



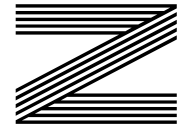
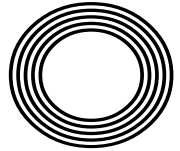
**PROS
AND CONS
OF ECO
HOMES**

The benefits
of outdoor exercise

WOMBLING FREE
Celebrate 50 years of The Wombles

Davina
MCCALL

Popular presenter celebrates 30 years on our screens



FREE

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'Our exceptionally talented team is headed up by Dr Aamer Khan'

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Cinderella Lift

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Editor's notes...

FEBRUARY 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Halstead Baintree. We're into February now - that fateful month when New Year's resolutions begin to scurry away like a thief in the night, never to be seen again. I admit that rarely does the start of a year go by without me promising to make either my own or someone else's life healthier or happier. This year I didn't, even though I'll be the first to admit that my fitness levels have taken a dive after the buoyant festive period. That's not to say I don't want to get back to a routine of regular exercise. I've already started, in fact. I'm on my bike every other day, choosing to walk over driving when I can and have cut out those sneaky snacks. The difference is that I want to get away from this being a New Year thing. I know so many people fall down on a resolution and believe the game is up. Not true! Not only should we take failure in life as just a temporary blip, but we should also be solid in the belief that good habits, new initiatives and a drive for self-improvement can and should happen at any time of the year. My advice is therefore to do something good in 2023, but use the whole of 2023 to do it.

Nik Allen

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CONTACT US: www.visionmagessex.com | nik@visionmagessex.com | 01787 339010
 @visionmagessex | @visionmagessex | Vision Magazine Essex
 CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Fiona Goble, Megan Milstead, Jacob Collick, Bryn Holmes, Holly Bullen, Ruby Ward

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KEEP ON WOMBLING

WOMBLING FREE, THE WOMBLES OF WIMBLEDON COMMON ARE WE

To celebrate 50 years since *The Wombles* first appeared on our screens, we explore how Orinoco and his furry chums were well ahead of their time.

The early 1970s was an era of rising food and fuel costs, political and social unrest, and dubious fashion choices. It also marked the moment when the very first episode of *The Wombles* aired, at 5.40pm on February 5, 1973, on BBC One.

Based on Elizabeth Beresford MBE's 1968 beloved children's book, the five-minute stop-motion masterpiece was titled *Orinoco and the Big Black Umbrella*, and was voiced by British actor Bernard Cribbins OBE. It told of a blustery day on Wimbledon Common, which corresponds perfectly with the story of how the Wombles came to be. When Beresford took her daughter Kate for a walk on the same common, the young girl mispronounced it as 'Wombledon', and the rest is history.

'There is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*'

Though we have moved on in terms of animation styles and childhood heroes, there is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*. Back in 1973, Britain didn't have recycling bins and nationwide initiatives to reduce waste, making the Womble mission to "make good use of bad rubbish" an almost revolutionary concept.

The seven Wombles, including Great Uncle Bulgaria, Orinoco and Madame Cholet, were highly creative in the way they recycled and gathered rubbish – even fronting a Keep Britain Tidy campaign – and would certainly be applauded by environmental activists today.

So let's mark their half-century on our television screens not just by introducing our children to their adorable 35 mini-adventures – and, of course, their hit theme tune *The Wombling Song* – but also by passing on their teachings.

From Wimbledon Common and beyond, let's keep making "good use of bad rubbish".

Know YOUR snow!

Who doesn't like that crunching noise as you walk on a patch of fresh snow? And what place doesn't look a little prettier with snowy roofs and trees? But what exactly is snow, and how does it happen?

WHAT'S SNOW MADE FROM?

When it's 0°C or under, the water vapour in clouds freezes into minute ice crystals. These crystals stick together. And if enough of them do it, they become heavy enough to fall out of the cloud and float to the ground as snowflakes.

HOW COLD DOES IT HAVE TO BE TO SNOW?

It won't snow unless it's 2°C or under. The snow will be powdery if the temperature is 0°C or below and the air is dry. When the temperature's slightly warmer and the atmosphere is moist, the flakes will be bigger because they melt around the edges and stick together. This sort of snow is perfect for making snowballs and snowmen.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SNOW, SLEET AND HAIL?

If the water vapour in the clouds freezes but the air temperature exceeds 2°C, the snowflakes melt and become sleet. At around 5°C, it'll become rain. Hail forms in thunderclouds when water droplets are blown up to the tops of the cloud, where they freeze. When the updraughts in the thunderclouds can't hold up the frozen droplets, they fall to the ground as hailstones.

WHAT DO SNOWFLAKES LOOK LIKE?

Under a microscope, snowflakes can look very different from each other. It all depends on how the ice crystals form and stick together. In 1951, the International Commission on Snow and Ice divided snowflakes into seven main types. These are plates, stellar crystals, columns, needles, spatial dendrites, capped columns and irregular forms.

Snow there you have it!



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MOTORING

CAR SEAT mistakes

While most parents wouldn't dream of driving around without securing their kids in a car seat, many are inadvertently putting them at risk. Here's how to avoid the four most common car seat mistakes.

Facing forward too soon

Children have relatively large heads and weak necks which means that, if they are facing forward during a collision, their head can jerk forward suddenly and violently. This can result in spinal injuries. Keep your children in rear-facing car seats until they reach the maximum height and weight limit. This is typically around the age of 15 months or up to 13kg (29 lb).

Twisted or loose harness straps

As many as one in three children are at risk because they are strapped into their car seats incorrectly. Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and they need to be tight enough to hold your child safely in an accident. Pull the harness so that it is nice and snug. If you can pinch any excess fabric, then it is too loose.

Too many clothes

Children should not wear coats or other bulky clothes when in a car seat. This is because, if there is a crash, these garments will compress and loosen the harness. Even a hoodie can push your child's head too far forward if the hood is down. Instead, cover your child with a blanket once they are secured if you are concerned about the cold.

Buying a used car seat

Ideally, you should buy a new car seat, as these are safer than used ones. However, if you do buy a used one, then you need to ensure you do your homework. Choose one that comes with instructions, hasn't been recalled, is no more than six years old, has no visible damage or missing parts, and has never been involved in a crash.



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HOME & DIY



HOW TO CHOOSE THE PERFECT BATH TOWELS

With so many different types of bath towels available on the market, it can be difficult to know which to choose. Here's everything you need to know about picking the perfect towels for your home.

towel and a low twist makes the towel more plush and absorbent.

LOOK AT THE TOWEL

Although you may think that touching the towel will help you determine its overall quality, manufacturers apply special finishes to make them feel softer. Instead, visually inspect the towel and make sure the edges are neatly folded and secured with close stitching.

CHECK THE FIBRE CONTENT

The first thing you need to look at when buying new towels is the fibre content. If you want a towel that is super-soft and absorbent, then 100 per cent cotton is the best choice. While you may be tempted by premium options such as Egyptian cotton, these are a lot more expensive and don't have much effect on the overall quality. If you are on a tight budget, opt for a cotton/polyester blend.

CONSIDER THE WEIGHT

Towel weight is measured in grams per square metre (GSM), with the higher the weight, the denser and more absorbent the towel. A lightweight towel is 300-400 GSM, medium weight is 400-600 GSM, and 600-900 GSM is the heaviest.

UNDERSTAND THE LINGO

Towel lingo can be confusing, so here are a few key phrases to look out for:

- > COMBINED COTTON – this is where the cotton is brushed to remove short fibres, resulting in a softer and more durable towel.
- > RING SPUN COTTON – this means that long and short fibres are tightly twisted to make the towel loops strong and smooth.
- > TWIST – a high twist results in a more durable

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Ultimately, choosing a towel is down to personal preference. If you want a soft and absorbent towel, then look for 100 per cent cotton, plush loops of yarn on the surface and a higher GSM. However, if you need a more durable or quick-drying towel, a cotton/poly blend with short loops and a lower GSM is a better choice.

Awesome décor, dude!

It's time to get groovy with your home décor, as 70s style makes a humungous comeback. To many, it's the era that fashion forgot, but are we due a 70s revolution, five decades on?

Appliances that pop

If you've ever coveted a Smeg toaster or fridge, you'll appreciate the allure of a coloured appliance. Surfy blue or pastel pink, it all works when integrating this bodacious trend into your worktop or (not-so) white goods.

Hey crochet

Crochet may be one of the oldest artforms, but in the 70s it was really hot – like, all over your bellbottoms, tablecloth and curtains hot. So don't fear as it makes a long-awaited comeback – perfect for placemats or to protect your coffee tabletop. Crochet away knowing you are bang on trend, my friend.

Rattan again

Think rattan furniture is only for the outdoors? Not so in the swinging 70s. Rattan is cool, rattan is comfy and rattan is also reasonably cheap if you're on a budget.

Velvet overground

Velvet gets a rough ride. Synonymous with a certain type of 70s cinema, you may think velvet has a sleazy reputation. That is, until you remember that it is gloriously soft and cosy and comes in all kinds of sumptuous colours.

Lino Ritchie

Don't be dancing on the ceiling when you have some lovely lino to tap your toes on. That's right, lino is cool again, so say: "Hello, is it me you're looking floor?"

Don't teak

Those of us lucky to inherit teak sideboards from family members can now feel smug. Any unit made in teak rosewood by G Plan or crafted in Denmark during the 70s, is now rather valuable and effortlessly cool.



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5 STYLISH WAYS TO STORE COOKBOOKS

Whether you can't resist treating yourself to the latest celebrity cookbook or you were gifted a few culinary classics at Christmas, you may be wondering how you can store and showcase your latest additions.

LINE THEM UP AGAINST THE BACKSPLASH

If you want to proudly display your collection of cookbooks for all to see, then why not line them all up in a row against your backsplash? Providing easy access and a visually appealing feature, this is a great option for all kitchens.

ADD BUILT-IN SHELVES TO THE ISLAND

A kitchen island provides the perfect space for storing all your favourite cookbooks, especially if you have a vast collection. Choose to either take advantage of existing shelving or incorporate new storage space that accommodates all your books.

STORE THEM IN THE PANTRY

Pantries are a godsend for many families, providing additional space and somewhere to keep items out of sight. If you're lucky enough to have one in your home, then designate an eye-level shelf for your cookbook collection so that all your favourite recipes are within reach.

DISPLAY YOUR FAVOURITE WITH A BOOK HOLDER

If you have a go-to cookbook that you use on a regular basis, you can keep this on display at all times using a simple book holder. Enabling you to create the perfect culinary focal point in your kitchen, you can even prop the book open at your favourite recipe.

INVEST IN A MULTI-TIER BASKET STAND

For smaller kitchens where space is tight, a vertical storage solution such as a multi-tier basket stand is the ideal choice. There are many different styles and sizes on the market or, alternatively, you could create your own if you have a set of storage baskets lying around your home.





LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



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Photo credit: Google Maps

Praise for hospital

Supporters of Halstead Hospital are hopeful the wards will stay open following praise from a top health boss.

When Halstead Hospital reopened at the end of last year, it was the first time it had been in operation since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Dan Doherty, the Mid & South Essex Alliance director of the Integrated Care System, attended the League of Friends of Halstead Hospital annual committee meeting on Tuesday, January 10.

A spokesperson for the group said: "He gave a very grim picture of the current situation in the NHS, but on a very positive note he told us how reopening the

hospital ward was making a real difference regarding winter pressures.

"The ward is being well used with a good turnover of patients, which in turn is having an impact in easing the winter pressures within the acute hospitals.

"The 'powers-that-be' are very pleased with the positive results, which makes us very hopeful the hospital will stay open.

"Dan was full of praise with how the ward is being run. It's well staffed and the feedback from patients is very positive."

Mr Doherty is also hoping to attend the Friends' annual general meeting later this year.



Safety beckons as Humbugs draw in big crowd

The Humbugs played four games last month, as the winter weather continued to play havoc with the fixture schedule.

A haul of five points from a win, two draws and a defeat has edged them closer to safety and is keeping them away from the relegation zone.

The latest result was a 1-1 draw with White Ensign following a 2-2 draw with runaway leaders Enfield FC, a result which shows the potential within the squad.

Consistency will now be the key as the team works towards a mid-table finish.

Attendances at the Milbank for home matches continue to increase and the latest game was witnessed by an impressive 212 people – by far the biggest in the Essex Senior League.

To keep up to date with all the club's fixtures, as well as news and events, please visit their website at www.halsteadtownfc.com

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Surgeries held in response to antisocial behaviour



Halstead Town Council (HTC) will be hosting a series of community police surgeries in the coming months following several incidents of antisocial behaviour.

The surgeries will be held from 10am to 12pm at Queens Hall, Chipping Hill, on March 7, April 11, May 9 and June 13.

According to HTC: "Members of the public will be able to come along for a chat. The surgery is a chance to speak to local officers about any concerns or issues in the community in a safe environment."

On Facebook, Essex Police – Braintree District have reported incidents of antisocial behaviour numerous times over the past year. Most recently, a dispersal order was put in place in Halstead on January 8 "following a number of incidents of antisocial behaviour". The order was in response to young people shouting and swearing at members of the public and congregating outside businesses, and gave officers the power to direct people suspected of acting antisocially to leave the area.

Inspector Joanne Molyneux said: "The behaviour of a number of people has meant this order has been put in place purely to ensure the safety of people and property in the town."

"We do not take these decisions lightly, but we will be directing anyone who we suspect of acting antisocially to leave the area immediately."

Council agrees to implement parking restriction

Parking restrictions could be introduced on a busy local street after Halstead Town Council (HTC) agreed at a meeting on January 16 to apply to the Local Highway Panel (LHP).

A local resident submitted a request to HTC in

December, with their letter read in full at the meeting. It stated that "the sheer volume of traffic" on Trinity Road next to the public gardens was impractical.

HTC agreed that parking was causing traffic issues on the road, with vehicles held up by parked cars. Furthermore, heavy goods vehicles travelling down the road occasionally become blocked, creating further issues.

Councillor Malcolm Fincken proposed that HTC agrees to ban parking on Trinity Road, and to install double yellow lines. This was seconded by councillor Peter Caulfield, and the decision will now be forwarded to the LHP following unanimous agreement.

Greggs opens new bakery on High Street

A popular bakery chain has opened a new branch on Halstead High Street, serving a range of sandwiches, pastries and hot drinks.

The new Greggs opened its doors on Friday, January 27, and has created 16 new jobs in the local area.

The opening hours are 7am to 5pm Monday to Saturday, and 10am to 4pm on Sundays.

Shop manager Baylee Barnes said: "We can't wait to welcome both Greggs fans and new customers to our new shop. We've got an amazing range of tasty bakes, hot drinks, sweet treats and savouries available for takeaway or Click + Collect."

Gillian Long, retail operations director for Greggs, said: "Our new shop in Halstead has brought 16 new jobs to the local area, as well as providing customers with a modern, convenient new place to experience their favourite Greggs food."

Last year, Greggs opened a total of 186 new stores and sales rose by 23 per cent to £1,513million.



Stock image



LOCAL NEWS HALSTEAD



LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Photo credit: Essex Police, Ruby Ward @hearthofindom

Paedophile jailed

A man who sexually assaulted a child in Braintree has been jailed for five years.

Leslie Cook, 71 (pictured left), was sentenced at Chelmsford Crown Court on Friday, January 20, having previously been convicted of sexual assault with a child and causing a child to engage in sexual activity.

Cook was also put on the Sex Offenders Register indefinitely and limited by the conditions of a Sexual Harm Prevention Order, granted for 10 years.

The offence took place in Braintree in March 2020, and came to light when the victim disclosed what had happened to their family the following month.

Following Cook's sentencing, the victim's family said: "We want to say a massive thank you to the officers who helped bring this case to court, including DC Jamieson, DC Hicks and T/DC Gaskin of the Child Abuse Investigation Team and Essex Police.

"I would also like to thank the Crown Prosecution Service and Witness Care for their ongoing support."

Council announces new proposed budget

Braintree District Council (BDC) has announced its proposed budget for 2023/24, including a 2.5 per cent council tax increase.


In addition, a charge will be introduced for green waste collections from spring 2024.

Alongside this, the council has identified "more than £1million of savings and additional income".

Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of BDC, said: "Spiralling inflation and years of government underfunding alongside extra demand on services puts councils against a backdrop of financial challenges.

"This means we are having to make some difficult budget decisions to stabilise our financial position, while ensuring we protect essential services."

Councillor John McKee, BDC's cabinet member for finance and corporate transformation, said: "With council finances under more pressure than ever, coupled with extra demand on core services, it is essential for our budget strategy to consider changes to the way some services are delivered so that we can continue to prioritise vital services and minimise impact on residents."



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Post Office closes after staff resignation



Photo credit: Google Maps

A Post Office in Braintree has temporarily closed owing to the resignation of the postmaster and the withdrawal of the premises.

The branch on Masfield Road shut on January 31 and will remain closed until the vacancy is filled.

The Post Office is now looking to provide an alternative service, such as a local-style branch that runs alongside a retail shop.

Applications are welcome from potential retail partners who would like to run a branch, and the vacancy can be found at www.runapostoffice.co.uk

Damien Haydock, partner account manager, apologised for the inconvenience and said that it was important for any future service to be sustainable for the operator and the Post Office.

He said: "The provision of a Post Office service to our customers in the local community is important to us, and we will continue to work hard to restore services in the area as soon as possible."

The nearest branches can be found at Braintree Post Office on New Street and Jubilee Oak Post Office on Crossing Road.

Man charged following burglary offences

A man has been charged and remanded into custody as part of an ongoing investigation into several burglaries, including one in Braintree.

Jay Maxwell, 25, of Saddleworth Square, Romford, has been charged with three counts of burglary dwelling and theft, one count of attempted burglary dwelling with intent to steal, and two counts of theft of a motor vehicle.

The offences took place in Braintree, Ongar and Dunmow between June 28 and September 6, 2022.

Following several enquiries, Maxwell was arrested

and charged with six offences on January 23, 2023. He is due to appear at Chelmsford Crown Court on February 27.

Second half comeback spurs club to quarter-final win

A marvellous comeback from two goals down at half time saw Braintree Town FC end up the winners of their Essex Cup quarter-final against Colchester United's under-21s side.

Things looked bleak for the Iron about 20 minutes into the tie as Colchester's Oscar Thorn put them in front.

This was followed by more bad news for Braintree, as Kaan Bennett doubled the lead for Colchester two minutes before the half-time break, amping up the pressure as both teams sauntered back to the changing rooms.

A good team talk later, the Iron responded to the task ahead of them with great gusto. Their efforts were rewarded at the 60-minute mark, with Alfie Pavey reducing the deficit for Braintree.

Then, two minutes to the end of the second half, Kyran Clements headed the ball in to bring both teams level. With such a late equaliser, both teams expected the game to have to go to penalties.

However, in the dying seconds of added time, second-half substitute Alfie Matthews managed to break through the Colchester defence and scrape in a late winner by running past the keeper, sending the Iron through to the next round and leaving the opposition wondering how they let a 2-0 lead go so quickly.

Braintree Town are now set to take on Chelmsford City in the Essex Cup semi-finals, with the date of the fixture yet to be decided.



Photo credit: Braintree Town FC Facebook

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DYNAMIC

Davina

HOW DAVINA MCCALL CONTINUES TO PROVE HERSELF AS A MODERN NATIONAL TREASURE

Davina McCall this year celebrates three decades on our screens. From her early break – a female voice dubber for Channel 4’s Friday night sleaze bonanza *Eurotrash* – through *Don’t Try This at Home*, *Streetmate*, *The BRIT Awards*, *Big Brother*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *The Million Pound Drop*, *Long Lost Family* and so many more, the now 55 year old has remained relevant, resplendent and always radiant on our screens.

The Wimbledon-born presenter, who has just returned as a judge in the fourth series of *The Masked Singer*, is immaculate in her appeal to multiple age groups and all genders. She carries a confidence and assurance that is effortless and puts contestants at ease, while also knowing when to reveal a more sensitive and emotional side to her character.

From uncovering her ancestry in *Who Do You Think You Are?* to fronting documentaries on the language of love and the mental pain of the menopause, Davina is truly one of terrestrial TV’s modern national treasures. At a time when our broadcasters are desperate for consistency and longevity in the face of competition from streaming channels, Davina continues to provide an enduring and vital influence.

“I’ve just tried to present in a way that feels genuine and accessible,” says Davina, who is currently in a relationship with hairdresser Michael Douglas, having previously been married twice. She has three children – Holly, 21, Tilly, 19, and Chester, 16.

“I am incredibly grateful to have been given the opportunity to sustain my career with new and exciting shows and concepts.

“I don’t doubt it’s probably time to step to one side and let some others have a go, but I’ll keep on going until I’m told I’m not needed anymore, because TV still gives me the feeling of having the time of my life, and that’s very special to me.”

The fact that Davina is someone not just admired by the general public, but trusted too, is arguably what’s behind the success of her latest book. In *Menopausal*, she discusses the apparent embarrassment, shame and fear behind the change, blowing away perceptions and encouraging openness and discussion about the subject.

This isn’t the first time the presenter has been vocal about life’s true challenges. In her own autobiography, she lifted the lid on the highs and lows she has encountered, including drug addiction and a fractured relationship with her mother.

The presenter has also been outspoken recently in criticising the trend for cancel culture. Speaking on entrepreneur Steven Bartlett’s podcast, *The Diary of a CEO*, she slammed the failure of those in the public eye to express real feelings for fear of finding work projects binned or sidelined. She added: “No one says what they think or believe anymore.”

If anyone can put a sense of honesty back into the discourse, it’s Davina. Never one to shy away from deliberation or debate, she refuses to toe the media line.

In fact, while the brilliant brunette has contributed so much to UK culture over the past three decades, it could be said that her most important work is yet to come...



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GARDENING

Springing INTO LIFE

THE CHANGES YOU NEED TO BE MAKING TO YOUR GARDEN BEFORE SPRING COMES AROUND

We may bemoan dropping temperatures and wet weather, but the good news is that spring is edging ever closer.

And while the realities of sunny mornings and technicoloured flower beds are still a distance away, we need to be preparing our outdoor spaces for spring now, if 2023 is to be a fertile year. Here are six ways you can start preparing your garden for the sunnier days to come.

Plan and purchase: There's nothing like planning the first steps on a task, so even though it's cold and wintry outside, now is the time to be selecting and ordering the summer-flowering bulbs and seeds that will make your garden look splendid. You'll be planting these in early spring, so get them ready now.

Sow good: Some of your summer seeds will require longer in the soil, so you may want to consider sowing some now. Included in these are geraniums, begonias, peppers and aubergines. Start them off in a heated propagator to give them a head start.

Tip-top tidy-up: It's cold out, but that shouldn't stop you getting beds and borders in order. Removing debris and decaying matter will be the biggest job, but consider the need to repair wood, cut back bushes, and give a new lease of life to paths and walkways.

Green clean: If you have a greenhouse, now is the time to take it back to its bare bones, ready for what you're about to bring in during the spring.

A clear-out and clean-up will leave your transparent studio ready to go.

The rain game: You may as well take advantage of the rainy season by installing a water butt and collecting water in time for the spring. Not only is it better for the environment compared to using the tap or a hose, but a number of plant varieties actually grow better with rainwater, including camellias and rhododendrons.





GARDENING

FlowerPOWER

FOUR FANTASTIC FLOWER SHOWS IN THE UK TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2023

There's nothing that feels more like summer than the blooming buds and luscious lawns of a flower show, and in the UK we're treated to an incredible array of events that cater for every type of green-fingered enthusiast.

Harrogate Flower Show: April 20-23
One of the earliest shows on the calendar, this Yorkshire gem is great for children looking to build a knowledge of outside spaces, with a variety of activities designed to inspire young minds. For adults, there's the floral art marquee, the largest in Britain, as well as a wealth of displays and presentations – many with a practical edge.

Chelsea Flower Show: May 23-27
A royal favourite, the Chelsea Flower Show represents the pinnacle of our horticultural passions in the UK, showcasing an array of award-winning designs, an abundance of experts and a wealth of demonstrations designed to

inspire. More than 150,000 people attend the show every year, so booking early is recommended.

Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival: July 4-9
This festival claims to be the greatest flower show on Earth. Set in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace, with architecture, history, opulence and Britishness in abundance, it's difficult not to be wowed by beautiful show gardens, interactive activities for children, amazing flower displays and live music.

There's also shopping, demos and expert advice – offering a modern show in a traditional setting.

Tatton Park Flower Show: July 19-23
If you fancy venturing up north, head to Knutsford in Cheshire for a flower show that is much more a garden party than an exhibition. With shopping, dining and music, the bamboozling range of horticultural heroics acts as a brilliant background to the party atmosphere. All you require is sunshine.

Photo credit: theenglishgarden.co.uk, yourharrogate.co.uk, EdinburghGarden.com, Shutterstock.com, FHS, NELL HEPWORTH via housebeautiful.com



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TEETHING TERRORS

HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR BABY IS TEETHING AND USEFUL TRICKS TO HELP THEM

It's one of the biggest anguishes for any parent – seeing a baby or child in pain and not knowing what to do about it. One such pain that all our youngsters have to go through is teething, and while there's nothing you can do to stop those gnashers appearing, here are some useful tips for helping your child get through the discomfort.

DETECTION

In babies, the appearance of drool – and lots of it – is a tell-tale sign that teeth are on their way. Many parents opt for the handy neck cravat to prevent clothes from getting soaked. Also keep an eye out for your baby gnawing or chewing on any available surface, with red and sore gums showing that there's activity lurking below. A loss of appetite can indicate dental pain, but perhaps the biggest signal is the distress, grumpiness, moaning and sleeplessness that accompanies this stage.

HELP

We all look to quickfire solutions when our children are ill, but teething is something you have to let progress in its own time, so really your only option is to try to limit the discomfort. Paracetamol and ibuprofen will take the edge off pain, while a number of parents opt for teething powders. A teething chew – usually made out of rubber or silicon, and which can be kept in the freezer for a great cooling sensation – will undoubtedly provide relief. Teething gel and even some frozen banana can also offer those troubled gums a bit of light relief. Of course, the biggest cure of them all is one we can all give in abundance and is completely free every time – a nice big hug.





How to make a warming BEAN & TOMATO SOUP

Set your pulse racing on World Pulses Day this February, with this delicious bean and tomato soup. It's thick, creamy and suitable for vegans. It's also an absolute doddle to make, though you will need a blender or food processor.

BEAN AND TOMATO SOUP (Serves 4-6 people)

You will need:

- 2 tbsp olive oil | 1 clove of garlic (minced) | ½ tsp dried oregano | ½ tsp dried thyme | ½ tsp fresh chopped rosemary | ¼ tsp chilli flakes | Heaped tbsp tomato purée | 1 tsp brown sugar | 400g tin of finely chopped tomatoes or sieved tomatoes (passata) | 500ml vegetable stock | 400g tin butter beans | Salt and pepper | Chopped parsley to decorate

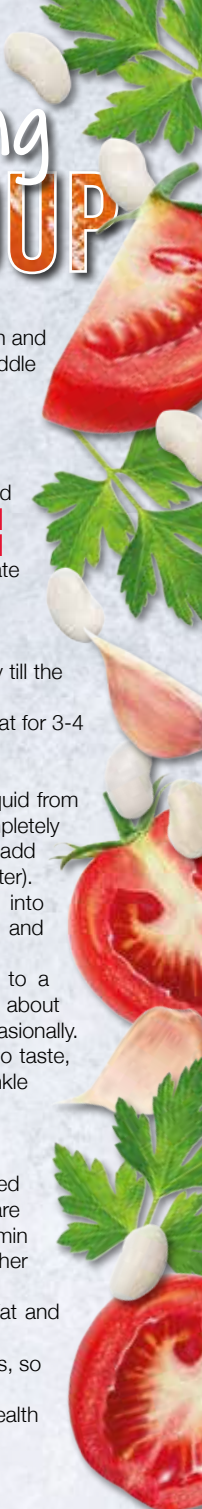
How to make:

- > Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan.
- > Add the garlic, oregano, thyme, rosemary and chilli flakes, and cook gently till the garlic is soft.
- > Add the tomato purée and sugar, and cook over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes.
- > Pour in the tomatoes and stock and give it a stir.
- > In a blender, purée the beans with the liquid from the can till the mixture is completely smooth (if it seems very thick, add a tablespoon or two of water). Pour the bean purée into the tomato mixture, and stir well.
- > Bring the mixture to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- > Add salt and pepper to taste, pour into bowls, sprinkle with parsley, and enjoy.

Health benefits of pulses:

- > Pulses – such as lentils, dried beans, peas and chickpeas – are a good source of protein, vitamin B, iron, zinc, potassium and other micronutrients
- > They are low in calories, low in fat and rich in fibre
- > They contain complex carbohydrates, so you feel fuller for longer
- > The fibre in pulses helps improve heart health and lowers blood cholesterol.

(Source, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021)



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FERRY GOOD



WHY OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE HUMBLE FERRY IS RETURNING, AND THE BENEFITS OF TRAVELLING ON ONE

To many, the ferry brings back pre-Eurotunnel days when, barring the process of boarding an airplane, our only connection with mainland Europe and beyond was via boat or ferry.

The ease with which tunnelled travel (including the Eurostar) now connects us with Europe has diminished the slow, clunky, often clumsy nature of the ferry; yet in the past couple of COVID-affected years, we've once again embraced this old-school method of travel, and here's why:

EXPERIENCE

Boarding a boat, particularly with a young family, can be a thrilling experience, with the excitement of setting sail and views across open seas. For a small child, arriving at a port bustling with industry and movement can be mesmerising. Effectively, your holiday starts as soon as you board the boat.

COST

The cost of travel has risen across the board. While ferries are sometimes noted as being expensive, they can still be one of the most affordable methods to reach the mainland if you book off-peak and look around for promotions and offers. This is particularly

true if there are multiple people in one car.

POST-COVID CONSIDERATIONS

Unlike aircraft, ferries offer ample space, with wide passenger areas, the privacy of your own vehicle when boarding and departing and, most importantly, access to ample fresh air.

FACILITIES

While not quite at the grade of the cruise ship megavessels that roam our seas, many ferries have an assortment of cafés, restaurants, bars, music clubs, cinemas, entertainment lounges and, in some cases, even splash pools.

LUGGAGE

Unlike most other modes of transport, there are no restrictions on luggage when taking a ferry. In short, if you can pack it, you can take it.

RELIABILITY

In (almost) all weathers, your trusty ferry will keep going, and with providers having invested hundreds of millions of pounds in new fleets, ferries have also never been safer.



HAPPY DAYS

While our reliance on technology becomes greater every year, so too does our interaction with the world around us. For all the criticism levelled at them, our communications devices and, specifically, the apps on them, have offered us a far greater understanding of the world. With that in mind, here are five apps that offer you the chance to broaden your horizons in 2023.

BACKDROP

Backdrop isn't a wallpaper app, as its name may suggest. Instead, it's a location discovery platform that aims to help you become more familiar with your surroundings. Rather than listing businesses and attractions, it turns the spotlight on interesting houses, colourful spaces and quirky local elements.

CENTER STAGE

A US app that can instantly help you value trading cards. Although the technology is still in its infancy, with identifiable cards in the sports of NFL, baseball, basketball and hockey, the plan is to incorporate UK sports, as well as Pokémon and other games-based card collectables.

OTTERRAL LIFE

A habit-tracking app that goes well beyond the norm of health and fitness. Instead, Otterral Life gives you the opportunity to input everything from studies to collections, guiding you and reminding you of daily tasks, while helping you steer clear of temptation elsewhere.

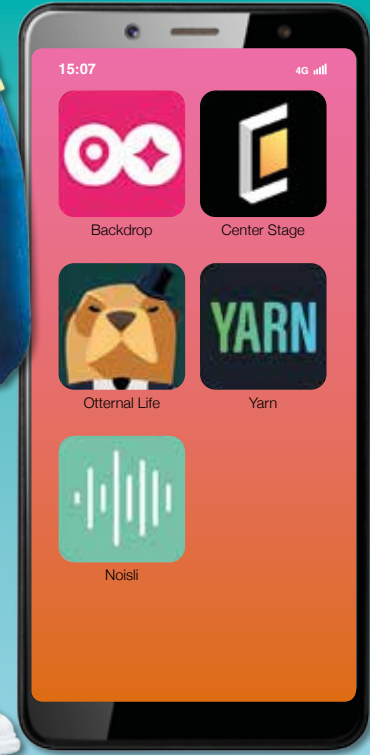
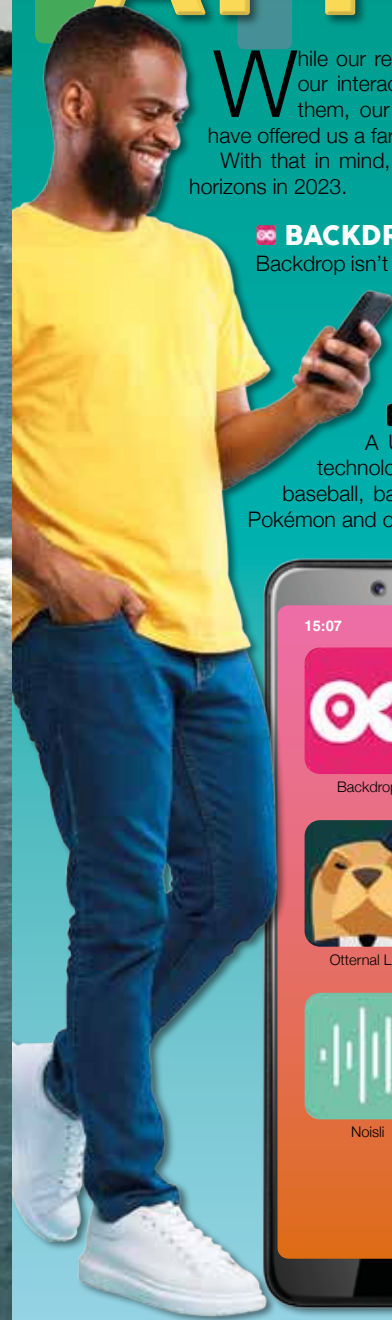
YARN

Go back to basics with this app that aims to help readers revisit the simple pleasures of storytelling.

Rather than elaborate videos, films or animations, Yarn offers app users a simple choice of stories presented in text message form. Episodes and conversations are updated daily, and you can enjoy stories from several categories, including mystery, romance, comedy, sci-fi, fantasy, and more.

NOISLI

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Plan for the future, protect your interests and preserve your wealth

Property Life Interest Trust Wills are becoming increasingly popular among couples due to the desire to preserve family assets for younger generations. But many are not familiar with these types of Wills or realise their benefit until speaking with a solicitor.

Property Life Interest Trust Wills can be of particular benefit to couples considering planning for future care and preservation of assets. Specialist advice on Property Life Interest Trust Wills can provide for both protecting the financial position and living arrangements of the surviving spouse, as well as protecting assets for future generations. For couples with children from a previous relationship, Property Life Interest Trust Wills can also prove an effective legal solution.

Taking advice and making early decisions to plan effectively

It is often the case that a couple's main asset is their family home, and many are conscious of this when considering planning their estate and inheritance for their loved ones. However, many couples can limit their ability to effectively plan and preserve their estate, or limit their available options for this, if planning their estate is left too late. This is certainly the case in respect of how their home will be treated upon death. The earlier advice is sought, the better in this regard.

How your property is owned is important

Property can be held jointly in one of two ways. Property held as "Joint Tenants" will pass automatically to the surviving owner under survivorship rules whereas, property held as "Tenants in Common" will pass under the terms of a Will. For couples to effectively plan their estate, it is often necessary for their main residence to be owned as Tenants in Common, providing each with a % share ownership which can be directed into a Trust upon death.

What is a Property Life Interest Trust Will and what does it do?

A solicitor is able to re-organise a couple's ownership of a property alongside preparing a Will for you, so as to ring fence each individual's

property share in a Trust for future generations and identified beneficiaries. The surviving spouse/partner is protected by having a lifetime right of residence in the property and can be one of the trustees (managers) of the Trust.

Therefore, the gift of your respective share in your principal residence at death is made to your trustees on trust and is subject to the surviving spouse/partner's right to live in the property for their lifetime. The Trust can be flexible in that the surviving spouse/partner will be able to move to another property using all or part of the value of the property.

Any surplus capital not used in the purchase of a new property can be invested and the income can be paid to the surviving spouse/partner for their lifetime. The surviving spouse or partner can decide to make gifts to the family if they do not need the surplus capital or income.

Property Life Interest Trust Wills are very flexible, with the surviving spouse/partner even able to rent out the property and receive the rental income.

These types of Wills and arrangements can often be recommended where couples (married or unmarried) wish to plan for future care and preservation of assets for future generations and/or provide for children from a previous relationship, whilst at the same time providing security and peace of mind to the surviving spouse/partner.

Speak to an expert from Holmes & Hills Solicitors

It is always a good idea to take advice when thinking about planning for the future, planning your estate and planning for care. When considering whether Life Interest Trust Wills are appropriate for your circumstances and wishes, your solicitor will also consider your Inheritance Tax position. As mentioned, it is advisable to seek advice sooner rather than later to ensure all legal solutions and options remain available to you.

For expert advice on planning for the future, contact Holmes & Hills on 01787 475312 or email advice@holmes-hills.co.uk and organise to speak with one of our specialists from your local Holmes & Hills office.

Are you looking for an ECO HOME?

IS THE GRASS ALWAYS GREENER WHEN IT COMES TO ECO HOMES?

We live in an era of eco sustainability in our homes, yet is eco design all it's cracked up to be, and do the negatives balance the positives for conscious consumers looking to create a home that has environmental excellence at its heart? Here, we look at the pros and cons of green homes.

PROS OF ECO HOMES

- > **Cost:** The trend for going green with our homes is supported wholeheartedly by local government. That means grants, subsidies and initiatives will bring certain costs down. If your structure benefits from elements such as rainwater harvesting and solar panels, your running costs will undoubtedly be lower than for a standard home.
- > **The planet:** Prioritising the homes in which we live can also help us feel as though we are playing a part in the bigger picture. After all, the commitments we make now are setting up the next generation for a better life.
- > **Regulations:** Future-proofing our homes for rules and regulations that may come about in the years ahead means we are investing now rather than paying further down the line.

CONS OF ECO HOMES

- > **Cost:** While green initiatives can save us money, the sourcing of some eco-friendly materials comes at a higher upfront cost. After all, going green is very rarely the cheapest option.
- > **Longevity:** While we know a lot about standardised building materials that have helped us map out huge communities, some of the newer green fabrication technologies are untested over the long term. Without the benefit of longevity testing, they may be more liable to having to be replaced or repaired as time goes on.
- > **Ratio:** While every environmental action makes a difference, the cost of investing in our homes may be at the expense of green initiatives we can undertake elsewhere (like buying an electric car) that would make a greater overall impact.



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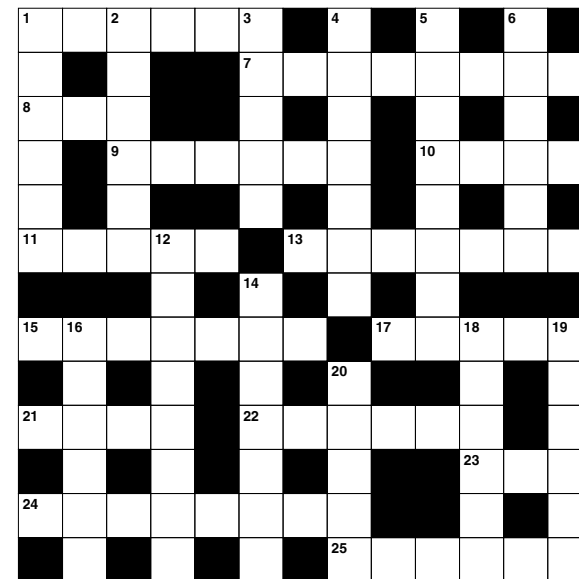
Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

1. Mexican cloak (6)
7. Swamping (8)
8. Belgian town (3)
9. Of the immediate past (6)
10. Place with temporary accommodation (4)
11. Standards (5)
13. Sharply (7)
15. Give up (7)
17. Draw or bring out (5)
21. Percussion instrument (4)
22. Popular round fruits (6)
23. Annoy (3)
24. Non-functioning period (8)
25. Thin candles (6)

DOWN

1. Points (anag) (6)
2. Closer (6)
3. Proposal; suggestion (5)
4. Act of touching (7)
5. Taught (8)
6. Hard tooth coating (6)
12. Memorial (8)



14. Pertaining to plants (7)
16. Subatomic particle such as a nucleon (6)
18. Bearlike (6)
19. Calls forth (6)
20. Surprise result (5)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Valentine's Day was first declared a holiday by a pope. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I made the feast of Saint Valentine an official holiday.
- ▶ The first known official celebration of Saint Valentine's Day took place in Paris on February 14, 1400.
- ▶ Each year, 10 per cent of all marriage proposals happen on February 14.
- ▶ Around 25 million Valentine's cards are sent in the UK every year.
- ▶ UK pet owners will spend £200million on Valentine's gifts for their animals.
- ▶ Valentine's Day is the second biggest 'event' of the year following Christmas. It is estimated that the UK will spend around £880million on Valentine's Day.

Facts courtesy of Funky Pigeon

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A HUMIDIFIER FOR YOUR SKIN?

1. Reduce water loss

If you suffer with dry or ageing skin, then a humidifier can help to reduce water loss and keep your skin looking plumped up and moisturised by balancing out low levels of moisture in the air.

2. Manage skin disorders

Skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis, rosacea and psoriasis can all be made worse by dry, air-conditioned or centrally heated rooms. However, by using a humidifier, moisture is added to the air, and you should see a vast improvement in your skin.

3. Prevent skin infections

Certain bacteria and viruses thrive in both high and low humidity and these can lead to skin infections. A humidifier can help to balance out the humidity levels in a room and prevent microbes from affecting your complexion.

4. Protect the skin from allergens and irritants

Low humidity levels affect the barrier function of the skin, which leaves you susceptible to irritants and allergens in the air. A humidifier can help to increase humidity levels and keep your skin protected from external factors.

TOP TIPS FOR USING A HUMIDIFIER

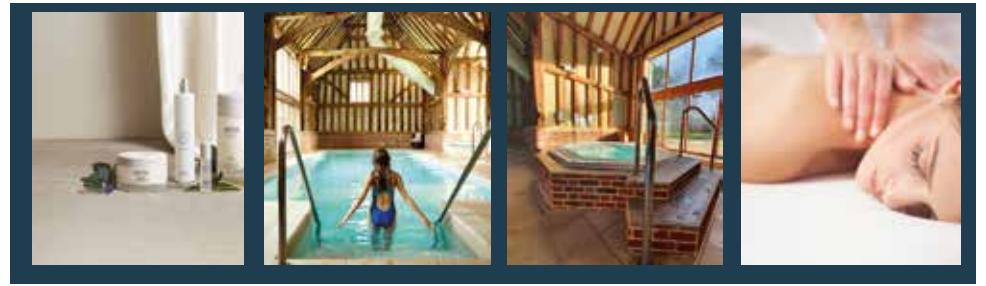
- > Use bottled or distilled water as these contain fewer microorganisms and a lower mineral content
- > Clean your humidifier regularly – once every 3-4 days
- > Switch on your humidifier before you start your daily skincare routine

BEST HUMIDIFIERS 2023

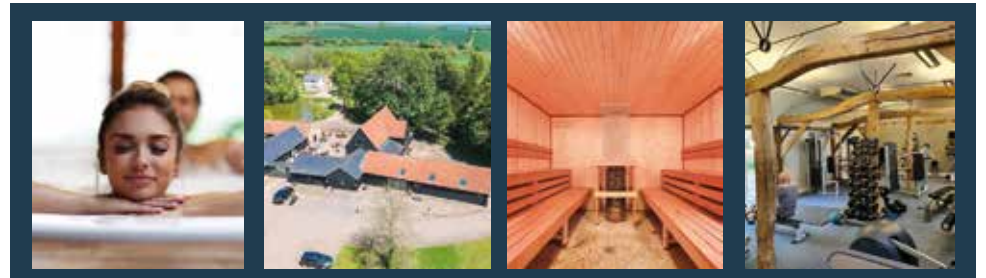
- > Best all-rounder: Aennon Cool Mist Humidifier
- > Best for winter: Vicks VH845 Warm Mist Humidifier
- > Best budget buy: Pro Breeze Premium 3.5L Ultrasonic Cool Mist Humidifier
- > Best for large rooms: Elechomes Top-Fill Ultrasonic Humidifier.

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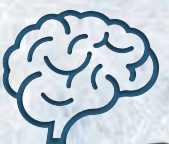
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FEEL THE CHILL!

ARE YOU READY TO EMBRACE THE COLD WEATHER AND EXERCISE OUTSIDE THIS WINTER?

While 'feel the burn' is a phrase you're likely to hear when it comes to physical activity, working out in cold temperatures comes with a whole host of benefits.

Read on to discover the top four reasons why you should exercise outside this winter.

BURN MORE CALORIES

If you are looking to lose weight, then working outside in the winter can help you to achieve your goals. This is because colder temperatures force your body to work harder in order to regulate its core temperature. As your body works to get warm, your metabolism goes into overdrive and burns more calories and fat.

BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Bugs and viruses are everywhere in the winter months, so it can be a good idea to look at ways to boost your immune system. Not only can exercising outside help to fight off the symptoms of a cold, but it also forces your immune system to work harder.

BETTER CARDIO WORKOUT

When you exercise in colder temperatures, your blood vessels narrow and your heart and lungs work harder. This means that you can enjoy an enhanced cardiovascular workout, which helps to maintain good heart health. Plus, you don't have to exercise for as long to enjoy the same results.

IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

If you are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder, which makes you feel down during the darker months of the year, then exercising outside can help to boost your mood. In fact, research suggests that a good workout can be four times more effective than taking antidepressants in improving the symptoms of depression. Getting outside can also help to replenish your vitamin D levels.



NATURAL ALTERNATIVES TO

toothpaste

Did you know that most mass-produced toothpastes include ingredients that can be found in shampoos, soaps, hand sanitisers and even antifreeze? Not the most pleasant of thoughts, so why not consider a more natural way to clean your teeth?

Essential oils

Essential oils such as peppermint, cinnamon and eucalyptus are all known for their ability to improve your oral health. All you need to do is mix a few drops of essential oil with the same quantity of water and then use this liquid to clean your teeth.

Baking soda

Baking soda is highly effective at removing plaque and stubborn stains caused by coffee, wine and smoking. Simply dip your brush in baking soda and then brush your teeth as normal. Mix in a few drops of peppermint oil if you miss that minty fresh taste.

Coconut oil

Are you familiar with the term 'oil pulling'? This is an ancient oral health technique that involves swishing a tablespoon of a carrier oil around your mouth for up to 20 minutes a day. Research has shown that coconut oil used in this way can reduce plaque and fight gingivitis.

Sea salt

Salt is antibacterial, making it a good choice for removing bacteria, plus it has the ability to naturally whiten your teeth. As with baking soda, dip your brush in sea salt and then clean your teeth gently to avoid abrasion. Alternatively, mix with water to create a chemical-free mouthwash that can help to prevent gum disease and soothe toothache.

Turmeric

Although this bright yellow spice may not seem like the best solution for achieving shiny white teeth, it is actually highly beneficial for your oral health due to its anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-plaque properties. Create your own DIY turmeric toothpaste by mixing ¼ tsp of turmeric powder with just enough mustard oil to make a paste. Brush and then rinse thoroughly.





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FASHION

BRACE

WHY THE ERA OF THE BRACELET IS COMING BACK, FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

For some of us, bracelets may be confined to our youths, conjuring memories of an armful of neon bangles, faded friendship bracelets and even the odd festival wristband. And yet bracelets are fast becoming a hot fashion statement once more, for both sexes.

In recent years, much of this resurging trend can be credited to high street jewellery brand Pandora, whose signature heart clasp snake chain bracelet graces the wrists of tens of thousands of women in the UK.

Making the ideal gift for any woman in your life, the bracelet's genius lies not in its simple and stylish design, but in the hundreds of different charms that can be added to it, making it utterly unique to the wearer. From Mother's Day motifs, birthstones and even special edition collaborations – *Harry Potter*, *Disney* and *Star Wars* to name a few – there really is

a charm for every occasion.

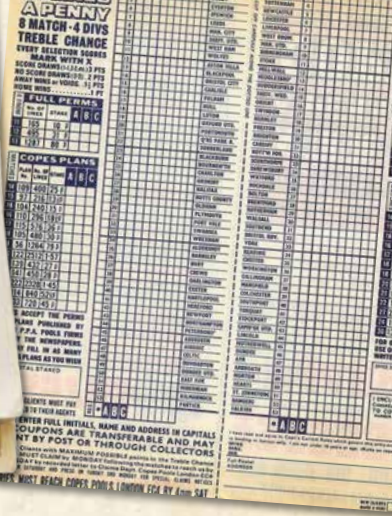
For men, Pandora sells a range of stylish leather bands that can be adorned with charms. There is also a wealth of online retailers selling beautiful wristwear that can be engraved with a personalised message or child's name. More stylish than a 'best dad in the world' key fob, bracelets are a modern and fashionable way for a father or husband to wear a token of love.

Even the humble friendship bracelet has had a makeover in recent times, with jewellers such as Oliver Bonas and Monica Vinader creating woven cord bands that almost look homemade, were it not for the solid gold beading or diamond-studded charms that adorn them.

In short, the bracelet is the ideal fashion accessory for those who prefer something a little more understated, while still boasting sartorial kudos.

YOURSELF





WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FOOTBALL POOLS?

Back in 1961, Viv Nicholson won more than £152,000 (around £3.5million in today's money) on the football pools. She promised to "spend, spend, spend". And that's what she did, splurging on luxuries like a pink Cadillac and exotic holidays before the money dried up.

The pools were launched 100 years ago this month, and in its heyday, 14 million people took part each week, hoping to win a fortune. Here's how it all started.

Football became increasingly popular in the years after the First World War, but betting on match results was illegal.

Liverpudlian telegraph operator Sir John Moores CBE, eager to make money, heard about a system devised by John Jervis Barnard from Birmingham. The idea was that punters bet on the outcome of matches, with the winnings coming from the 'pool' of money gambled – minus 10 per cent to cover 'management costs'.

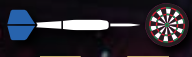
But Barnard's business was failing. Moores and two of his friends reckoned they could do better and started distributing coupons outside Manchester United's football ground. To take part, punters had to predict 'score draws' – games that would end in a draw with at least one goal. Because Moores claimed it was a game of skill and only accepted postal orders, not cash, he managed to get around strict gambling laws.

At first, the new company lost money, and Moores' friends gave up. But Moores' wife said she'd "rather be married to a man haunted by failure than one haunted by regret". So Moores carried on – and less than a decade later had earned £1million (£82million in today's money).

Moores, who was knighted in 1980, died aged 97 in 1993. A year later, the National Lottery was set up, and the popularity of the pools faded. While you can still play the game online, there are now easier ways to dream big – without predicting football scores.



Photo credit: onlinebetting.org.uk/betting-guides/football/the-football-pools



BULLSEYE



ENGLISHMAN MICHAEL SMITH BECOMES DARTS WORLD CHAMPION AFTER PLAYING HIS PART IN THE GREATEST LEG OF DARTS EVER SEEN

They say that to be the best, you have to beat the best, and Michael Smith's elevation to world number one – as he took the 2023 world title in January – certainly made true that statement.

Not only did he see off three-time champion Michael van Gerwen at Alexandra Palace in a memorable final, but he also gave the sport what is being described as the most memorable leg of them all.

It came during the second set, and saw two of the sport's titans begin by scoring treble-20 maximums. The next throws also saw the players hit their respective trebles, setting up each on a legendary nine-dart finish. Van Gerwen went first, knocking off treble 20 twice, before faltering on double 12.

With the crowd barely able to reset, Smith stepped up – taking the more conventional nine-dart finish route of treble 20, treble 19, then nailing the double 12, for arguably the most amazing leg of darts in the competition's 29-year history. Smith seized the momentum, rallying thereafter to take the title 7-4 in sets.

While 'Bully Boy', from St Helens, is excelling in what is a modern, showbiz era of professional darts – with packed arenas, primetime TV billing and a semi-celebrity status for the game's major stars – Smith epitomises something reassuringly old school about the sport. He is a 'larger' man, is adorned with tattoos, and reassuringly doesn't possess any of the media training associated with those in other sports.

For example, having come through his semi-final with Belgian Gabriel Clemens, Smith revealed that he'd spend most mornings during the tournament in bed watching repeats of *Catchphrase* and *Supermarket Sweep*.

What's clear, though, is that when the evening comes around, the only programming on display was three decades of dedication to his craft, where laser-like hand-to-eye coordination has made the 32 year old the best darts player in the world.

Photo credit: ANDY RAIN/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock

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