

Brenchley & Matfield Horticultural Society – Talk – 8th April 2026

Themed Planting Schemes – Marie Shallcross

Our last talk of the season was by the garden designer Marie Shallcross who shared some novel ideas for incorporating themes into our gardens. Not just the more familiar period themes or colour schemes, but tailored planting to commemorate a special occasion, a person or maybe a favourite place or thing.

Do you have a Dave in your life? Well you could dedicate a border in his honour by just including plants that are named David! There are a surprising number, including David's Delight Rose, Dahlia David Howard, or Phlox Paniculata David. As so many varieties are named after people it's not as outlandish as it sounds. If you wanted to pay homage to an Elizabeth then thanks to royal floral tributes you'd be spoilt for choice.

You might even find a collection of plants that celebrate your greatest obsession. A fan-based theme could pay tribute to your favourite film series, for example planting the Dahlia Star Wars and the Magnolia Star Wars together with the Iris Princess Leia. May the garden forks be with you! You could also plant to accompany the theme of an upcoming special occasion. For a wedding or anniversary garden party, select flowers that match the bridal bouquet or colour scheme, or there are several species of pretty confetti plants, aptly named, that should suit such an occasion.

Themed planting requires research and planning and we were advised to start with a small area and keep it simple. Marie underlined the importance of ensuring plants are suitable for the conditions and recommended testing the soil. Our local soil is typically clay over sandstone bedrock and slightly acidic, but the mix can vary over different parts of a garden. However when choosing a theme, Marie encouraged us to go with our passion. It certainly gave us something different to think about. One of our members is now inspired to replant their garden in the colours of Norwich City Football Club!

