

Some background information about the Central England Quaker Meeting House Gardens Calendar photographed over 2024 – 5.

The initiative was supported by the Quaker Climate Action group from Central England Quakers to investigate and encourage sustainable ways of maintaining these gardens. Specific photos identify bee and butterfly friendly plants and reveal successful fruit and vegetable planting alongside good composting. A donation from the sale of these Calendars will encourage sustainable gardening workshops in 2026.

In 2018 Quakers in Britain committed to become a low carbon community and give reports on recycling, organic gardening, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and using alternative energy sources such as solar panels and electric vehicles. The Calendar highlights some of these commitments through the care for the gardens.

The suggested donation of £8 per calendar can be made by bank transfer to the Area Meeting General Fund, Sort code: 608301 Account number: 20508074 Account name: The Central England Area Quaker Meeting Charities Bank: Unity Trust Bank. Please use the reference 'Calendar'

Front page: From the top left, across down right to left from 1 to 16.

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| 1. Campanula (Trailing Bellflower) | 2. Hypericum (Magical Beauty) |
| 3. Dianthus (Sugar Plum) | 4. Rose |
| 5. Apple blossom | 6. Strawberry plant |
| 7. Rose | 8. Opium poppy |
| 9. Pyracantha (Firethorn) | 10. Cosmos |
| 11. Marigold | 12. Sorbus aucuparia (Rowan) |
| 13. Rose | 14. Phlox |
| 15. Jasmine | 16. Oxalis (Pink Woodsorrel) |

January: Selly Oak

Composting is the process by which plant material is heaped together to rot (decompose) to produce compost. It is a great way to make use of your garden waste – everything from lawn clippings, wood or hedge trimmings, faded flowers, weeds and plant-based kitchen waste, such as veg peelings, paper and cardboard.

Composting is great for garden biodiversity, with many kinds of fungi and soil micro-organisms contributing to the process, while worms, woodlice, slugs and other invertebrates also feed on the decaying material. These in turn provide food for birds, hedgehogs, toads and other valuable wildlife. It can be broken down over time in a compost bin or heap to produce crumbly organic matter that can be used as a mulch, soil conditioner and a constituent of potting compost. Hosting outdoor parties to cook marshmallows over a wood fire is a great winter activity.

February: Sutton Coldfield:

Hellebores belong to the buttercup family and flower from late winter into Spring. They grow well in fertile, moist soil and dislike extremes of weather including direct sunshine. Common Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) thrive in partial shade and crocuses are among the first to bloom in early Spring and provide essential food for early pollinators.

March: Barnt Green & Redditch

White flowers Himalayan Blackberry, Chamomile, Heather and Prunus Spire (Ornamental Cherry) flower in late Spring and attract pollinators such as this honeybee. The garden is maintained by Dragan Obrenovic, who is a keen forager and the meeting hosts a monthly Friends Cinema night.

April: Coventry

Flowers and herbs can be grown in the garden for medicinal purposes alongside flowers for decoration. Hypericum (Aaronsbeard St John's Wort) has been used as an antidote to depression, Allim Schoenoprasum (Chives) is a herb used in salads and Tanacetum parthenium (Feverfew) was traditionally used as a herb for relieving headaches, fever, inflammatory conditions, coughs, colds and arthritis. The Latin word *febrifugia*, means 'fever reducer' and feverfew is used as a herbal remedy for the prevention of migraine.

May: Hall Green

Cotoneaster, Fushia and Berberis are good deciduous shrubs and ground cover that provide flowers in late Spring and berries with autumnal colours in Autumn. They provide a low maintenance garden for a meeting house that has a valuable heritage, as a former Reading Room built in 1883, converted for use as a meeting house in the 1920s and has many beautiful stained-glass windows.

June: Kings Heath

The Laburnum tree outside the Meeting House creates a vibrant display of yellow flowers in May / June with specific roses in the back garden to complement the vibrant mosaic on the back wall. The mosaic was a commissioned work created by Caroline Jariwala, who is a Quaker and painter, visiting lecturer, exhibitions organiser and community artist. This was a legacy gift by Jim Patterson in memory of his wife Linda and other members of Moseley Road Institute and Kings Heath Meeting.

July: Warwick

As one of the oldest meeting houses in the region, the original meeting house was built in early 1680s but destroyed by fire to be rebuilt in 1695. There was a burial ground within the landholding and the respected Quaker William Dewsbury was buried there. The Meeting House was given up in 1909 and repurchased in 1949 and today the garden

is filled with wildflowers such as foxgloves, poppies, opium poppy, roses and blue geraniums. Planting and management for wildlife and biodiversity is ongoing.

August: Hartshill

There are a series of garden spaces at Hartshill Meeting House which includes a memorial rose garden, a front peace garden (established in 2011 with a peace pole) and an allotment with hedges and wildlife corridors planted with native shrubs and trees. The garden was once a cemetery for Friends and many gravestones remain in the garden to commemorate the history with specific trees in memory of Hilda Parnell, Joan Dyde, Ann Parkes and the Harrod family. There is a memorial bench at the back of the rose garden with native trees planted such as hawthorn, holly, gelder rose, wild raspberry and sycamore which provide food and shelter for nesting birds and insects.

September: Stourbridge

Stourbridge Meeting House was built in 1689 by Ambrose Crowley on a plot of land that he leased at a peppercorn rent. For the 300th anniversary of the Meeting House and garden in 1989, the Meeting purchased a Ginkgo tree (a gymnosperm named Ginkgo biloba), which is planted in the garden and 300 peppercorns were given to a descendent of Ambrose Crowley as payment of rent. The Ginkgo tree is one of the oldest trees on the Earth and has existed for over 200 million years. The garden also features gravestones from Quaker families originally buried in the cemetery. Two special Olive trees brought back by Hugh and Daphne Maw from their guided tours to the Holy Land in the 1980s sit beside two oak trees which may be over 200 years old.

October: Cotteridge

Cotteridge Meeting have created a strong witness to simplicity and sustainability and reduced the electricity used to heat and light the building by 80% and their solar panels generate more than they buy from their provider. The garden is planted with bee and bird friendly plants, with sculpture and stained-glass panels providing hidden gems of wonder and reflection. As Green Advices and Queries say: *Mountains, lakes, rivers and forests can all inspire us and provide places of peace and opportunities for worship.*

November: Bull Street

The current conference building and garden was constructed in 2002 but stands on the ground and cemetery of previous buildings dating back to 1702 (<https://bullstreet.quakermeeting.org/history/>). In the garden there are memorial stones of Quakers who had been buried on the site beside and rainwater is collected and stored for use in flushing toilets and watering the garden, helping to reduce the amount of water used. The back garden has a White Poppy Mosaic created by Caroline Jariwala in 2019 to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War, made possible by a legacy from Pam Williams who was a passionate believer in peace.

As a conference centre providing food, any surplus food is donated to the homeless charity Lets Feed Brum. The building is powered by 100% renewable electricity, upholding the Quaker values of stewardship, simplicity, and integrity.

December: Bournville

Bournville Meeting House was designed and built in 1905 by the Arts and Craft architect William Alexander Harvey. George and Elizabeth Cadbury together with Richard Cadbury built Bournville as a model village for employees at the Cadbury factory. Designed to be a 'garden village' the root of Quaker values remain to this day with a Christmas Fayre and Christmas Tree lighting up ceremony attended by thousands, with no alcohol available across the Bournville Village Trust. A statue to George Cadbury is placed in an alcove in the garden next to a bench on which to reflect on the rich legacy of Quakers in Bournville for over 120 years.

Back page: Knepp estate

As part of this year's project a trip to visit the Knepp Estate was undertaken to learn from their innovative approach to re-wilding and sustainable land management (<https://knepp.co.uk/>). From top to right photographs from this guided tour reveal:

1. Sallow scrub bank which Purple Emperor Butterflies feed on
2. Beavers introduced to Knepp have built a small river dam
3. Beavers have also built a larger dam at the bottom of the reservoir
4. Storks born this year getting ready to leave the nest and the established colony
5. Longhorn cattle roam free in the grounds
6. Ragwort provides insects and pollinators with food
7. Storks nesting at Knepp for the first time in 600 years since 2016
8. Female Purple Emperor butterfly

Thanks to the photographic team Phil, Teala, Billie-Jo and Judith Dearden and the editorial group, who have supported this publication. Any mistakes in the text are our responsibility. Additional information has been supplied by Dragan Obrenovic and specific flower names were contributed by Michael Parton (who attended Stourbridge Meeting House on Heritage Open Day), who recommends additional flowers to encourage biodiversity:

Campanula, Cyclamen, Echinacea, Erodium, Foxglove, Fuchsia, Garlic chives, Hardy Geranium, Helenium, Hellebores, Heliopsis, Hypericum, Linaria, Marjoram, Michaelmas daisy, Oregano, Oxalis, Penstemon, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Sedum, Thyme, Verbena