

# OUR PLACE *News*

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

DECEMBER 2024

*Inside this issue...*

## **Winter care:**

How to avoid plant losses, flowering disappointments and container catastrophes

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The 20 best Christmas wines for 2024

**PLUS...**

What's on • Health & Beauty • Money & Work • Leisure & Travel  
Food & Drink • Arts, Crafts & Hobbies • Home & Garden

## 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

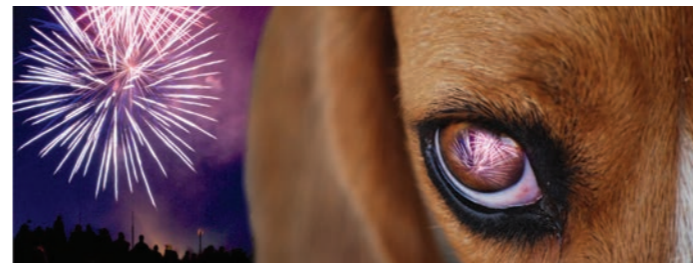
*PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so send us an email by visiting: [www.ourplace.co](http://www.ourplace.co)*

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### Data Privacy

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## FIREWORK FEAR

### How to deal with your dog during New Year's Eve

Once again it is the time of year when many pets suffer from the effects of firework phobias. Phobias can be complex and it is important to tailor behaviour modification to each individual's circumstances, but there are some changes owners can make that will benefit most noise sensitive dogs.

The secret is to look round your home and watch how your dog is affected. See how you can use the principles to maximise the benefit for them. Here is the solution:

#### On the day of the fireworks:

- Take your dog out for a walk to empty before the fireworks start.
- Feed a stodgy meal of high carbohydrate, low protein, an hour before the fireworks (unless they suffer from stress related diarrhoea, when this is NOT a good idea).
- Put on some music with a heavy bass beat - not too loud, but loud enough to mask the more distant bangs.
- Take your dog to their den and provide chews, stuffed Kongs and dog food. Water should always be available. Don't worry if the food goes untouched - some dogs are so stressed they are unable to eat.

#### When the fireworks start:

#### DON'T:

- Pet, praise or cuddle your dog if they are displaying anxiety - they may see this as approval and continue with the anxious behaviour.
- Tell your dog off - this will make them even more worried.

#### DO:

- Take your dog to their den.
- Ignore any anxious behaviour. They have to learn to cope on their own - dependence upon people will not help.
- Ignore the noise - set a good example.
- Reward any relaxed behaviour with stroking, a massage, or food treats.
- Play games if your dog is able - if there is another, more relaxed, dog, play games with them and hope that the stressed one joins in.

## WINTER CAT WARNING

At this time of year please check under your car and wheel arches for cats trying to keep warm, before you set off on your journey!



During the cold winter months cats will often seek out any warm space they can find. One particularly irresistible lure seems to be the cosy confines of a warm car engine. Unfortunately, cats that seek shelter under the bonnets of cars can then be injured or killed when that car is started. Help keep your own and your neighbourhood cats safe this winter by tapping the bonnet of your car before you start the engine.

## HEDGEHOG WARNING

At this time of year please check for these prickly creatures before lighting your bonfire.



Bonfires are perfect sleeping areas for hedgehogs and every year many get burnt alive. If you are having a bonfire, just make sure you check inside before lighting it. If you do find a hedgehog, move it to a safe place. This year second litters have been born later than usual. This means that there may still be young and underweight hedgehogs around. Remember if they are under 600gr they will not survive hibernation and need to be taken to a local animal rescue centre.





# Timeless transformation: How to stay youthful at heart and mind beyond 50

Ageing gracefully isn't merely about retaining physical youthfulness; it's a mindset, a way of living that radiates vitality, confidence, and joy regardless of your birth year.

For those of us who have reached or surpassed the 50-year milestone, life can feel richer, deeper, and more fulfilling than ever. By embracing a few transformative strategies, you can ensure that you stay youthful in spirit and sharp in mind, ready to take on new experiences with vibrance and curiosity.

Here's how to do just that.

## Cultivate a curious mind

Staying youthful starts with the mind. Adopting a 'beginner's mindset' - a willingness to learn and see the world through curious, unjaded eyes - keeps mental faculties sharp and nurtures a sense of wonder.

Whether it's taking up a new language, mastering a musical instrument, or engaging in book clubs with diverse genres, continuing to learn new things rewires the brain and promotes cognitive longevity.

**Quick tip:** Universities, both online and in-person, offer plenty of free courses. Consider enrolling in something that intrigues you, be it philosophy or digital photography.

## Build and nurture connections

Our social networks are not just about parties and gatherings; they form the cornerstone of emotional resilience.

Close relationships are scientifically proven to boost longevity, lower the risk of dementia, and improve mood.

As we age, maintaining connections with family, friends, and community groups gives life greater meaning and offers a buffer against isolation.

**Connect creatively:** Host themed dinner parties, join volunteer organisations, or consider intergenerational activities, such as mentoring schemes or local interest groups.

## Get moving and keep grooving

Movement is medicine, and it's key to staying young at heart. Whether you're an avid gym-goer, a rambler who enjoys long walks along the stunning British coastlines or a yoga enthusiast perfecting your poses, regular exercise preserves muscle tone, balances hormones, and reduces stress. It also plays a key role in releasing endorphins - nature's feel-good chemicals.

**For your diary:** Why not explore local dance classes? Salsa, ballroom, or even Zumba can add a rhythm of joy and enhance coordination, proving that fitness doesn't have to be a chore.



## Embrace a balanced diet for the ages

A healthy diet is not about restrictions; it's about choices that bring vitality. A Mediterranean-inspired diet - rich in olive oil, nuts, oily fish, fresh fruits, and vegetables - has been shown to slow ageing processes, support heart health, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Hydration is also key, so don't forget that classic glass of water!

**Indulge wisely:** Moderation, not deprivation, is key. Enjoy an occasional slice of cake or a glass of wine, but prioritise nutrient-dense meals that keep your body feeling energised.

## Seek joy and laughter

They say laughter is the best medicine, and they aren't wrong. Regular bouts of laughter reduce stress hormones, improve blood circulation, and even alleviate pain. Surround yourself with lighthearted people, watch that comedy special you've been meaning to catch up on, and don't be afraid to laugh at yourself!

**Laugh out loud:** Consider joining a comedy club, or simply spend time with friends who never fail to lift your spirits.

## Prioritise restorative sleep

The restorative power of sleep cannot be understated. Quality sleep repairs tissue, consolidates memory, and resets emotional balance. Make your bedroom a sanctuary, establish a calming bedtime routine, and aim for seven to nine hours of uninterrupted sleep.

Be mindful of screen time before bed, and consider incorporating relaxation techniques such as mindfulness or gentle stretching.

**Bedtime rituals:** A warm cup of herbal tea, such as chamomile, and reading a book can help prepare your mind and body for rest.

## Reflect and practice mindfulness



Taking time to pause and reflect keeps you connected with your purpose and passions. Mindfulness practices - be it meditation, nature walks, or simply unplugging from technology - help ground you, reduce stress, and promote emotional resilience.

**Daily practice:** Even just five minutes of focusing on your breath or a gratitude journal can work wonders for perspective and peace.

## Stay stylish - your way

Fashion doesn't have to age you; it can empower you. Find your style and wear it confidently. Expressing yourself through clothing that you love, be it bold colours, classy neutrals, or statement pieces, lets your personality shine and reinforces self-confidence.

**Wardrobe refresh:** Collaborate with a stylist or a trusted friend to revamp your wardrobe to align with who you are today. Confidence is always on-trend. Ageing is inevitable, but feeling old is optional. By investing in our minds, bodies, and spirits, we can experience timeless transformation at any age.

Whether you're embarking on new adventures, forging meaningful connections, or simply pausing to reflect, there's joy and vibrancy to be found in every day. Here's to staying youthful, no matter the number that graces our birthday cakes.

*(Article source: Silver Surfers)*

## Finding warmth in cold days

**Grey skies and cold winds. But here's the thing: winter is nature's invitation to slow down, reflect, and discover the hidden joys of cosiness.**



*Silver Surfers* reports that this season can remind us of the beauty of life's quieter moments and the warmth we carry within ourselves. Here are five ways to find brightness and cheer on even the coldest days:

### Rediscover the magic of small pleasures

Cold days are perfect for embracing small, heartwarming rituals. Make that cup of tea or coffee extra special by sipping it from your favorite mug, nestled under a soft blanket. Light a candle, even if it's just for you. These little actions may seem trivial, but they're moments of self-care that remind us of life's simple joys.

### Move, even just a little

It's tempting to stay tucked in on cold days, but a little movement can do wonders for the soul. Take a brisk walk, even if it's just around your block or your living room. Feel the crisp air on your face and know it's part of what keeps you alive and thriving. Or, try a gentle indoor yoga video - it'll warm your body and calm your mind.

### Connect to stay warm

Winter can feel isolating, but it's the perfect excuse to reach out to loved ones. Call an old friend, start a group chat, or write a letter. Better yet, organise a "winter potluck" with neighbours or friends - everyone brings a dish, and the laughter and chatter will leave your heart warmer than a fireplace ever could.

### Dive into something new

There's no better time to explore a new hobby or interest. Have you ever wanted to knit, paint, write, or bake that perfect loaf of bread? Winter gives you permission to sit indoors and immerse yourself in creativity. Think of it as adding new chapters to your story - a story that's far from over.

### Celebrate the beauty of this stage

Being over 50 means having layers of experience and wisdom to draw from. Let the winter remind you that, like the season, you are a mix of resilience and beauty. Laugh at the silly things, relish the memories that warm your heart, and remember that every stage of life has its own kind of magic.

### A warm thought to carry

Imagine that life over 50 is like winter itself: a time when things slow down but also grow richer and deeper. The quiet can be nourishing, and the cold makes the warmth all the sweeter. So, on this chilly day, wrap yourself in gratitude, connection, and the belief that the best moments can be as simple as a shared smile or a warm bowl of soup.

Winter doesn't last forever, but the memories you create in it will. Keep your heart glowing!

*(Article source: Silver Surfers)*

## 50+ and fearless: Breaking free from limiting beliefs to enjoy life

**As we age, life brings both wisdom and challenges.**

*Silver Surfers* reports that by the time we reach 50, we've often collected not only experiences but also expectations - some helpful, others deeply limiting. Many people over 50 find themselves navigating a complex web of beliefs about aging, abilities, and what's still possible in life. But what if the biggest obstacle to living fully isn't age, but rather the limiting beliefs we hold?

It's time to break free from these mental constraints and reclaim the joy, energy, and excitement life still has to offer. By shedding outdated ideas, we can embrace the freedom that comes with experience and create a vibrant new chapter.

Here's how to shift your mindset and live fearlessly after 50...

### Understanding Limiting Beliefs

Limiting beliefs are thoughts or ideas we've adopted over time, often unconsciously, that restrict our actions and potential. These beliefs are usually based on past experiences, societal expectations, or internalised fears. For those over 50, common limiting beliefs might sound like:

- "I'm too old to try something new."
- "It's too late to change my career or pursue a passion."
- "Physical limitations will only get worse from here."
- "At my age, I should just accept the way things are."

While these thoughts can feel real, they're often self-imposed barriers that keep us from exploring new possibilities.



By challenging and dismantling them, you open yourself to new adventures, relationships, and even ways of thinking.

### Rewriting the Story of Ageing

The way we think about aging has a profound impact on how we live. While society often equates ageing with decline, many people are flipping that narrative. Studies show that maintaining a positive outlook on aging can lead to better physical health, a longer life, and greater emotional well-being.

Instead of focusing on what you "should" or "shouldn't" do based on age, ask yourself: What excites me now? By shifting the focus from external expectations to your personal desires, you create space for growth and joy.

### Steps to Break Free from Limiting Beliefs

#### Identify the Limiting Beliefs

The first step in overcoming limiting beliefs is recognising them. Pay attention to the automatic thoughts you have about what you're capable of. Do you ever catch yourself saying, "I can't do that," or "I'm too old for that"? Write these beliefs down. By bringing them into the open, you can start to see how they've influenced your decisions.

#### Challenge Your Beliefs

Once you've identified your limiting beliefs, question them. Is it really true that you can't start a new hobby, switch careers, or travel solo? Find examples of people who've defied similar assumptions. Consider artists, entrepreneurs, and athletes who achieved great things later in life - people like Vera Wang, who designed her first dress at 40, or Colonel Sanders, who founded KFC in his 60s. These stories remind us that age is not a barrier to success or happiness.

#### Replace Limiting Beliefs with Empowering Ones

For every limiting belief you identify, create a new, positive belief to replace it. For example:

- Limiting belief: "I'm too old to learn a new skill."
- Empowering belief: "I am capable of learning and growing at any age."

By repeating and internalising these empowering beliefs, you gradually rewire your brain to expect possibilities rather than limitations.

### Set Bold, New Goals

It's easy to fall into routines as we get older, but setting new goals can reignite a sense of purpose. These don't have to be monumental - small, achievable goals can be equally powerful. Whether it's taking up a new hobby, training for a charity walk, or starting a blog, pursuing something new keeps your mind sharp and your spirit alive.

### Surround Yourself with Positivity

The people we spend time with influence how we feel about ourselves. Seek out those who inspire and encourage you to live fearlessly. Whether it's a community of like-minded peers, an online group, or a mentor, being surrounded by positivity helps keep limiting beliefs at bay.

### Embrace Change and Uncertainty

Fear of change is one of the most common reasons people over 50 cling to limiting beliefs. But change is inevitable, and resisting it only leads to stagnation. Instead, view change as an opportunity for growth. By stepping into the unknown, you open yourself up to new possibilities that you may never have imagined.

### Fearless in Action: Real-Life Stories

Consider the story of Susan, a 57-year-old who decided to take up painting after decades of shelving her creative interests for work and family. She had believed for years that it was "too late" to become an artist, but after joining a local art class, she found not only joy but a sense of purpose in her work. Today, her paintings are featured in local galleries, and she feels more fulfilled than ever.

Then there's David, who at 63, left his corporate job to start his own consultancy. He had spent years feeling trapped by the belief that "retirement is the only option," but his decision to trust in his expertise and passions led to a thriving second career, allowing him the freedom to work on his terms.

These stories are reminders that it's never too late to pursue a dream or reinvent yourself. The only thing standing in the way is often our own limiting beliefs.

### Living Fearlessly Beyond 50

Breaking free from limiting beliefs is a transformative process. It requires courage and the willingness to challenge long-held assumptions, but the rewards are immense. By embracing a fearless mindset, you can rediscover joy, creativity, and confidence, no matter your age.

Remember, life after 50 can be a time of reinvention and rediscovery. The experiences and wisdom you've gained give you the tools to create a richer, fuller life. With the right mindset, there are no limits to what you can achieve.

So, let go of the old stories that no longer serve you, and step into this new phase with courage, curiosity, and a fearless heart. The best is yet to come.

*(Article source: Silver Surfers)*



# Wintery fun: The best new Christmas and winter attractions in the UK

From festive markets and light trails to floating saunas and chalet-oke sessions, there's plenty of wintery fun to be had for all ages.

## Light trails

This year, there are plenty of light trails to brighten up the winter gloom. **The Northern Light** is an immersive light and sound show at the Slieve Donard hotel in Newcastle, County Down, with projections conjuring up the Arctic, an ice cave, the stars and the aurora borealis (£35 adults/£22 children). Cornwall's **Eden Project** has an immersive light show that transports visitors to a Christmas party, as well as a new theatrical experience and carousel (from £38 adults/£12 children, selected evenings until 5 January). **Christmas at Westonbirt**, the national arboretum in Gloucestershire, has been designed by the light trail producers behind Christmas at Kew. Expect neon trees, luminous birds and tunnels of light, plus a Christmas village (from £18 adults/£12 children, 29 November to 31 December).

**The Ancient Forest** Twi-Lights experience at the Landmark Forest Adventure Park near Aviemore in the Highlands is a 1km trail through the pines. It includes a Red Squirrel treetop journey, eight metres up in the tree canopy, for a view of the illuminated woodland below (£15 adults/£10 children, open now at weekends, then during the Christmas holidays and February midterm). **Wilderspool Woods**, an ancient woodland next to the Trafford Centre in Manchester, has a family-focused Christmas Trail with a pop-up by the street-food hub Freight Island (£11 adults/£9 children, family 2+2 £36, until 2 January). More contemplative is the eco light festival at the 18th-century naturalist **Gilbert White's House** in Hampshire, featuring solar-powered, low-level and renewable lighting to minimise the impact on nocturnal wildlife, plus installations from local artists (£12.50 adults/£9 children, Thursdays to Saturdays until 21 December).

## Ice rinks

There are some magical settings for pop-up ice rinks this year, including **Blenheim Palace** in Oxfordshire. The Great Skate is a covered rink in Blenheim's Great Court; other festive goings-on include a Neverland display in the palace, a light trail in the gardens and a Christmas market (skating from £15 adults/£10 children for £45 minutes, until 1 January).

Equally spectacular is the new rink at **Another Place, The Lake**, a hotel in Cumbria. The rink overlooks Ullswater and is open to hotel guests and visitors. Skaters can also swim in the lake, use the sauna and hot tub, drink mulled wine and shop at the weekend markets (skating from £13 adults/£10 children for 45 minutes, 1 December to 4 January).

**Courts Club**, a social hub in Manchester that opened earlier this year, has turned into the Winter Assembly for the season, with an ice rink, chalet-oke (karaoke in a hut!), festive films, bratwurst and boozy hot chocolate (skating from £16 adults/£14 children for 45 minutes, until 5 January). In Gateshead, there is a new outdoor covered rink at MetroCentre - beginners can book a four-week learn to skate course (skating from £12.40 adults/£9.90 children for 45 minutes, until 5 January).

## Other activities

The **Polar Express** train ride is coming to Wales for the first time this winter. Based on the book and film, it's a live show on a steam train on the Vale of Rheidol railway from Aberystwyth to Devil's Bridge, with singing, dancing and a visit to Santa (from £37.95, 30 November to 24 December). St Peter's Square is hosting the **Brighton Winter Fayre** in December, with Santa's grotto, craft workshops, party nights, festive films, a makers' market and live music (free entry, 5-8, 12-15 and 19-22 December). **Winters of the World** is a pop-up party venue in Finsbury Square, London, with games (Eisstock and Jingle Bowls); DJs and après-ski bands; food - including smash burgers, steak-frites and donburi bowls - and winter cocktails (2-20 December).

## Heritage and culture

National Trust properties across England and Wales have a host of new Christmas events this year, including **Powis Castle**, which is throwing a Dickensian Christmas inspired by A Christmas Carol (adults £15/children £7.50, until 5 January).

**Buckland Abbey**, in Devon, which is celebrating a Viking Yule (adults £15/children £7.50, 30 November to 31 December), and Christmas at **Nymans**, West Sussex, inspired by The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (adults £18/children £9, to 5 January). **Wild in Art** has four free outdoor sculpture trails across England this winter: they are Snowdogs in Buxton, Derbyshire; penguins around Fleet Street, London; The Snowman in Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey; and Elmer and other elephants in Doncaster (free, various dates).

## Christmas villages

In Cambridge, **Parker's Piece** common is becoming a Christmas village. There are Christmas market chalet huts and a street food area, as well as an alpine lodge bar with ski gondola booths and a tipi. You'll also discover heated domes next to an ice rink, an après terrace with curling lanes and other activities - and a Christmas tree maze (free entry, some paid-for activities, until 5 January). **The Fabulously Festive Christmas village**, at Hurtwood Park Polo Country Club in Surrey, has market stalls, an après-ski bar, fairground rides, an ice rink and visits to Santa (from £12.50, until 5 January).

## Saunas



Saunas have been springing up across the UK over the past couple of years, from city centres to seafronts. The latest is **Wyld Sauna**, a floating sauna at Princes Dock in Liverpool, which opened on 23 November. The Finnish-style coal sauna has space for 30 people, who can cool off with an ice bath or a cold shower - or brave a swim in the docks (from £7 an hour). The **Slomo Floating Sauna** also opened this month, at Tapnell Farm on the Isle of Wight. Facilities include two wood-fired saunas, a lake and a plunge tank for dips, and a lounging area with a firepit (£20 an hour). Next month, **Tiptoe Retreat** opens on Tiptoe Farm in Northumberland. Two luxury tree cabins, with wood-burning stoves and outdoor copper baths, share a mirrored woodland sauna (£390 for two nights, each cabin sleeps two).

## Food and drink

Edinburgh has a pop-up **Polar Ice Bar**, with tables, chairs and glasses made from ice, and engraved ice walls and sculptures. The temperature is a chilly -8C, but guests are given jackets and gloves (from £14, including a cocktail, until 4 January). A handful of eastern England pubs in the **Chestnut collection** have winter gardens. The newest one is the **Lifeboat Inn** in Thornham, Norfolk, which provides guest with blankets, faux furs and hot-water bottles, and a menu of tartiflette pizza, smoked bockwurst and pretzels. The **Hare & Hounds**, a country pub near Windermere in Cumbria, has an alpine chalet-themed tipi in the garden for parties, serving fondue, Christmas dinner and mulled wine (from £45 a head, groups of four or more, availability on selected dates in December).

(Article source: The Guardian)



# Tis' the season to be merry: The 20 best Christmas wines for 2024

**Spicy Rhônes for the roast, aromatic riesling for the leftovers, and excellent value fizzes to bring in the new year.**

When it comes to choosing the right wines, Christmas dinner is something of a challenge. The classic bird (or plant-based alternative) with all the trimmings is a riot of sensations, flavours and textures, from the soft umami hit of stuffing and gravy to the piercing sweet-sour burst of cranberry sauce and the bitter green tang of sprouts.

I tend to go one of two ways: pick out an acid-driven wine (white, red or orange) that will cleanse and revive and cut through the fat; or something substantial and spicy (a beefy red or rich oak-aged white) that stands up to anything you care to throw at it.

I've included several examples of each in this year's selection, and in a range of prices and sources. There are also wines to take care of aperitifs, puddings, parties and the shapeless hours (and leftovers) of the days after you've cleared away the wrapping paper but before you've popped the cork on the New Year's Eve fizz (also included here).

A final suggestion: if you need more than a couple of bottles this Christmas, it's worth thinking about buying by the case of six or 12, with plenty of multi-buy discounts available from independent merchants and online specialists as well as the supermarkets.

## Whites

### Kakapo

*South Island, New Zealand 2023 (£6.50, Asda)*  
Largely made of riesling, this cheerfully floral-aromatic, tropical fruit salad-juicy blend is an attractive solo sipper and a good value party bottle. It has the presence and verve to be a match for any spicy soups or leftover turkey curries.

### M&S Chez Michel Marsanne Collines Rhodaniennes

*Rhône, France 2023 (£9, Marks & Spencer)*  
Made from local variety marsanne by the ever reliable Rhône co-operative producer Cave de Tain l'Hermitage, this delightful Christmas dinner-ready white combines fulsome soft pear and white peach with a subtle, pithy citrus and herb quality.

### Reyneke Organic Chenin Blanc

*Stellenbosch, South Africa 2023 (£10.99, Waitrose)*

There are so many fine Cape white wines being made from old chenin blanc vines right now. This is hard to beat on value for money, with gorgeous honeyed apple shimmering over racy citrus pith, zest and juice. Bring on the roast bird.

### Tenute Orestiadi Organic Orange Inzolia

*Sicily, Italy 2023 (£13, Booths)*

With their mix of red wine grip and white wine freshness, orange wines are among the most versatile with food. This graceful, nutty, mandarin-scented and very gently astringent Sicilian is a fine festive grub all-rounder.

## BEST BUY

### Zuccardi Q Chardonnay

*Uco Valley, Argentina 2023 (£16, Tesco)*

Argentina is still much better known for its reds but its top whites have never been more compelling. An exceptionally smart, savoury-mineral Burgundian chardonnay, this comes from a family producer at the top of its game and is brilliant value.

### Ventisquero Grey Sauvignon Blanc

*Atacama, Chile 2021 (from £16.50, vinvm.co.uk; ndjohn.co.uk; reservewines.co.uk)*

There's something counterintuitive about finding super-fresh white wines from one of the world's driest places, but that's what we have here. A scintillating, pristine, seafood-friendly sauvignon blanc that lifts and cleanses with green-herb energy.

## Reds

### Nice Drop Pinotage

*Western Cape, South Africa 2023 (£4.25, Asda)*

Most of the cheapest wines on the market resort to a hefty dose of sugar to cover up their flaws, but this surprisingly serious budget buy avoids such mawkish sweetness and offers a smoky-savoury tint to its berry juiciness. A sound party bottle.

### Chassaux et Fils Costières de Nîmes

*Rhône, France 2023 (£6.99, Aldi)*

If your ideal Christmas dinner wine is the solar-powered richness of châteauneuf du pape, but your budget doesn't stretch that far, this robust brambly-spicy red Rhône blend from vineyards around Nîmes is a more than acceptable alternative.

### M&S Found Saperavi

*Kakheti, Georgia 2022 (£10, Marks & Spencer)*

The Found series of lesser-spotted styles and grape varieties is home to many of the highlights in the M&S range. Not least this deliciously hearty but brightly blackberry-juicy, liquorice-spiced version of saperavi, Georgia's red grape speciality.

### Ponte da Boga P Mencía

*Ribeira Sacra, Galicia, Spain 2023 (£11.95, thewinesociety.com)*

In the spectacular steep, remote vineyards of Galicia in north-west Spain, the mencía grape variety makes some gorgeously vivid, fresh red wines. This example's satiny cherry-skin feel and black cherry-juicy flavours are a guaranteed cranberry sauce-like hit with the turkey.

## BEST BUY

### Château Tour Marcillanet

*Haut-Médoc, Bordeaux, France 2018 (from £15.95, hhandc.co.uk, swig.co.uk)*

Like rioja, classic claret is a must for many at the Christmas table, and this is a fine example from a highly regarded vintage. It's at a lovely moment in its evolution, when the fruit (graphite-edged cassis) is still bright but the nimble tannins are softening up beautifully.

### Gulfi Rossojbleo

*Sicily, Italy 2023 (from £22.15, fieldandfawcett.co.uk; cellarnextdoor.com; corksofbristol.com; chapelstreetwines.co.uk)*

From one of the masters of the Sicilian native red grape variety nero d'avola, this is a joyous Christmas feast bottle. It is rich and ripe but full of unforced, supple red cherry and berry juiciness and tomato brightness, coupled with a hint of sage herbiness.

## Fizz

### Taste the Difference Cava Brut

*Spain NV (£8.75, Sainsbury's)*

Cava is more than just an affordable alternative to champagne, and few other fizzes can match wines such as Sainsbury's classic brut for bottle-fermented richness and tang, at a price that leaves change from a tenner.

### Prince Alexandre Crémant de Loire Brut

*Loire, France NV (£14.99, reduced to £10 from 4 December to 1 January, Waitrose)*

Crémant sparkling wines, made using the same techniques as champagne in other parts of France, can offer superb value. This light, red- and green-apple-scented blend of chenin, cabernet franc and chardonnay from the Loire is no exception.

### Can Sumoi Ancestral Montònega

*Penedès, Spain 2023 (from £19.49, thefinewinecompany.co.uk; shrinetothethevine.co.uk; chanctonburywines.co.uk)*

Made in cava country using the "ancestral" or "pét-nat" method of bottling the wine while it is still fermenting, this light (9.5% abv) but lively and evocative bubbly has become a festive favourite thanks to its effortless, food-friendly, herb-scented charm.

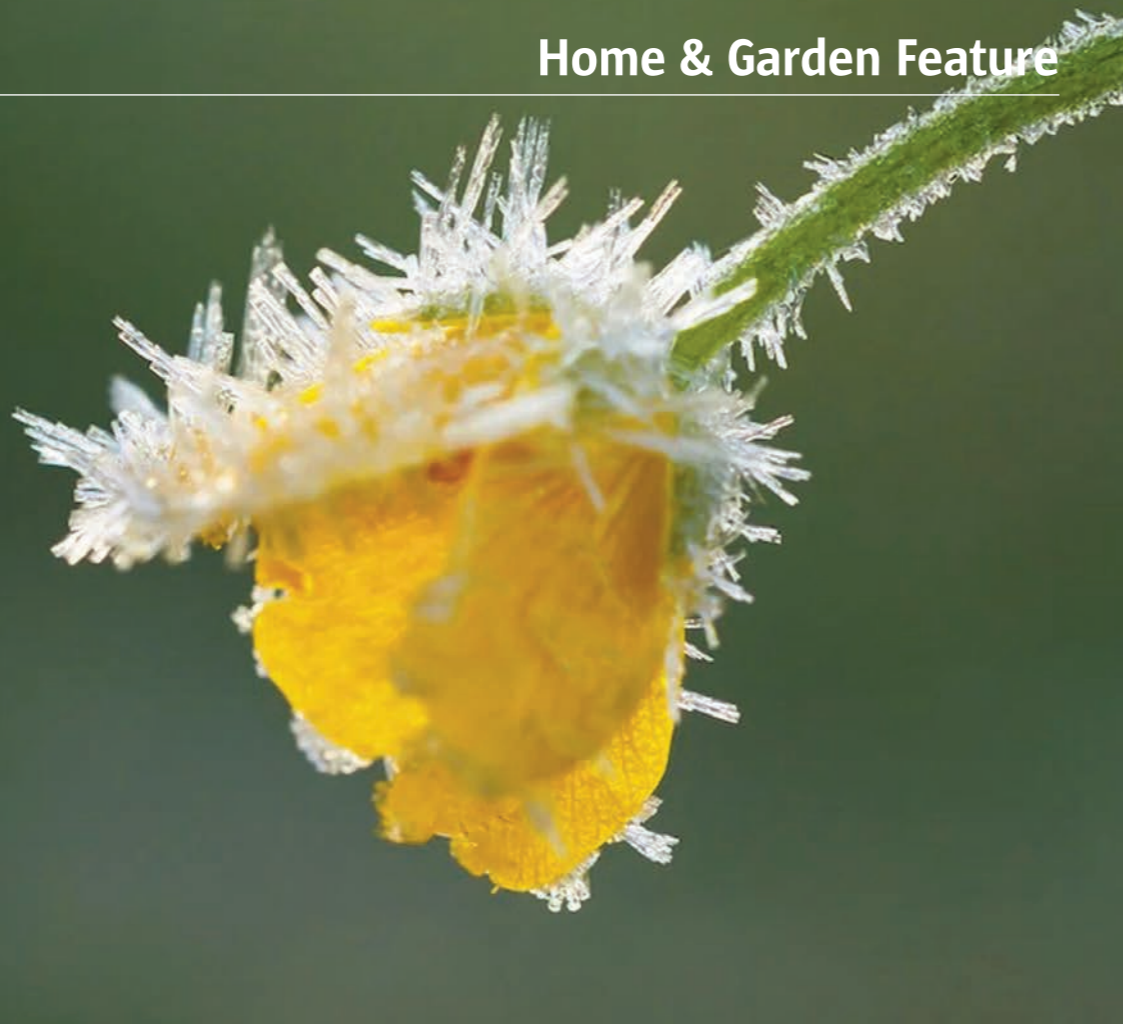
## BEST BUY

### Veuve Monsigny 1er Cru Champagne

*France NV (£21.99, Aldi)*

A cut above Aldi's standard Veuve Monsigny champagne (£14.99), but still around half the price of most mainstream branded champagnes, this pinot noir-dominated fizz, sourced from high-quality "premier cru" vineyards, is a lemon-creamy, butter-biscuity bargain.

*(Article source: The Guardian)*



# Winter care: How to avoid plant losses, flowering disappointments and container catastrophes

As the colder weather sets in, we offer a 10-point checklist to help your garden survive the worst of winter.

As winter begins to make itself known, you may want to hibernate in front of a roaring fire - but there are some jobs that just won't wait unless you're prepared to have to do more work, and spend more money, next year.

So, put on your woollies and your wellies and brave the elements before it's too late, with these jobs that won't wait...

## Protect vulnerable plants

Any plants that aren't totally hardy will need some protection outdoors. Cover vulnerable plants with cloches or horticultural fleece if harsh frost is forecast and protect newly-planted trees and shrubs over the winter with windbreaks, or wrap a cosy blanket of hessian or horticultural fleece around them.



## Watch out for windy weather

Prepare for winter winds by removing dead or decaying branches on established trees.

Check the stakes of newly-planted trees are secure and make sure that fences, trellises and other structures which prop up climbing plants are all secure enough to withstand high winds.

## Get pruning

Once the leaves have fallen from ornamental trees such as acers and sorbus, you can prune them lightly while dormant, to keep their framework neat.

Do the same with young trees and shrubs to give them a good framework from the get-go. Many shrubs, however, can be left for pruning in late winter and early spring.

## Avoid cracked pots

If you have terracotta pots that aren't frost-hardy, clear them out of any plants and compost, wash them and store them under cover in a frost-free place such as a shed.



Protect pots containing permanent plants of borderline hardiness by grouping them together in a sheltered spot and wrapping them with hessian or horticultural fleece.

## Keep weeding

Although the growth of weeds will slow down as the weather gets cooler, they will spring up again next year unless you catch them now, so dig up as many as you can before the ground becomes too hard to work.

## Move plants

If you want to switch plants around, or just need to lift and divide overgrown clumps, do it now while the ground is still soft enough to work.

You'll be able to fill any gaps leftover from summer, while dividing plants will also give you a chance to do some repeat-planting in your borders, which will create a rhythm in your garden next year.

## Plant bulbs sooner rather than later

Tulips are best planted at the beginning of November, but try to get all your bulb planting done by then or you may have problems digging planting holes in your borders as the ground hardens up during winter.



## Plant and harvest

There's still time to plant winter salads such as pak choi in the garden, but make sure you cover crops with fleece to protect them from winter weather.

Harvest vegetables including kale, spinach, turnips, parsnips, winter cabbage and the first Brussels sprouts, but make sure you stake your plants with canes now as they can become quite large and you don't want the sprouts to touch the ground.

## Look after fish

If you have fish in your pond, stop the water from freezing by floating a ball on the surface, or consider installing a pond heater.

## Order seeds and plants

When you do come into the warm, flick through the latest seed catalogues and don't delay ordering to guarantee you get the varieties you want before they run out of stock.

*(Article source: Silver Surfers)*

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

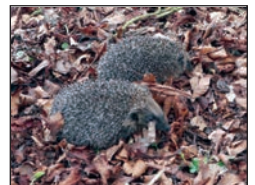
## 'Julie'



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

## Baby Hedgehogs

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



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

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

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



**HEDGEHOG RESCUE**  
 REHABILITATION AND CARE CENTRE

Registered Charity No: 1126812 (England & Wales)  
 Registered Charity No: SCO47720 (Scotland)