OURPLACENews

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

MAY 2024

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The man connecting rail-based walks

PLUS...

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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 21st - Saturday 25th May 2024 Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London.

See vivid floral displays and innovative show gardens at the prestigious RHS Chelsea Flower Show from 21 to 25 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.

Brighton Festival

4th - 26th May 2024

Brighton, south-east England.

Brighton is known as a place that welcomes diversity, creativity and innovative thinking, and its annual festival celebrates this pioneering spirit and experimental approach.

Established in 1967 and now one of Europe's leading arts festivals, this celebration of music, theatre, dance, circus, art, film, literature, debate and family events aims to make art accessible to all and takes place in a variety of venues across Brighton and Hove.

RideLondon

Sunday 26th May 2024

London-Surrey, south-east England.

Developed by the Mayor of London and his agencies in 2013, Prudential RideLondon is a world-class festival of cycling that wants to encourage more people to cycle more safely, more often. TfL anticipates tens of thousands of spectators and participants every year will take up regular cycling after each event. There is no other closed-road event quite like it, combining a fun and accessible free family ride in central London with the excitement of watching the world's best professional cyclist's race.

London Craft Week

13th - 19th May 2024

Various venues in London.

London Craft Week brings together over 750 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.

Blenheim Palace Food Festival

25th - 27th May 2024

Oxfordshire, central England.

Oxfordshire's largest food festival brings food stalls, strolling jazz musicians, children's storytellers and some of the biggest names in the foodie world to Blenheim Palace's magnificent grounds. Raymond Blanc and MasterChef winners have attended in the past.

Highest Point Festival

10th - 11th May 2024

Williamson Park, Lancaster.

Highest Point is located in Williamson's Park, a Lancaster central location. This festival is a family-friendly festival that has something for everyone to enjoy. Featuring some of the best DJs and artists around with lots of kids activities along with excellent views, and the best spots for watching your favourite artists. Highest Point Festival is a non-camping festival.

Tunes in the Dunes

17th - 19th May 2024

Perranporth Beach, Cornwall.

Tunes in the Dunes is a three day live music festival held on Perranporth Beach, North Cornwall with a line up including McFly, Craig David and Ocean Colour Scene.



A 'longevity revolution' is coming. Here's how those over 100 are making the most of their lives

Life at its essence is about time and by 2050, nearly 3.7 million people are expected to live up to 100. What can we do to get the most out of our bonus years?

Loneliness. Ageism. Physical limitations, cognitive decline and, increasingly, elder poverty.

The downsides of living to 100 and beyond are numerous. But so are the upsides. Life at its essence is about time - time to live, time to laugh, time to love - and many of those who have achieved a triple-digit age are living their best lives as centenarians.

As I explore in my new book, The Big 100: The New World of Super-Aging, we're experiencing what the United Nations calls a "longevity revolution", and there's no turning back.

By 2050, the number of us reaching 100 is projected to increase eightfold to 3.7 million people - roughly the equivalent of everyone living in Connecticut or Los Angeles.

And half of all five-year-olds alive right now are expected to live to 100

What can we do to get the most out of our bonus years? Here's some wisdom from those who've been there.

Believe in something bigger than yourself

Had you asked the world's oldest living man why he lived so long, Juan Vicente Pérez Mora, who recently died just a few weeks shy of his 115th birthday, was always quick to answer: "Love God and always carry him in your heart." A devout Catholic who prayed the rosary twice a day, the Venezuelan said what he treasured most was "the love of God, the love of family".



Health & Lifestyle Feature

Japan's Kane Tanaka, who died in 2022 as the world's then oldest living person, voiced similar sentiments over her 119 years and 107 days. A convert to Christianity from Shinto, she frequently attributed her longevity to her faith.

"The secret is the grace of God living in me, and me trying to live the best life that I could," says 100-year-old Martha Bailey of Fort Washington, Maryland.

Spirituality is the tie that binds many centenarians and supercentenarians. National Geographic and the Blue Zones organization interviewed 263 people aged 100 or older, and all but five belonged to a faith community. Subsequent research suggests attending religious services four times a month can add at least four years of extra life span.

That squares with the findings of a much larger longterm study suggesting regularly attending religious services can increase life span. A team at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health examined data collected over a 20-year period from nearly 75,000 middle-aged female US nurses who were free of cardiovascular disease and cancer when the study began.

Regardless of race or ethnicity, those who attended a temple, synagogue, mosque or church at least once a week had a 33% diminished risk of death from all causes - but especially heart attack, stroke and cancer - compared with those who never went.

"Religion and spirituality may be an under-appreciated resource that physicians could explore with their patients," the researchers say. The "whys" remain elusive, though some scientists think abstinence from drugs and alcohol - common to many faiths - may help explain the benefits, along with the stress-relieving power of prayer and meditation. There's also the sense of community and belonging.

Find your purpose

If we're going to live to 100, we'd better have something to live for. That wasn't a problem for the US district judge Wesley Brown.

He died at 104 as the oldest sitting federal judge in American history. Sharp and competent to the end, with a wicked sense of humor - Brown used to warn lawyers gearing up for lengthy trials in his Kansas courtroom that he might not be alive for their closing arguments - he credited his very caseload for extending his life by keeping his mind and body active and giving him a sense of purpose.

Well past his 100th birthday, he was still taking the stairs to his fourth-floor chambers. A year before his death, asked how he intended to leave the bench that John F Kennedy appointed him to in 1962, he quipped: "Feet first." Dr Ephraim Engleman understood.

The 104-year-old rheumatologist died as he lived: at work, at his desk, in between seeing patients at the Rosalind Russell Medical Research Center for Arthritis in San Francisco.

Engleman very deliberately never retired, a move he regarded with suspicion as "generally a great mistake". One of his top rules for longevity was: "Enjoy your work, whatever it is, or don't do it."

Laugh

The world's oldest person who ever lived whose age could be authenticated by records, credited laughter for her longevity and she should know. Jeanne Calment of France - who made it to 122 years and 164 days - lost her eyesight and her hearing but kept her sense of humour to the last. "I never wear mascara... too often I laugh until I cry," said Calment, who's best known for a wisecrack she made at the age of 121: "I only have one wrinkle and I'm sitting on it."

Herlda Senhouse of Wellesley, Massachusetts, who just celebrated her 113th birthday, didn't have an easy life as a Black woman in the Jim Crow era. But she giggles through conversations and sees laughter as a perfect way to counter toxic stress, the enemy of longevity. Senhouse's emphasis on positivity and optimism underscores how both of those things not only add years to our lives but life to our years.

More than mere wishful thinking, positive beliefs around aging have the potential to extend our lives by as much as seven and a half years, according to research by Becca Levy, an epidemiologist at Yale University's School of Public Health.

The cumulative effects of an optimistic outlook even outweigh the steps we take to exercise, lower our blood pressure and cholesterol, and watch our weight.

Love

What's love got to do with it? A lot more than you might think. Researchers say married people tend to live longer than singles - men by two and a half years; women by a little less - and they also stand a better chance of living to 100.

Tension and conflict in marriage are stand-up comedy staples, but studies have shown that those of us who endure the vicissitudes of life with a partner experience less stress than those who go solo. Couples in happy, nurturing relationships have greater life expectancy free of disability and other health challenges than singles, and they tend to have more financial security.

It's not the sex, the tax deductions or even the cohabitation. Deep platonic friendships can have the same effect. At an assisted living facility in Montana, two centenarians have found beauty and meaning in a relationship that's blossomed around their shared love of poetry. When they met, Bob Yaw was 101 and Gloria Hansard was 100. They live down the hall from each other but gather each evening in her apartment to recite verses.

"We didn't meet long ago," Hansard told the Bozeman Daily Chronicle. "Just poems are all we know of each other."

Their friendship isn't just life-extending. It's life-giving.

Then mendemp for a just me externally has me giving.

(Article source: The Guardian)



Health & Lifestyle News

Summer asthma tips for World Asthma Month

May is World Asthma Month, a campaign that aims to raise awareness for people living with asthma..

Silver Surfers reports that in the UK there are over 5.4 million people living with the condition, and though many people associate its worst symptoms with winter, for many, summer can be even more challenging.

Each person has their own unique triggers, and by monitoring them, you can also take steps to avoid them. Here's some of our best summer asthma tips as recommended by the experts.

Prepare for pollen

Pollen is a common allergy symptom, but can also be an asthma symptom that many are unaware of. According to Lloyds Pharmacy, it's thought to be a 'hidden trigger' for up to 80% of people with asthma. If you're prone to hay fever, pay close attention to the pollen count in your area to help you stay aware, and if you find the pollen is negatively affecting you, speak to your GP or pharmacist to see if adjusting your medication could make a positive difference.

Consider your travel plans

Think about your summer travel plans and whether your destination is the right choice for you based on your known triggers. Some travellers find their symptoms improve because their exposure to allergens is lower. For example, if pollen is a trigger, a city may provide relief. Or for example, if pollution or dust is problematic, holidays in rural areas can help minimise the chance of an asthma attack. Wherever you go, be sure to pack medication with you.

"The best thing people can do to prevent symptoms and attacks when they're on holiday is to keep on top of their medicine routine. It's also a good idea for people to get to know their individual asthma triggers and try to avoid these wherever possible," said Dr Andy Whittamore, in-house GP for Asthma UK.

Keep a good routine

Keeping up with your usual routine of inhaler or medicine is one of the best defences against summer flare-ups when you're out enjoying exploring or socialising with friends and parties and barbecues.

Make a point to keep your inhaler close to hand and stick with any preventative routines you have already in place. By spending some time considering how you might come into contact with your known triggers you can also plan to avoid them or minimise the impact.

Avoid direct sunlight

Your inhaler should be stored in a cool, dry place as much as possible, so avoid leaving it out in direct sunlight or in spaces that can become particularly warm, such as a car glove compartment.

Think about heat

Exercise is a common asthma trigger, and in the heat physical activity can be especially challenging for your body. Don't push yourself too hard, take regular breaks, and where possible, avoid overheating by cooling off in the shade or indoors out of the direct heat.

Stay hydrated

Drinking plenty of water can help you manage your symptoms in the heat and help you stay cool and calm. While you can't always control the presence of triggers like pollution, dust and pollen, you can make sure you are comfortable and hydrated wherever you go.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

Frequent gardening may be linked to improved wellbeing

Gardening two to three times a week leads to better wellbeing and lower stress levels, new research suggests.

Silver Surfers reports that gardening more frequently may be linked to improvements in wellbeing, perceived stress and physical activity, new research suggests.

A new study indicates that people who garden every day have wellbeing scores 6.6% higher and stress levels 4.2% lower than people who do not garden at all.

According to the paper, gardening just two to three times a week also leads to better wellbeing and lower stress levels.

Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) wellbeing fellow and lead author Dr Lauriane Chalmin-Pui said: "This is the first time the 'dose response' to gardening has been tested and the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the more frequently you garden - the greater the health benefits. "In fact gardening every day has the same positive impact on wellbeing than undertaking regular, vigorous exercise like cycling or running.

"When gardening, our brains are pleasantly distracted by nature around us. "This shifts our focus away from ourselves and our stresses, thereby restoring our minds and reducing negative feelings."

According to the study published in the journal Cities, gardening on a frequent basis - at least two to three times a week - corresponded with greatest perceived health benefits. Improving health, however, was not the prime motivator to garden, but rather the direct pleasure gardening brought to the participants.

The study conducted by the RHS in collaboration with the University of Sheffield and the University of Virginia found that more frequent gardening was also linked with greater physical activity supporting the notion that gardening is good for both body and mind.



Health & Lifestyle News

Dr Chalmin-Pui added: "Gardening is like effortless exercise because it doesn't feel as strenuous as going to the gym, for example, but we can expend similar amounts of energy. "Most people say they garden for pleasure and enjoyment so the likelihood of getting hooked to gardening is also high and the good news is that from a mental health perspective - you can't 'over-dose' on gardening. "We hope all the millions of new gardeners will be getting their daily doses of gardening this week and feeling all the better for it."

The research explored why residents engaged with gardening and the extent to which they recognised any health benefits from the activity. A survey was distributed electronically within the UK, with 5,766 gardeners and 249 non-gardeners responding. Pleasure and enjoyment was the reason why six in 10 people garden. While just under 30% said they garden for the health benefits, one in five said wellbeing is the reason they garden, and around 15% say it makes them feel calm and relaxed.

Co-author Dr Ross Cameron, of the University of Sheffield, said: "This research provides further empirical data to support the value of gardening and gardens for mental restoration and promoting a calmness of mind. "We also found a greater proportion of plants in the garden was linked with greater wellbeing, suggesting even just viewing 'green' gardens may help." But it was not just able gardeners who benefited. Those with health problems stated gardening eased episodes of depression (13%), boosted energy levels (12%) and reduced stress (16%).

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

A new start after 60: meditation cured my insomnia. Now I help others cope

Ken Lunn was having a 'hellish' time juggling work and childcare after his wife died. Then he found a way to catch his breath.

The Guardian reports that throughout his 30-year career as a tech professional, Ken Lunn regularly gave talks to rooms packed with experts and leaders in their fields. Yet it wasn't until he taught his first meditation class to a dozen novices in 2016 that he felt nervous. "Guiding a meditation to a silent room was the most nerve-racking thing I'd done," he says. "Trying to get people to explore their own psychology and leading as an example is a terrifying experience."

At 60 years old, Lunn had recently retired from his data and IT management role in the NHS and decided to pursue an entirely different passion - one that had become central to his wellbeing in middle age. In 1989, when he was in his mid-30s with three young children, Lunn's wife Susan was diagnosed with skin cancer. She died in 1993. Suddenly finding himself a single parent juggling work and childcare, Lunn began to suffer from depression and insomnia. "It was a hellish few years as a sole carer," he says. "I didn't know how to cope but one day a friend recommended that I try meditation to see if it could at least help me sleep."

Struggling to find a meditation teacher during a time when mental health was still a touchy talking point, Lunn eventually began attending a transcendental meditation class. "It very quickly allowed me to calm my mind down with just 20 minutes of meditation each morning and evening," he says. "The insomnia went away and I started to feel as if I could breathe again."

As he adapted to his new life without Susan, Lunn carried on exploring the world of meditation through learning about Buddhist practices and mindfulness. By the time he was in his late 50s and considering retirement, he was regularly using it as a way to deal with daily stress and realised there might be a way that he could put his years of experience to wider use.

"Meditation changed my life so much, so I wanted to give back," he says. "I also have a scientific background and was never comfortable with meditation often having a spiritual component you had to ascribe to. I wanted to find a way of teaching it with more rigour."

In 2014, he moved to part-time work and enrolled in a master's qualification in mindfulness at Bangor University. "I have a PhD in computing but that was the most challenging academic thing I've done," he says. "It was all about exploring your personal experience and being able to share that." In turning inwards, Lunn revisited the impact of Susan's death on his life. "It became transformative in the way that I viewed myself because I realised how I had tried to get on with the positives but ignored the negatives," he says. "The course rebalanced me and encouraged me to be open about my inner life. As a man it can be hard to do but we created a safe space."

Qualifying in 2016 and newly retired, Lunn immediately began teaching at a Buddhist centre in Wakefield, as well as at yoga studios and in an adult education college. By the following year, he had hired his own room and built a committed group of attenders keen to learn the techniques of mindful breathing and observation.

"It's all about teaching people tools to deal with the stresses of daily life, as well as building an informal practice of noticing what's going on around you," he says. "Mindfulness can be really restorative in allowing ourselves to be grounded in the present. I have many people who have experienced mental health issues, and who said that coming to the classes has transformed their lives."

Moving to online work during the pandemic, Lunn currently holds weekly drop-in classes for people of all abilities, and helps supervise trainee teachers for the charitable organisation The Mindfulness Network. He no longer finds leading a class nerve-racking and his grown-up children have even tried mindfulness with him. "I love seeing the effect it has on people and I'm learning something new every day," he says. "It's become my purpose and I still take 30 minutes each morning to reconnect with myself through my breathing practice."

At 68 years old, Lunn feels he still has work to do. "The conversation has completely changed around mental health, which is fantastic, but there remain people who think there isn't anything they can do to help themselves," he says. "I want to try to show them. That's why I don't see myself stopping any time soon."

(Article source: The Guardian)

6



'You can walk virtually everywhere in England by using the train': The man connecting rail-based walks

A new website aims to offer a wide network of walking routes from British train stations, and is calling on hikers to add their favourites. Our writer accompanies the founder on a ramble to Bath Spa station.

A British railway station can be many things. A place of tended flowers and toytown paintwork. A concourse of shuttered ticket booths and overpriced pasties. A terminus, a meeting spot, a gateway to escape. It can be heart-lifting or drab, bathed in birdsong or heaving with commuters. It can also be the starting point for a properly good walk.

National Rail serves 2,593 stations, their locations scattered across the map like cartographic confetti. Many of them sit directly on longstanding hiking trails or within a short distance of paths worth exploring. In a large number of cases, it's possible to walk between two stations following rights of way, rendering a car or taxi redundant.

Such routes are frequently scenic but often little-known, giving value to the prospect of a dedicated database of station-to-station walks. Might a disembarkation at Ffairfach, Whatstandwell or Crianlarich be the passport to your next hike? Quite possibly which is where the recently launched Railwalks.co.uk comes in. Its aim is to create a crowd-sourced national network of railbased walking routes, mostly ranging from two to 20 miles.

"If you'd asked me 20 years ago how much of Britain you could walk through while using public transport, I would have imagined, like everyone else, not very much," says founder Steve Melia, an academic, author and one-time Lib Dem parliamentary candidate who gave up flying in 2005 and driving in 2009.



Leisure & Travel Feature

"I discovered that that's not true. You can walk virtually everywhere in England by train - and bus, but mainly trains - and a lot of Wales and Scotland."

I meet Steve near the station in the Wiltshire town of Bradfordon-Avon, from where we're taking a nine-mile countryside walk to Bath Spa station. It's one of the first truly fine days of spring, a breezeless morning of sunshine and plum blossom. Twenty four hours earlier we'd have got drenched, but today the skies are blue, the blackbirds are fluting and the dandelions are blinding. We head to the banks of the Kennet & Avon canal, bear west and begin.

Steve first had the idea for the website, which was unveiled in January in partnership with like-minded walking organisation Slow Ways, when he moved to Bristol in 2009 to teach transport and planning at the University of the West of England. "I started doing public transport-based walks each weekend," he says, as the canal path leads us past narrowboats and banks of forget-me-nots. Waggy-tailed terriers zigzag the other way. "I like to walk somewhere different every time I go out, and the fact I was able to do that for 15 years and still find new routes made me think there was more to this than people realise."



Soon we reach a path across open fields. A herd of friesian cows graze in the middle distance. The route we're following is one of many that Steve has plotted (he's a fan of poring over paper maps) then uploaded online as a GPX file (which can be found here). He's one of four volunteers managing Railwalks, an umbrella website that has gathered together relevant regional webpages listing local rail-based hikes. These include a wide variety of sources (with a varying level of detail) from walking and community groups to local authorities and individuals such as Steve

His collection of walks near Bristol (greentravelwriter.co.uk/rail) sit alongside other day-walk itineraries everywhere from the South Downs to the Scottish Highlands.

This, however, is just the beginning. By partnering with Slow Ways - which is midway through creating a web of walking routes that connect all Britain's towns, cities and national parks - Railwalks aims to eventually offer a comprehensive, searchable, national network of rail walks, a mixture of station-to-station routes and circular hikes. And like Slow Ways itself, it needs your help.



"We're asking people to add new walks," says Steve. This involves signing up to Slow Ways via the Railwalks website or, for those already registered with Slow Ways, adjusting their profile settings to incorporate Railwalks (instructions for both options can be found at railwalks.co.uk/how-to-help). "The idea is that our network will eventually go into a separate section of the Slow Ways site," says Steve.

The concept at its core is admirable. Few pleasures are more simple than cross-country rambling with a trail at your feet and hours at your disposal. Our route to Bath winds up and down across the hills. We pass through pretty limestone villages with old-world names - Avoncliff, Limpley Stoke, Monkton Combe and stop at the 16th-century Inn at Freshford for liquid sustenance. On the trail, wrens trill and the scent of wild garlic hangs on the woodland verges.

Steve acknowledges that relying solely on trains can pose problems for hikers - not least the cost - but he and his fellow volunteers are passionate about spreading the word that rail-based walks aren't only feasible but can also be deeply enjoyable. Now in his early 60s, Steve goes walking at every opportunity. As we descend towards Bath down a long green meadow, the city's Georgian crescents glinting in the afternoon sun, I notice his boots. They look as if they're carrying the dust of a decadelong pilgrimage and I mention the fact. "What, these?" he laughs. "I only got them a few months ago."

Three more station-to-station walks on railwalks.co.uk

Torquay to Teignmouth, Devon

Distance: about 12 miles. Tracing a section of the South West Coast Path along a scenic stretch of the Devon coastline.

Cynghordy to Llandovery, Carmarthenshire

Distance: about 7 miles. An undulating route between two stations on the Heart of Wales line, finishing in the market town of Llandovery.

Bempton to Filey, Yorkshire coast

Distance: about 10 miles. A clifftop walk along the North Yorkshire Coast, with the chance to spot breeding seabirds on Bempton Cliffs in spring.

railwalks.co.uk

(Article source: The Guardian)



Food & Drink Feature

Go wild in the kitchen! Uses and recipes for Wild Garlic

Wild garlic, also known as Ramsons, is a popular springtime ingredient in the UK. It can be found in woodlands, meadows and hedgerows from March to May. In this feature, we will explore some facts about wild garlic, and its uses, and we share a delicious recipe for wild garlic pesto.

Facts about Wild Garlic:

- Wild garlic is a member of the allium family, which includes onions, leeks and chives.
- It has a strong garlic scent and a mild, sweet flavour that is less pungent than regular garlic.
- The leaves of wild garlic can be eaten raw or cooked, and the flowers are also edible.
- The leaves of wild garlic contain high levels of vitamin C and other nutrients, making it a healthy addition to meals.
- Wild garlic is a popular ingredient in traditional British cuisine, and has been used for centuries in dishes such as soups, stews, and omelettes.



Uses for Wild Garlic:

- Add fresh wild garlic leaves to salads, sandwiches, and wraps for a garlicky twist.
- Use wild garlic in place of regular garlic in recipes to add a mild, sweet flavour.
- Cook wild garlic leaves in butter or oil to create a simple and delicious side dish.
- · Add wild garlic to soups and stews to add depth of flavour.
- Make wild garlic pesto (recipe below) and serve with pasta, bread, or as a condiment.

Wild Garlic Pesto Recipe



Ingredients:

- 100g wild garlic leaves
- 50g pine nuts
- 50g grated parmesan cheese
- 150ml olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions:

- · Rinse the wild garlic leaves and dry them thoroughly.
- Toast the pine nuts in a dry frying pan over medium heat until golden brown.
- In a food processor, combine the wild garlic leaves, toasted pine nuts, and parmesan cheese. Pulse until the ingredients are finely chopped.
- While the food processor is running, slowly pour in the olive oil until the mixture becomes a smooth paste.
- Season with salt and pepper to taste.
- Serve the pesto with pasta, bread, or use as a condiment.

Wild garlic butter



Ingredients:

- 100g unsalted butter, at room temperature
- · 20-25g wild garlic leaves, washed and finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice (optional)

Instructions:

- In a mixing bowl, combine the unsalted butter, finely chopped wild garlic leaves, sea salt, and black pepper. Use a fork to mix everything together until well combined.
- Add the lemon juice (if using) and mix it in until evenly distributed.
- Take a piece of cling film and lay it flat on the countertop.
 Spoon the butter mixture onto the centre of the cling film in a long line.
- Roll the cling film around the butter mixture, twisting the ends to create a tight, sausage-like shape.
- Chill the garlic butter in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes or until firm.
- To serve, slice the garlic butter into rounds and serve with fresh bread, crackers, or use it to enhance your favourite dishes.

Note: This can also be frozen.

Enjoy your delicious homemade wild garlic butter!

In conclusion, wild garlic is a versatile and healthy ingredient that adds a unique flavour to meals. Whether you use it in salads, soups, or pesto, it's a great way to add a garlicky twist to your cooking. So, next time you're out foraging, don't forget to look out for wild garlic!

(Article source: Silver Surfers)





Think like a beaver, create a pond - and lose the cat: Seven ways to rewild your garden

Rewilding is not just about vast estates. You can - and should - apply its nature-friendly principles to your own garden.

Much of our mailbag at the Knepp rewilding project is from gardeners. Inspired by a visit to the estate, or by hearing about rewilding in general, they want to know if it's possible to apply the principles to their own garden. We think it is.

Most gardens are designed primarily for human enjoyment: for beauty, eating and relaxing, playing ballgames, and growing fruit and vegetables. But a growing concern for nature has brought about a rise in gardening to encourage wildlife. A nature-friendly approach to gardening includes not using chemicals or peat; planting nectar-rich plants and fruiting trees; using hedges rather than fences; creating a pond; turning lawns into wildflower meadows; and installing bird boxes, birdbaths and feeders, and hedgehog and bat boxes.

Rewilding can take a garden to another level of species richness. This is not about "letting your garden go". Certainly, relaxing the normal garden obsession with tidiness will almost always increase the potential for wildlife, and using traditional tools instead of labour-saving devices - swapping the leaf-blower for a rake, for example - can increase a garden's hospitality to wildlife.

But rewilding a garden is more about focusing on ecological results - to establish a mosaic of habitats. A person can mimic the other creative influences at play in nature (such as large herbivores): learning to think like a beaver, wild boar or browsing pony will almost certainly change the way you garden.

Naturally, there will be limits to how much change is acceptable, and these will be different for every gardener. You might allow selected corners to become "self-willed" with nettles, brambles, dead branches and the like. It is a mistake to think of these areas as messy in the sense of being neglected. A chaotic-looking tangle of weeds and scrub can provide an array of niches and opportunities for life.

Some gardeners may prefer to stay close to a conventional, nature-friendly garden, with a traditional layout of managed lawns, paths and beds. Others will feel able to explore more radical interventions. Every step towards a wilder system is an important driver for change: rewilding one corner of a garden, for example, may inspire a desire for incremental changes elsewhere. It takes time to become comfortable with a different way of doing things. Here are seven ways to try.

Go chemical-free

One of the most important steps you can take to achieve biodiversity in a garden is to go chemical-free. As entomologist Dave Goulson points out in his book The Garden Jungle, plants generally suffer pest infestations only if they are stressed, most probably because they are unsuited to the local climate or soil. So plant to suit your conditions, and allow natural predators to respond to an outbreak of a pest, so that a natural boom-and-bust scenario can play out.



Likewise, being fixated on a particular species, such as roses, and being intolerant of blemishes of any description, is asking for trouble. If you exercise a little patience, nature will often sort out the problem itself.

Often, nature-friendly gardeners provide flowers for pollinating insects. But it is just as important to choose plants that encourage predators. Aphid-hunters such as lacewings, ladybirds, rove beetles and braconid wasps, for example, love plants with small, flat, open flowers such as dill, fennel, yarrow, marigolds, sunflowers and cosmos.

Rethink the lawn

Maintaining a pristine lawn is not only high-carbon, time-consuming and costly, it's also disastrous for wildlife. Why not imagine it as a meadow, prairie or even woodland pasture in miniature, and consider how those ecosystems are sustained in the wild?



Conservation charity Plantlife promotes No Mow May to give wildflowers a chance to bloom. This mimics the spring flush in the wild, when grass and wildflowers grow so fast they outrun the activities of animals that would normally eat them. For the rest of the growing season, the charity recommends mowing once every four weeks - a loose grazing effect - to stimulate the continued flowering of the short grass species.

Plantlife also promotes the "mohican" mowing approach, in which patches of longer grass are allowed within the shorter sward or at the edges of the lawn. You might mow more tightly close to a patio, for example, and less frequently further away. This benefits flowers that like longer grass, such as ox-eye daisy, field scabious, knapweed and orchids, and provides cover for insects, birds and small mammals, as well as frogs, newts and lizards.

Create a pond

Garden ponds provide drinking and bathing water for birds and hedgehogs, and a habitat for threatened species such as the great crested newt, common frog and common toad, as well as aquatic invertebrates, which provide food for other species.

Anyone who has created a pond, even a bucket pond (no pond is too small), can attest to the speed with which aquatic plants, insects and amphibians move in. Night visits with a strong light can reveal underwater life that is difficult to see during the day: dragonfly larvae waiting to pounce on their next prey and juvenile newts swimming in the shallows.

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Home & Garden Feature

Anxious parents and grandparents are often tempted to fill in a pond. But this will not only eradicate the pond's inhabitants, it will also deprive small children of the joy of pond life - often the start of a naturalist's passion. Look online for ways to child-proof a garden pond.

Provide habitats and food

Garden centres sell an array of bird, bat, dormouse and hedgehog boxes, insect towers and bug hotels. But why do we need these artificial constructs? Usually because of a lack of suitable habitats. Most garden birds will nest in brambles, dense foliage, creepers (both ivy and wisteria provide wonderful cover) and hedges, where they can find food - insects, seeds and berries - and hide from predators. Many bat species need ancient trees to roost in.



Leaving seed heads standing, rather than deadheading at the end of summer, provides food for birds, and protects the soil from winter weather.

Native rowan, ivy, hawthorn, blackthorn, honeysuckle, bramble, spindle, holly, elder, wild plum, sea buckthorn and dog rose, as well as exotics such as pyracantha, Oregon grape, cotoneaster, mulberry and berberis, provide wonderful supplies of berries.

Leaving fallen fruit from apple, pear, quince, medlar and plum trees provides sugar-rich calories for birds, insects, small mammals, and even badgers and foxes in the run-up to winter. Leaving dead wood to decay, such as fallen branches, logs or even a dead tree - if you can do so safely - provides a similar habitat to a bug hotel.

Lose the cat (or play with it more)

Domestic cats are by far the most abundant carnivores in the UK. They catch up to 100 million prey in the UK over spring and summer alone, of which 27 million are birds. Most are common species, such as blue tits and blackbirds, but cats also regularly kill house sparrows and starlings, which have declined dramatically in the UK in recent years.

By far the largest proportion of prey killed by cats in the UK (about 69%), however, are small mammals, including mice, voles, shrews, squirrels, stoats, weasels, rabbits and bats. A mouse eaten by a cat cannot be eaten by a hawk.

If you're serious about encouraging wildlife, not having a cat is one of the most positive actions you can take. If you do have a cat, keep it indoors, especially around sunrise and sunset. Using a brightly coloured Birdsbesafe collar or attaching a bell to an existing collar is thought to improve the chances of escape for prey by about 50%. Most effective, though, in reducing a cat's propensity to kill, is interactive play indoors. Encouraging a cat to chase a toy around the house - even for 15 minutes a day -can help to satisfy its hunting instincts.

Keep soil covered

Exposing the soil is a natural process that creates opportunities for plants and insects to colonise new ground, but, apart from on very sandy soils, nature never tolerates bare earth for long. Open soil is swiftly healed by a dressing of pioneer plants - fast-growing grasses and "weeds" such as dandelion, foxglove and ragwort (a much-maligned native wildflower that is wonderful for insects) and rosebay willowherb - or even, on poorer soils, lichens and fungi, protecting soil from desiccation.

Keeping continuously bare soil between selected plants in a border or vegetable patch may look like assiduous gardening, but it is essentially as unnatural and deleterious as a ploughed field. Like nature, we should be looking to disturb the earth judiciously and infrequently, and provide cover, conserving moisture, carbon and life in the soil.

Turn off the lights



Rewilded gardens should have only natural light. Nocturnal insects, including many moths, navigate by the moon. They can become disoriented by, or positively attracted to, artificial light, wasting their energy and often dying if they cannot draw themselves away. Security lights that burst on at night can stimulate garden birds, particularly robins, to start to sing or even feed. Some species, such as frogs, may be temporarily blinded by lights, and owls find lit areas harder to hunt in.

If you do need lights, switch them off when they're not in use; choose low-intensity (preferably solar-powered) lights with warmer white, yellow or amber hues (coloured solar lights seem to attract and confuse glow-worms); position them as low as possible; and use hoods to direct the light downwards. Best of all is to relish the tranquillity of darkness, and use portable solar-charged or candle lanterns that you can take outside when you need them.

Which garden do you have?

Conventional

A manicured lawn and patio provide few opportunities for wildlife to thrive. A leaf blower rids the garden of natural compost, while lights disturb bats and moths.



Nature-friendly

The lawn, mown less often, is rich in wildflowers. A hedge provides nesting for birds, and a pond encourages dragonflies and frogs.

Rewilded

Fallen fruit and seed heads are left, and long grass encourages hedgehogs, field mice and voles. Birds find protection in the shaggy hedges.



This is an edited extract from The Book of Wilding: a Practical Guide to Rewilding, Big and Small by Isabella Tree and Charlie Burrell (Bloomsbury, £35), which will be published on 11 May.

(Article source: The Guardian)

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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-Wye HR9 5NB

