



## WOOTTON COURTENEY GARDENING CLUB

### Chairwoman's Report 2026

The Gardening Club bubbled along nicely in 2025. With more trips than ever, it was a busy year. Our speakers covered a wide variety of topics, and we were lucky enough to host a talk by Dr Ken Thompson in July to celebrate the Club's 25th anniversary. Admittedly, in our April meeting we endured a stultifying talk on rejuvenating tired gardens, after which we needed rejuvenating ourselves, but on the whole it was an active, enjoyable year with lots to give us food for thought. Our trips included a visit to Rob Gudge's Desert to Jungle nursery of exotics, and a potpourri of perennials at Little Ash Bungalow. I particularly enjoyed the Seedling Swap at Jeremy's - an interesting range of plants, Simon's wonderful teas and a truck-load of tomato seedlings!

A group of us visited Good Vibe Veg in March, just as the growing season was starting, and saw how Adam and Leighanne raise thousands of seedlings in their greenhouses, elevating them on platforms to prevent them being feasted on by mice. It can't have been easy to maintain veg-box production during the long dry summer of 2025, so all credit to them.

Despite the lack of rain, the Flower and Produce Show was a resounding success, with Best in Show going to a humongous cabbage grown by...who was it again? Anyway, it was a delightful afternoon and I was really glad to see how enthusiastically everyone took part. I'm already planning my exhibits for this year's Show - Jeremy's trombone squash lizard thing last year has inspired me to have a shot at 'Most Amusing Vegetable with Embellishments' this time.

As ever, I'd like to thank my committee, without whom I think I'd be swivel-eyed and squawking by now. They really did their bit last year, offering ideas, practical solutions, support, and hand-me-down 'Gardening Which?' magazines (much appreciated - thank you, Nigel!). Thank you to Peter Clapham for coming up with the idea of a Members Open Garden event - and to Jeremy for taking on responsibility for it, in addition to his reports from Good Vibe Veg - and to Peter Stenner, whose management of the accounts has been exemplary. And, of course, thank you to Ingrid, without whom the Flower Show wouldn't actually happen; we mustn't forget it's the proceeds from the Show which allow the Club to help fund the school visits to Good Vibe Veg.

I feel blessed to have such a friendly, enterprising bunch of people in the Club - you are all remarkably individual in your enthusiasms and so full of energy. I've occasionally visited other local gardening clubs over the past few years and they seem rather feeble by comparison, with stories of declining membership numbers and a sense of impending disintegration. I'm determined not to let that happen in Wootton Courtenay, and there's no sign of it in your company.

My personal criteria for this year is to avoid orthopaedic surgeons, the property market and vine weevils. I hope 2026 steers clear of all three and proves to be an excellent year for all of us!

**Marion Jay**