgrade them to a larger pot later on.

This hack is a great way to recycle your toilet roll tubes because the microbes in the soil will break the cardboard down into carbon - which your seedlings will use as plant food!

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Wrap a wet cloth around your drink and put it in the fridge

We've all longed for a cold drink on a summer's day, but realised soon after that we'd forgotten to put our bottles or cans in the fridge.

Next time this happens, try wrapping a wet cloth around your drinks bottle or can before putting it in the fridge. The water will rapidly evaporate and cool, cooling your drink down much faster. You should have a nice cool beer in just 10 minutes.

Place a lazy Susan in your fridge or cupboards

A lazy Susan is essentially a turntable which you can place on any counter or shelf, that is designed to help you access your food more easily. If you regularly find yourself with food piled up at the back of the fridge or cupboards, making it difficult to see, then this hack is for you.

You can store all your food on a lazy Susan, which has 360 degree rotation, meaning that nothing will ever get forgotten about at the back of the cupboard or fridge again.

Those who get them tend to never go back! There are plenty of lazy Susan options available on Amazon.

Create extra counter space by placing your chopping board on top of an open drawer

If you're making a big dinner or a dinner with lots of different components, then sometimes it can be handy to have some extra chopping space. By pulling out your kitchen drawer and putting your chopping board on top, you may be able to create an extra work surface.



Use spaghetti to light a candle

If you want to protect your fingers when you're lighting a candle, then consider using a dry piece of spaghetti because it will give you a longer reach to light your candle. This is a great tip for lighting candles in glass holders because you often have to use matches and lighters at funny angles to reach the wick, meaning that your fingers risk getting toasty!



Special Feature

Use drinks can tabs to create extra space in your wardrobe

If you can't fit anymore hangers in your wardrobe but you need some extra hanging space, then it's worth keeping hold of the tabs on drinks cans.

Keep bugs away with peppermint spray

Many people who are scared of bugs tend to spend a lot of time and energy fretting about bugs invading their homes. If you really keen to keep bugs away, then consider mixing 10-15 drops of peppermint oil with a cup of water and putting it in a spray bottle.

Then lightly spray window and door frames, or anywhere that bugs are most likely to gain entry to your home. While we might enjoy the pleasant smell of peppermint, the majority of bugs (including spiders) find it offensive and will usually head in a different direction once they smell it.

Fry your egg inside an onion ring

To cook the perfect fried egg, try cutting a thick onion ring and cooking your egg inside it. This is one of the most satisfying hacks on the list, because the egg really does come out perfectly round and it tastes delicious!

Let your blender clean itself

Cleaning a blender can be a fiddly (and potentially risky) job because it requires you to clean the blade. Next time you use your blender - rather than trying to clean it by hand with a sponge - try filling it with some soapy water and letting it run for 30 seconds. Then just give it a good rinse and allow it to air dry. Repeat if necessary.

In a hurry? Charge your phone on airplane mode

If your phone has run out of battery and you need to charge it in a hurry, then try putting in on airplane mode. You won't be able to receive calls, but your phone will charge much faster as it's using less energy whilst charging!

Put pancake mix into an old squeezy bottle for a no-mess experience

Putting your pancake batter into a bowl or jug before pouring it into a frying pan can make for a messy experience. Instead, why not try putting your batter in an old squeezy bottle instead?

You'll have much more control over the size and shape of your pancake, and it will make less mess. This is also a fantastic way to recycle your own ketchup and mayonnaise bottles yourself.

Consider baking your eggs instead of boiling them

Although most of us boil our hard-boiled eggs, it's also possible to create the perfect hard-boiled egg in the oven. Baking them in the oven can be much easier if you're making large quantities of eggs. The shells are also less likely to crack and splinter - making for easier washing up!

To bake eggs in the oven, preheat your oven to 175 degrees celsius. Then place eggs in a muffin/cake tray and cook for 20-30 minutes depending on how hard or soft you like the yoke.

Put tea bags in smelly shoes

Let's face it, with warmer weather comes sweatier feet, which can sometimes leave our shoes smelling far less fresh than we would like. If you want to remove odours from your shoes, then try putting a few dry tea bags in each shoe to absorb the smell. There are many different types of tea bag out there, but it helps to choose ones with a more appealing scent. Peppermint or lemon are usually popular choices.



Use soapy water to detect a slow tyre leak

When a car tyre has a slow puncture, it can often require a whole new tyre. But sometimes doing a home repair on the existing tyre is also possible - if you can first locate the source of the problem. Being unable to tell where your car tyre is slowly leaking air from, can be frustrating. Sometimes there's no obvious damage and other times the object that caused the leak in the first place – like a nail or a small shard of glass, is lodged deep in the hole it's just made.

One of the best ways to find the source of a slow leak is to mix some washing up liquid and water together in a spray bottle and spray the tyre all over. You will usually see bubbles start to form at the point where air is leaking.

Cure a headache with lime (pictured top left)

Looking for a natural way to cure headaches? Try cutting a lime in half and rubbing it on your forehead. This one is a bit of an old wives tale, but many say that they have found success with this method.

(Article source: Rest Less)





Leisure & Travel Feature

On your bike! 9 beautiful cycle routes to ride in the UK

After the events of the last year, many of us are looking forward to regaining some freedom and exploring The Great Outdoors. One of the best ways to discover the beauty and diversity of the UK is by bike - and the health benefits that cycling provides is just an extra bonus.

So whether you're a seasoned cyclist or you're looking for an exciting new way to explore the country, here are nine of the most beautiful cycle routes in the UK.

Assynt Achiltibuie Circuit, Scottish Highlands (pictured above)

If you're looking for a cycling challenge that will allow you to explore some of the most isolated and dramatically beautiful landscape in the UK, the Assynt Achiltibuie Circuit in the Scottish Highlands may be for you.

Many of the roads in the Scottish Highlands are wonderfully deserted, so if you're hoping to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life and experience a true sense of peace, this challenging loop is unparalleled.

At around 76 miles, it is possible to do this route in a day if you're an experienced cyclist, otherwise you might want to break it up over a couple of days.

The route begins in the village of Achiltibuie, and as you cycle you can admire beautiful views of imposing mountains (Sula Bheinn, Cùl Mòr and Stac Pollaidh), landmarks like Loch Assynt and, and historic spots like the ruined Ardvreck Castle.

Good places to stop off - either for a break or to spend the night are Lochinver, Drumbeg and Newton.

The Lakeland Loop, Lake District, England

If you're an experienced cyclist who's looking for a challenge, then the Lakeland Loop cycle route is an absolute must - and has been voted Britain's best bike ride. Taking you through some of the country's most spectacular landscapes, this route showcases the very best of the Lake District: think dales and valleys, rugged mountains, and gleaming, tranquil lakes.

At 40 miles, it isn't the distance that makes this route so challenging, but rather the climbs: gradients of 30% will test even the most hardened cyclists! However, if you're not sure you have the legs for the biggest climbs but don't want to miss out on the views, there's no harm in walking your bike up the toughest terrain! Depending on your fitness, bike, and the weather, the loop usually takes between four and 10 hours to complete -though you might want to think about doing it over a couple of days, and getting some more sightseeing in while you're in the lakes

Because much of the route hugs the shoreline of Coniston Water, this is considered the best place to stay, so if you'd like to check out accommodation in the area, head over to Airbnb or Booking.com. Coniston is only a short drive (or ride) away from Ambleside, one of the most popular towns in the Lake District, so whether you're looking to do some hiking or take it easy visiting shops, pubs and tearooms, you can do all that and more here.



The Camel Trail, Cornwall, England

Running the length of an abandoned railway line, Cornwall's Camel Trail is one of the loveliest and most famous cycle routes in the UK - and for good reason. At 18 miles, it's the perfect duration for a leisurely cycle under the sun, and the traffic-free route will take you through the idyllic woodland of Camel Valley and the wild moors of Bodmin, taking in many of the South-West's best heritage sites along the way. Head over to The Camel Trail Bike Hire site to find out more about the route and hiring bikes. Most cyclists set off from Padstow, a popular seaside resort that's famous for its many excellent restaurants, so foodies will certainly be happy here - and it's a great place to fuel up before and after your ride. If you fancy a shorter ride, you can call it a day when you hit Wadebridge, but keep going to Bodmin if you're up for more of a challenge. You can find accommodation for Bodmin on Booking.com.

Elan Valley, Powys, Wales

If you'd like to enjoy sensational views of the Welsh countryside - as well as the opportunity to do some mountain biking - head to the beautiful Elan Valley in Powys, Wales, where you'll follow a trail along the old Birmingham Corporation Railway line. The Elan Valley Trail starts in the pretty town of Rhayader, where there's everything you need to fuel up for the ride, including cafes, shops, pubs, a bike shop, and toilets.



The trail then takes you west through the Elan Valley, over Rhayader Tunnel Nature Reserve (which is home to many species of bat), and through picturesque woodland. This route will take you off the beaten track, but because it's only 17 miles, it's still a very manageable distance for one day. The route is generally pretty flat, but there are a few strenuous climbs up to the Garreg Ddu Reservoir and the Craig Goch Dam. The views from the top are absolutely worth it, though. Once you've completed the Elan Valley trail, you can also get a bit of mountain biking action in, if you like. There are seven mountain biking routes to choose from, from the 9km Ant Hills route to the 60km Elan Epic. To browse accommodation in Rhayader, head over to Airbnb or Booking.com.

Richmond Park, London, England

If you live in London and don't have the time or opportunity to head out to the countryside, that doesn't mean you have to miss out on cycling beautiful trails. Richmond Park is a cycling oasis in the middle of the country's sprawling capital, and if you're looking to find a spot of solace in the city, you'd be hard pushed to find anywhere more tranguil and beautiful.

The route might only be seven miles, but Richmond Park spans 2,500 acres, so there's much to explore here: keep an eye out for the park's famous deer, as well as for flocks of colourful parakeets (whose presence in London are the subject of countless urban myths!). The route begins and ends at Roehampton Gate: if you cycle clockwise, you'll have a challenging climb up Broomfield Hill, and if you cycle in an anticlockwise direction, you'll face longer yet gentler climb up Dark Hill. Whether you're looking to improve your cycling or just fancy a leisurely pedal, Richmond Park is the perfect spot, as looping the park several times can act as an exhilarating training session. If it's a nice day, you could even pack a picnic, and find a spot where you can admire distant views of St Paul's Cathedral before finishing your cycle.

Continued on pages 14-15...





If you live outside London and want to explore Richmond Park, why not combine a trip to the park with a mini-break to the capital? London is a global hub of culture, history and cuisine, so whether you want to visit museums, try delicious snacks at outdoor food markets, or enjoy a drink in a pretty beer garden, there's something for everyone here. Head over to Visit London to find out what's open and when, and to check out accommodation, you can have a browse at Booking.com or Airbnb.

Causeway Coast Cycle Route, Northern Ireland (pictured above)

If you're hoping to discover the wild beauty of Northern Ireland's North Coast, why not cycle the Giant's Causeway to Benone cycle route? Though it's only 23 miles, this route takes you past some of the most spectacular scenery in all of Ireland, including the world famous Giant's Causeway, a unique geological formation that was created by a volcanic eruption 60 million years ago.

Aside from geological wonders, the route also takes you past plenty of pristine beaches, including Portballintrae Beach and Whiterocks Beach, which are great places to stop for a wander, if you fancy hopping off your saddle for a while. There are plenty of opportunities for refreshments and breaks along the way too, as the route takes you past the popular resort towns of Portrush. Portstewart and Castlerock, where there are pubs, cafes and restaurants. While the route itself isn't too challenging, there are a couple of short climbs and two longer climbs - one between Castlerock and Coleraine, and the another between Portrush and Bushmills.

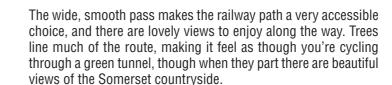
To browse accommodation near Giant's Causeway, head over to Booking.com or Airbnb. If you'd prefer to stay at the other end, around Benone, there are some good options on Airbnb.

Bristol and Bath Railway Path. Somerset, England

If you're looking to enjoy a beautiful rural bike ride with a dose of city culture at either end, then you can't beat the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. Because both ends of the cycle route end at train stations (Bristol Temple Meads and Bath Spa) it's incredibly convenient to get to - and if you don't fancy cycling back to where you started, you can simply hop on a train with your bike.



At 16 miles, this is a relatively easy distance - though if you'd like to up your mileage, you can turn the route into a circular one by returning along the Kennet and Avon Canal towpath.



If you fancy a snack along the way, you can stop off at the Warmley Waiting Room, an old waiting room that's been turned into a cafe on the old platform, and serves tea, sandwiches and cakes. If you have the appetite for something more substantial, you have the culture and cuisine of both Bristol and Bath just a short ride away. To look for accommodation in Bath, head over to Booking.com.

Applecross via Bealach na Bà, **Scottish Highlands**

For a serious change of pace - and a dramatic change of scenery - why not challenge yourself to cycling the Applecross Loop in the Scottish Highlands? This 45 mile circuit is tough, and at times unforgiving - but because much of the route follows the North Coast 500, you're guaranteed views so spectacular you'll have to keep reminding yourself you haven't left the country. If you want to cycle along craggy highland passes and along deserted coastal roads, and fly past windswept beaches and crumbling castles, this is the route for you.



But of course, enjoying such dramatic and diverse scenery doesn't come for free, and there are seriously tough climbs along this route. For this reason, this route is only recommended for more experienced cyclists. You might be following one of the world's best roads, but there are also climbs of 20% gradient and plenty of hairpin bends. If you have the legs and fitness for it, though, this is considered one of the best cycle routes in the world, and climbing the notorious Bealach na Bà, a winding single-track road through the mountains, won't be something you forget in a hurry.

If you're a seasoned cyclist who's used to tackling tough terrain, this route can be completed in four to five hours, but otherwise you might want to go at a more leisurely pace. To find out more about what it's like to cycle the Bealach na Bà, have a read of this article by Cyclist.co.uk, and to find out more about the route itself, head over to Strava. To find accommodation near the village of Applecross, head over to Airbnb or Booking.com.

The Settle Circular, Yorkshire, England

Ever since the Tour de France whizzed through Yorkshire for three days back in 2014, this region has become increasingly popular with amateur and experienced cyclists alike - and for good reason. With its dramatic heather moorland, dense forests, and rolling green fields, this part of Yorkshire is spectacularly beautiful, and this 40 mile loop takes you past some of the county's most gorgeous landscapes and charming villages.



Beginning from the village Settle, you'll pass through many of the region's most popular villages like Arncliffe, Kilnsey and Grassington - so if you're looking to enjoy plenty of stops along the way, you'll be spoilt for choice. There are some short, steep climbs and fast descents along the route, so any breaks will be well deserved, and the views of Pen-y-Ghent and Pendle Hill are superb.

You can check out the Strava cycle route here, and to browse accommodation in Settle, head over to either Airbnb or Booking.com.

Final thoughts...

After a year of relative confinement, many of us are itching to get out and about again. Though international travel still remains a question mark for now, the UK is opening back up, and there's never been a better time to discover its beauty, diversity and charm. Cycling isn't only good for our health; it can also provide an exhilarating sense of freedom and adventure, something most of us have been missing over the past year.

Plus, aside from the views and the exercise, heading out on a cycling adventure also gives us the opportunity to enjoy some of the smaller things we've been missing, like a cold pint in a pub garden, idly browsing in village gift shops, or treating ourselves to an ice cream on the beach. Wherever you choose to cycle, just be sure to follow government guidelines, and if you're planning on spending the night somewhere, it's always best to book accommodation in advance.

(Article source: Rest Less)

Spain to reopen its borders to British tourists with or without vaccine passports from June

Spain and Portugal have both said they expect British tourists to be welcomed within weeks.



Inews reports that Spain has announced British holidaymakers will be allowed into the country from June onwards even if they have not received a Covid-19 vaccine.

Spanish tourism minister Fernando Valdés Verelst said those with a valid digital health certificate as well as those who have not been inoculated would be included in the plans. People who have not received a vaccine will instead be required to present a negative test on arrival

Mr Valdés Verelst said: "June will be the beginning of the recovery of tourism in Spain. By then we will have a digital vaccination certificate in place and we will be able to reopen our borders."

Mr Valdés Verelst said he had been in "close conversations" with ministers in the UK over the plans, adding that he was pushing for Britain's vaccine passport to be "mutually recognised".

It comes as Portugal's ambassador to the UK said British tourists could be able to visit from the "middle of Mav".

Asked when Portugal will be opening its borders, Manuel Lobo Antunes told Sky News on Wednesday: "As soon as possible, this is not just a unilateral matter, we have to co-ordinate this issue with our British friends and the UK government. "But we are hopeful, as we have been saying for these last months, that from the middle of May, regular mobility between the UK and Portugal and vice versa, can be established, that's our hope."

Asked if Britons who have not been vaccinated can travel into the country, he added: "Yes, that's the idea, that's what we wanted, to as much as possible go back to the regime that existed before the pandemic. "It's in that direction we are working and that is possible."

Under Boris Johnson's roadmap, non-essential international travel is set to resume on 17 May for people living in England.

Transport secretary Grant Shapps said on Wednesday that domestic Covid statistics "look good" to enable the resumption of foreign holidays next month.

Mr Shapps told Sky News: "I have to say that so far the data does continue to look good from a UK perspective, notwithstanding those concerns about where people might be travelling to and making sure we're protected from the disease being reimported."

He added that he will set out which countries fall into the "green", "amber" and "red" categories under the new risk-based traffic light system "towards the beginning of May". That will determine what testing and quarantine requirements travellers will face when they return from various destinations.

Mr Shapps said the NHS app is being worked on to become a health certificate for UK holidaymakers to use for international travel.

He told Sky News: "In terms of vaccine certification, I can confirm we are working on an NHS application; actually it will be the NHS app that is used for people when they book appointments with the NHS and so on, to be able to show you've had a vaccine or you've had testing. "I'm working internationally with partners across the world to make sure that system can be internationally recognised, as that's the way forward. "Actually, I'm chairing a meeting of the G7 secretaries of state for transport, my equivalents from America and Canada and all the G7 countries, next week on exactly this subject."

(Story source: Inews)

At the heart of Glastonbury is a celebration of outdoor life, a joy that can be replicated beyond the festival

In a new book that celebrates the glory of rural getaways, Glastonbury Festival coorganiser Emily Eavis explains why spending time in nature - and protecting it - is so important.

Inews reports that over the years, I've come to understand that Glastonbury Festival - which my dad and I organise on Worthy Farm - is an event that means so many different things to so many different people: the Pyramid Stage, the performers, the late-night areas, the mud, the magic.



But, at its very heart, our festival has always been a celebration of nature and the outdoor life. Each June, we welcome more than 200,000 people to these idyllic Somerset fields and, for those five days, they have no option but to live a simpler, more pastoral life.

They sleep under canvas, get around by foot and find themselves very closely attuned to the weather. If they need shelter or shade, they'll search out a tree. If they need to relax or slow down for a bit, they'll sit on the grass and have a chat or read the paper (they can't keep looking at their phones, because they need to preserve the batteries). And the toilet facilities? Well, let's just call them functional.

Yet, so many people I meet tell me that Glastonbury is their favourite place in the world, those five days their most cherished. And I'm sure that the back-to-basics rural lifestyle is a huge part of that. It allows people to reset, slow down and live in the moment. And, when they do, they realise what a special thing being outdoors in the countryside is.

Certainly, I feel hugely lucky to have grown up on Worthy Farm, where my family has lived for six generations. I've lived in London, too, where I often found myself yearning for the valley, the trees and the birdsong. But what I think I missed most was the seasons.

The power of nature

When you're in a big city, you might notice whether it's raining or hot, but the seasons - indicators of ongoing life and the beauty of the natural world - can pass you by.

Now I'm back in Somerset, I take so much comfort in nature: seeing the first snowdrops of spring or the autumn leaves beginning to bronze. That seasonal ebb and flow gives you perspective.

The wonder and power of nature is all around us, and I think that maybe explains why my dad and I have always seen protecting the planet as such a big part of the festival's mission. For decades now, we've tried to raise awareness of climate change and campaign for ways of living that can help preserve and heal the world. On the farm, we have Europe's largest privately owned solar farm (on the roof of the cowshed); we convert the Worthy herd's dung into electricity with our anaerobic digester; and we were proud to save millions of single-use plastic bottles from potentially going to landfill after we banned the sale of them at the Festival.

We're very fortunate to be in a position to make those big gestures - and having that platform is something we take seriously - but the small things count, too. All of us can make changes and choices that will make a difference. And one of those is simply to take time to enjoy and appreciate the natural world. The countryside is there for all of us. Use it, value it, cherish it.

Three places to stay in the UK for reconnecting with nature

Dabinett Treehouse, The Orchard, Fenny Castle, Somerset

This beautifully crafted cocoon of a treehouse stands on a tripod. Beside it, a deck is home to a wood-panelled bathtub beneath low-slung branches. Lights twinkle in the trees at night and, come morning, the air fills with birdsong. The stylish cabin comes complete with a king-sized bed, luxury bathroom, mini kitchen, wood burner and sofa. Guests can idle away the hours admiring views across Somerset while they plan walks in the Mendip Hills. From £205 per night for two.



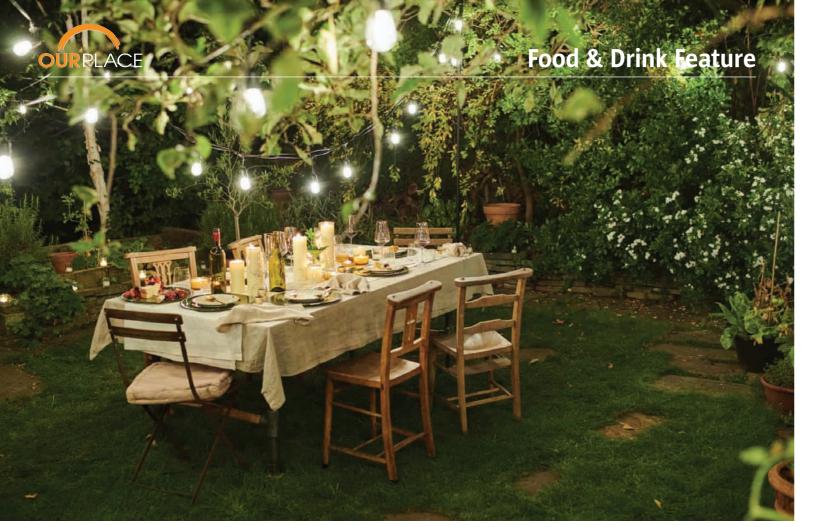
Digital Detox Cabin, Rockells Farm, Duddenhoe End, Essex

This small cabin overlooks open Essex countryside. The quiet, back-to-basics, secluded hut has a ban on digital devices - guests have to lock away their smartphones upon arrival. A "Digital Free" box of goodies includes a Polaroid camera, cassette player and postcards. Visitors are free to stroll to the village pub or to simply sit on the bench outside the cabin and do absolutely nothing. The retreat is the creation of start-up duo Hector and Ben, who believe you can only truly escape the manic pace and long working hours that come with city living when you take a break from digital devices. From £130 per night for two.

Midsummer Meadow Bed, Southcombe Barn, Widecombe-in-the-Moor. Devon

Picture a glade in an ancient woodland surrounded by wildflowers, their heads bobbing in the summer breeze. There's a bell tent pitched on the grass and, beneath the trees, a four-poster bed carved from the branches of a fallen eucalyptus tree. This idyllic scene is a glamping-retreat reality crafted by co-founder of Canopy & Stars, Tom, and his partner Vashti, on a Devonshire Dark Sky Reserve. Available during the summer, the Midsummer Meadow Bed offers guests a rare opportunity to sleep in the wild. Just a stone's throw away, there's a barn with a private bathroom and tea-making facilities. And the bell tent? It's the perfect place to chill after trail walking. From £145 per night for two.

(Story source: Inews)



Al fresco dining: 10 top tips for planning an outdoor dinner party or picnic

This year, many of us will be looking forward to getting our social lives back on track. And often, there's no better way to spend time catching up with friends and family than with good conversation over some delicious food and drinks.

Now that the rules allow us to meet up with a small number of people in outdoor spaces, you might be feeling excited about the possibility of hosting a garden dinner party, or organising a picnic in the park. But, whichever way you choose to meet friends or family, these things can often take a fair bit of planning and preparation to make sure everything runs smoothly.

To help you get everything in order, we've put together some top tips that'll hopefully make your outdoor meetup one to remember.

From DIY decorations and delicious recipes, through to mobile drinks stations and tips to help you stay out of the kitchen on the night - we hope you find them useful!

Get plans in the diary early

As life gradually returns to normal, it's likely that a lot of people will be excited to start making plans to see loved ones, visit restaurants, and go on staycations. As a result, people's diaries may start to get booked up fairly quickly.

To make sure your plans don't get side-tracked, it's a good idea to invite guests or make plans in advance, so that you can set a date that works for everyone and avoid disappointment.



Food & Drink Feature

Plan your menu in advance

When catering for people, it can be useful to plan in advance what you'll serve, and avoid making it too complex. If you're hosting at home, recipes that are quick and easy but equally tasty, can help take some of the hosting pressure off of you - and if you're meeting for a picnic in the park, often the most simple picnic foods are the most popular!

Main meals

If you're in need of some main meal inspiration for your dinner party, then perhaps you could try making some melt in the middle fishcakes, a comforting spaghetti recipe, a refreshing salad, or sun-inspired recipes from Delicious Magazine.

If you're planning a picnic, you could have a go at making your own delicious burritos, wraps, quiches, pies, breadsticks and dip, inspired by easy picnic food ideas from Olive Magazine. If you're also wanting to save money while still making some delicious food, then you might be interested in some budget recipes by Jamie Oliver, or cheap picnic recipes from Cheap Recipe Blog.

Opting for recipes that you're familiar with can also be a good call because you'll be better able to determine which steps you can (or cannot) complete before the event. Plus, you'll know what the dish should look like, so you can feel more confident about achieving a successful end result. However, if you're wanting to use this opportunity to try an exciting new recipe, then by all means go for it. Perhaps just trial it beforehand!

Snacks and sides

When planning your menu, it's also worth thinking about any snacks and sides that you'll want to include. For example, if you're hosting people in your garden, you might like to serve some canapes or simple appetizers like nuts and crisps prior to the main meal, or perhaps some cheese or late night snacks like mini waffles, churros and cookies. And if you're planning a picnic, don't forget about the classic snacks that everyone loves like sausage rolls, cocktails sausages, and scotch eggs!

Drinks

When it comes to drinks, it can be helpful to have a mix of different beverages on offer. Alongside any alcohol you might serve, soft drinks like elderflower presse, ginger beer, or pink lemonade are delicious, not too pricey, and add great colour and variety. If you're wanting to keep the cost down, you could consider asking your guests if they'd be happy to bring a bottle with them or split the cost.

If you fancy adding an extra treat to your gathering, then why not make some delicious summery cocktails and/or mocktails? From minty mojitos and easy sangria, to summery pimm's and frozen margaritas, you'll find a whole list of mouth-watering recipes here on BBC Good Food.

It's also a good idea to make sure you're well stocked up on ice - there's nothing worse than sipping on a white wine, champagne, or beer that isn't chilled enough. To avoid using too much freezer space and keep drinks chilled throughout the day, you might find simple ice buckets or cooler boxes or bags useful.

Dessert

Ending your dinner party or picnic with a delicious dessert can be the perfect finishing touch - and choosing an option that's simple to make can be a lifesaver after a lot of preparation and hard work.

Choose a fun and simple dessert

After serving the main meal, sometimes the last thing you want to think about is making dessert. If that's the case, you might want to opt for a simple dessert that's not too fussy. BBC Good Food has a range of 37 delicious quick and easy desserts that won't have you slaving away in the kitchen. From 5-minute mocha pots and quick peach crumbles, through to easy tiramisu, trifles, and sticky toffee pudding, there's something to tickle all appetites.



If on the other hand you'll be eating in a park or other outside area, it's usually best to pick a dry dessert option, or something that won't be affected by temperature, to avoid it losing its desired appearance or texture. Traybakes, cookies, or a fruit salad are usually good options, as are banana bread, carrot cake, or vanilla cupcakes. For some further inspiration, check out BBC Good Food's best baking recipes or picnic dessert recipes.

Make a list of your ingredients before heading to the supermarket

Once you've got your menu in place, it can be helpful to make a shopping list. Catering for people can be expensive, so writing a list can help you avoid buying unnecessary items, and racking up an unpleasant bill.

While recipes will tell you how much you need of each ingredient to serve a particular number of people, this can be trickier to work out with drinks.

Continued on pages 20-21...



Prepare food and drinks in advance where possible

Preparing food the day before a dinner party or a picnic is a great way to save time and prevent you from having to spend all your time in the kitchen on the day of the event. It also means you can be confident that you haven't forgotten anything.

If your chosen recipe doesn't allow you to prepare the whole meal in advance, you may still be able to get some tasks out of the way; for example chopping up vegetables, or measuring dry ingredients and storing them in individual containers.

These things can end up being much more time consuming than we initially imagine, so it's great to get them ticked off early. However, while preparing in advance works in a lot of areas, it's also worth keeping in mind that some foods won't withstand time quite so well, and might benefit from being made on the day.

For example, if you're packing sandwiches for a picnic, consider only adding in wetter ingredients like fresh tomatoes or sauces at the last moment, to avoid the bread going soggy. Similarly, if you're serving drinks like cocktails at your gathering, these can be made up in jugs or dispensers not too long beforehand - just make sure not to add any ice until the last moment to avoid watering it down.

To keep track of everything you've got going on in the kitchen, it might be worth making a checklist of all the components of your menu and what preparation is required - including any side dishes or appetizers - to make sure nothing slips under the rug.

Consider creating a 'help yourself' drinks and snacks station

Stocking an area with essentials like glasses, ice, plates, a cocktail shaker, and appetizers, can help aid the smooth running of any outdoor gathering. Instead of having to keep an eye on everyone's glass, or continually pass around the snacks and appetizers, having a help-yourself station means guests can top up as they please, and no one will be left hungry or with a dry glass. It'll also take some of the hosting pressure off your shoulders, so you'll be more free to join in the fun too.



A small table, serving trolley, or anything similar with a nice table cloth over the top will work perfectly for this - the required size really depends how many drinks and snacks you'll be offering!



Food & Drink Feature

Think about adding some decorations

Adding some decoration to your outdoor gathering can work wonders in bringing it to life and adding a great atmosphere. You can keep your decorations as simple or complex as you like.

For quick and easy options, tealight candles and simple flower decorations like this floating floral arrangement are beautiful to look at, make great centrepieces, and take almost no time to prepare at all.

All you'll need to create this floral arrangement is your favourite flowers, a vase, and some bubble wrap. Other great options that can bring any space to life include garden bunting, paper lanterns, and garden fairy lights. If you fancy pulling out all the stops for your outdoor decorations, then you might like to consider making some DIY decorations that require a bit more time.

If you're looking for some inspiration, check out 15 DIY Summer Table Decor ideas by DIYS.com. From pineapple vases and pom pom twigs, through to sand bottles and paper flowers, these gorgeous decoration ideas add a warm summer touch, and will bring any table to life.

If you're gathering away from home, perhaps for a picnic in the park, then there's still plenty of opportunity to add decoration. For example, you could add some character with a coloured picnic blanket, plates, or matching cutlery.

Take measures to keep bugs at bay

While we might enjoy observing from afar, there's nothing more annoying than having an insect or wasp buzzing around you whilst you're trying to eat outdoors.

Luckily, there are a few things you can do to help you keep any bugs at bay. For example, some herbs like basil, lavender, lemongrass, rosemary, and mint actually repel insects, so you could include some in a centrepiece for your table, and scatter them around the area for good measure.

You'll also want to keep any food safe and away from bugs, and simple swaps like using drink dispensers rather than jugs, or using bowls with lids, can prove useful for this.

You could even put some of your kitchen equipment to use; for example by using a wire-mesh colander to cover your food. If however, you're worried about ruining the look of your outside set up, you could always invest in some outdoor food covers, or make your own decorative ones.

Prepare for all types of weather

Although we've now moved into a warmer time of year, we all know that UK weather can be unpredictable. If you know you've got an outdoor event coming up, it's always best to check the weather forecast in advance. But if you're hit by unexpected weather on the day, there's precautions you can take to avoid it ruining your plans.

For warm and sunny weather, it's a good idea to provide ample shade for your guests and have sunscreen on offer to avoid anyone getting uncomfortably hot or sunburnt. In case it's chilly, you might like to have some extra layers and blankets at the ready that people can place over their laps. Another useful tip is to invest in some table cloth weights to help keep any outdoor tables intact on a windy day. And lastly, it's best to have some umbrellas at hand - and if possible a larger garden umbrella to gather under if you're at home - to stay dry through what will hopefully be just a passing shower.



Take precautions to allow social distancing and cleanliness

While we should enjoy the excitement of this next coming out of lockdown stage (we certainly all deserve it!), it's also important to make sure that we continue to take the necessary steps that'll keep both ourselves and others safe.

Therefore, whether you're hosting people in your back garden, meeting for a picnic, or have another outdoor event, it's important to abide by social distancing rules and maintain good hygiene. If you're not 100% clear on the rules then it's worth reminding yourself of the current government guidelines before arranging any plans.

Final thoughts...

After spending so long away from friends and family, the idea of dining together outdoors is more exciting than ever. So, there's really never been a better time to gather your loved ones and share great food, delicious drinks, and good times. Whether you come together in your back garden or a local park, anyone can have fun playing host, and planning a great outdoor dining experience.

Just remember to always abide by the government guidelines, and take all the necessary precautions to ensure that both you and your loved ones remain safe and protected.

(Article source: Rest Less)





How low should you go? Monty Don has stirred the pot on lawn cutting. It's risky but he's right.

You should stop mowing your lawn at least for a month this season, according to gardening experts - here's why.

You should stop mowing your lawn this spring, a growing number of professional gardeners are saying. The BBC Gardeners' World presenter Monty Don is leading the trend by calling on gardeners to take a more relaxed approach to mowing their lawns to allow nature to thrive. In an interview with Radio Times, the gardening guru was unequivocal in his aversion to neatly mowed lawns: 'Cutting grass burns lots of fossil fuel,' he explained, also adding that it 'makes a filthy noise, and is about the most injurious thing you can do to wildlife.'

The no-mow trend is gaining momentum across the gardening community. The wildflower conservation charity Plantlife runs an annual No Mow May challenge, which encourages people to share their experiences of letting the grass and wildflowers grow, or even learning how to plant a wildflower meadow in the process.



And while Monty Don's impassioned warning against overmowing has attracted some criticism on social media channels, gardening experts wholeheartedly agree with the presenter: letting your grass grow is one of the best wildlife garden ideas there is

'If you only do one thing this year to improve your garden's value for nature, be more like Monty and cut your grass less, or not at all,' says Sarah Mead, Head Gardener at Yeo Valley Organic and creator of the Yeo Valley Organic Garden in Somerset. 'Monty is absolutely right to highlight our obsession with keeping our lawns neat and tidy, and frankly I was shocked to read how much negativity he has faced as a result of his recent Radio Times interview. Come on gardeners, would a little less cutting really be such a bad thing?!'

The UK's climate is perfectly suited to allow grass and the many species of beneficial plants that share our lawns to thrive, but regular cutting deprives essential pollinators of an important food source. According to PlantLife, allowing your lawn to grow naturally for just a single month can provide enough nectar for 10 times the number of bees and other pollinators than a regularly cut lawn.

Sarah concludes, 'Global biodiversity is in decline, and our climate is warming. It's essential that we all recognise the small changes we can make that have a huge collective impact on our environment. Putting your feet up instead of getting the mower out is top of the list!'

Sarah makes an important point: not mowing your lawn this spring may help redefine your relationship with your garden, making it more about relaxation and quiet - and watching bee friendly plants grow. If you do like keeping active in the garden, you can always give yourself a challenge by growing a new plant, starting a vegetable patch, or building a bird box or a home for a hedgehog.

Monty Don's tips on getting the perfect lawn - and the mistakes you're making

Growing a beautifully lush lawn is easier than you think, thanks to this advice from the celebrity gardening expert.

With spring just around the corner, your lawn will already be coming back to life, so now is the ideal time to improve its condition for the seasons ahead. To get the best from your grass this year, heed the advice of celebrity gardening expert Monty Don.

In the new edition of his book, The Complete Gardener, Don revealed that at his own garden at Longmeadow, Herefordshire, he doesn't strive for a pristine lawn - just 'an even-ish area of green dominated by grass'. He is not troubled by a few weeds or even a bit of moss.

Don firmly believes that if the grass is healthy then everything else will look after itself.

'To get a "good" lawn you have to think positively,' he revealed in a recent blog post. 'Put your efforts into healthy grass rather than fighting perceived "problems" like daisies, moss, ants, worm-casts, moles, plantains, dandelions and fairy rings.'

However, he stressed that the most common problem for lawns is lack of drainage - and for the best grass your soil does need to be well drained.

'Moss, for example, is always a symptom of poor drainage, made worse by shade,' he says. 'Unfortunately even the best prepared soil becomes compacted by matted roots, rain and, especially, normal family use.'

Don explained that to solve the issue it's important to work on the soil at least once a year. He does this by 'sticking a fork in the ground and wiggling it about', repeating the process every 6 inches or so.



To get the right mix for your soil, Don advises that you should combine equal portions of sieved topsoil, sharp sand and sieved leaf mould or compost. 'Spread it across the area you have pricked and brush it in with a stiff broom, filling the holes with the mixture,' he says. 'This will help drainage and feed the grass.'

Don also suggests running a wire rake over the lawn to get rid of excess thatch and moss, and to allow light and water to get to the roots in the soil. However, you should not be cutting back the leaves of spring bulbs at this stage - they need to be allowed to die back naturally as they absorb their energy for next year's flowers through their leaves.

Finally, you should finish by mowing the lawn. 'Do not cut it too short,' he says. 'Just give it a light trim for the rest of this month and the grass will be a lot healthier - and better able to resist summer drought - as a result.'

(Article source: Various)



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 <u>HALVED</u> 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 <u>HALVED</u> 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-Wve HR9 5NB

