

PESTS AND DISEASES

Because we are an island, new plant pests in Britain used to be kept to a minimum. However, because of increasing international plant trade and the mild, wet winters and warm summers we are experiencing, numbers are starting to escalate. In the past 30 years, at least 25 new pests have become established in the UK. Our changing climate may make our previously hostile environment more favourable to alien pests, so when they do arrive they can become established and spread.



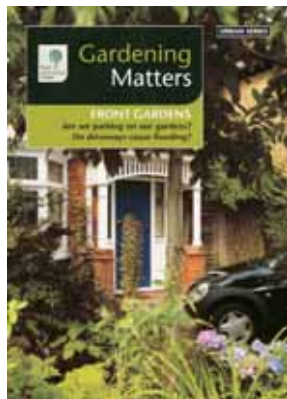
- Southern green shield bug arrived in London in 2003 and is now widespread.
- Found in London in 2006, hollyhock weevil is now spreading.
- Fuchsia gall mite was first discovered in Brazil in the 1970s and appeared in mainland Britain in 2007.
- A native of central and southern Europe and Asia, berberis sawfly (pictured below) appeared in Essex in 2000 and is now defoliating berberis and mahonia plants across England.



- One of the best known and most cursed of our garden pests, lily beetle (pictured above) arrived in Britain in 1940 but its spread suddenly accelerated in the 1990s. It is now well established in southern England and has spread up to Scotland.
- The Mediterranean rosemary leaf beetle appeared in Cheshire in 1963 and is now common in London and the home counties.

FRONT GARDENS

- Think before you pave over your entire front garden to provide a convenient parking space. Tarmac and concrete are impermeable materials, so when it rains, rather than soaking into the soil, the water runs off driveways into street drains. If these overflow, the excess water can flood people's homes. *Gardening Matters: Front Gardens* is an RHS leaflet: www.rhs.org.uk/learning/research/gardeningmatters/index.htm



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Fork & spade
- Compost
- Grit
- Watering can
- Hose
- Sprinklers
- Hoe
- Fertiliser
- Plant food
- Mulch

For more information:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice
www.plantforlife.info

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THE EASY GUIDE TO GARDENING & CLIMATE CHANGE



Photography: Tim Sandall/*The Garden*, Neil Hepworth, RHS

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INTRODUCTION

A changing climate could have consequences for all gardeners - we may benefit from a longer, warmer growing season but this may lead to drought situations, water shortages and an increase in pests and diseases. And although our winters tend to be milder, they are also wetter and we need to be prepared to deal with waterlogging and flooding. No-one knows for definite what may happen to our climate in the future and how our plants and gardens will adapt to the changing conditions, but this is the advice that has been gathered so far.

BE PREPARED FOR:

DROUGHT: Warmer, drier summers will lead to more droughts and in turn this will have an effect on the plants that will grow successfully. It will also affect water and water supplies.

FLOODING & WATERLOGGING: Warmer, wetter winters and unseasonal downpours are possible, leading to flooding and waterlogging.

PEST PROBLEMS: The changing climate has increased the number of new pests and diseases that have now established in the UK.

PLANTING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES: These changing conditions will present gardeners with both challenges and opportunities. Some plant species will thrive - but others will be more difficult to grow.

TIME TO TAKE ACTION

IMPROVE YOUR SOIL: By paying more attention to your garden soil, you can combat many of the effects of climate change. Digging in plenty of organic matter in autumn will help soils retain water in summer droughts and binds clay soils into crumbs so water drains away more quickly after a downpour. It also makes water more available to plant roots which can grow through the gaps between the crumbs.

CHANGE YOUR HABITS: Assess the conditions of your garden - does it suffer from flooding, drought or both? - and change your planting schemes and gardening practices accordingly (see panel right).

CARE FOR YOUR PLANTS: Plants that are looked after and growing in ideal conditions are more likely to survive the onslaught of drought, flooding or pest attack. The *Easy Guide to Organic Gardening & Recycling* has more information.



DROUGHT CONDITIONS

If you garden in drier areas of the country, drought during summer, when temperatures and sunlight are at their highest levels, is a common problem. However, by making some careful selections, and using simple techniques, dramatic plantings can be achieved that require low maintenance and have minimal moisture demands.

- When planning a new garden or border, use plants with silvery, glossy, hairy, narrow or fleshy leaves, which tend to be more drought tolerant (right).
- Dig in plenty of organic matter, which improves the soil's water-holding capacity



- Water wisely - plants prefer a good soaking periodically with water directed at their base rather than the foliage. *The Easy Guide to Watering & Feeding* has lots more information.

FLOODS AND WATERLOGGING

Plant roots require water and air to function properly. Waterlogging leads to a lack of oxygen and results in poor root function, root disease and death. If your garden suffers from waterlogging or flooding, there are steps you can take to address the problem.

- Improve the soil structure and drainage by deep digging in autumn and working plenty of organic matter into the soil.
- Grow plants in raised beds of soil at least 20cm deep above the surrounding area (below).
- Choose permeable surfaces, such as gravel or bark chips, for driveways and paths, which let rain soak in rather than running off into the lawns and borders.

- Dig out a ditch or seasonal pond at the lowest part of the garden to catch surplus water and let it soak in slowly.
- Apply a dressing of fertiliser in spring to plants that have suffered winter waterlogging, and mulch over the root area. Foliar feeds in the growing season may help improve leaf colour and encourage new root growth. Water well in dry spells as plants will be more susceptible to drought stress.
- Choose plants that are likely to grow well in wet soils. *The Easy Guide to Managing Your Soil* contains many suggestions and additional information on dealing with waterlogged soils.



Expect to see more of exotic planting schemes featuring palms and fruit trees

PLANT WINNERS AND LOSERS

PLANT WINNERS:

Expect to see more of:

- Palms including European fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*), *Trachycarpus fortunei* and Canary Island date palm (*Phoenix canariensis*)
- Traditional Mediterranean perennials such as *Bougainvillea*, creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*), red passion flower (*Passiflora racemosa*), *Plumbago auriculata*, blue rock bindweed (*Convolvulus sabatius*) and blue marguerite (*Felicia amelloides*)
- more tender fruit species such as citrus trees, apricots, nectarines and peaches, olives, figs, grapes, kiwi and pomegranate

PLANT LOSERS:

Plants that are likely to suffer:

- Traditional 'English country garden' favourites - rambling roses, lupins and delphiniums can still be grown, but may need more

devoted attention.

- Winter-cool loving plants: crocus, daffodils, bluebells, snowdrops
- Summer-cool loving plants: rhododendrons, primulas, alpines, many conifers, birch, willow, ferns, mosses and fescue grasses (currently used for lawns)

SAFE BETS: Plants that can withstand hotter summers and warmer, wetter winters include: giant reed (*Arundo donax*), acacia, myrtle (*Myrtus communis*), Italian cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*), oleander (*Nerium oleander*), weeping bottlebrush (*Callistemon viminalis*), eucalyptus, cabbage palm (*Cordyline australis*), bay (*Laurus nobilis*), artemisia, buddleia, Mexican orange blossom (*Choisya ternata*), fuchsia, yucca, lavender (particularly *Lavandula dentata*), pittosporum, tamarix, *Viburnum tinus* and grasses such as rye grass and Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*).



Traditional English cottage garden plants will need more tender loving care to succeed