

## Brenchley & Matfield Horticultural Society – Talk – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026

### Preparing for a Village Flower Show – Jean Schofield

Flower showing can be a competitive business. If you thought those prize blooms lined up in the RHS Pavilion at Chelsea went from freshly picked straight to display, well that's not quite the full story. We welcomed flower show judge **Jean Schofield** to our March talk, who revealed the tricks employed by wily gardeners to clinch the top awards. We had been lucky enough to secure Jean as the judge for our own summer show last year, when she provided fascinating insight on why one set of raspberries pipped another or why a particular perennial was cream of the crop.

Mindful of our upcoming spring show, Jean explained how to make your daffodils stand out from the crowd and shout "pick me, I'm a winner". We learned that the bottom petal should be perfectly aligned with the stalk, and this can be "helped" by gently massaging and twisting the stalk behind the bloom in a process called "clocking". The flower can also be "encouraged" to face upwards in the same way. Then carefully position (not plonk!) your daffodil in a vase supported with wet sand or shredded newspaper and maybe top with moss to go the extra mile.



Conditioning of flowers is also key to success, pick at least twenty-four hours ahead and condition your blooms and foliage by standing in fresh water somewhere cool. Changing the water, re-trimming the stalks (always at an angle) and adding a little feed, helps to avoid the dreaded wilt at show time. Use a paint brush to gently remove dust or bugs and a damp cloth to wipe leaves.

However, when it comes to fruit and vegetables, harvest closer to show time so they are fresh and don't dull or wrinkle. Preen and arrange them as beautifully as you can, a dish of dry play sand will stop your tomatoes rolling around.

Some of our members who will remain nameless, confessed to nefarious practices of sticking pins in tulips and wires in daffodils to keep their blooms standing proud. This was

met with amusement and mild disapproval; ideally any “enhancements” should be organic, a wooden skewer would be more forgivable. Nonetheless, Jean reminded us that the most important thing is to have fun, just give it a try and keep this wonderful tradition alive. No experience is needed to take part and enjoy the friendly rivalry. Even if you think your produce is not up to scratch, the chances are that others are having issues too and sometimes the least blemished exhibit wins first prize!

Our summer show takes place on 11<sup>th</sup> July at Matfield Fete, so start planning... what will you bring to the tent?

