

# GARDEN NEWS EXPLODING INTO LIFE

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**A**s you are reading this, storm Doris may be a somewhat distant memory, although as I am writing it has been one week since she whirled through the Garden and we are still dealing with the aftermath of fallen branches, wood chips swept meters across the lawn and soggy grass underfoot. I hope that you may be able to read this with some sunshine peeking out of the clouds and that it will feel like spring is well and truly on its way.

Storms like Doris remind us of the force of nature, at times incredible, awe inspiring and terrifying. Most of the time, we are well protected from these visceral experiences, tucked safely inside and in the case of Doris, or others like her, this is only a good thing.

As a Gardener I generally spend much of my time outdoors, which I rate as one of the perks of the job. Due to this, I tend to check the weather forecast on a daily basis and what nature has in store for us dictates much of how we structure our working week. By the end of winter we are eagerly awaiting the days when the sun will come out, which never fails to boost our



mood, and I'm sure many of you will identify with this feeling.

I recently read an article by George Monbiot (environmental journalist and writer) and he made the case that there are times when we need some sort of jolt to the system and that this can come from experiences in nature, he says *"It is no longer rare to meet adults who have never swum except in a swimming pool, never slept except in a building, never run a mile or climbed a mountain, never been stung by a bee or a wasp..."* I'm not sure how true this is, but it made me think about what I get from those sorts of experiences, and it's often a heady rush and a renewed appreciation of both the comfort of my (inside) bed and the ever-changing seasons.

I'm not suggesting that we all become extreme adventurers, but there is something in this which we can take on board in our everyday life. Incorporating some time in nature, such as a walk around the Inner Temple Garden, has very



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well charted benefits. You might be inspired by the plants, by the fresh air, by the wind on your face, or even by the wildlife (the Garden is home to Britain's smallest bird the Goldcrest).

The Faculty of Public Health and Natural England report that *“contact with green spaces can reduce symptoms of poor mental health and stress, and can improve mental wellbeing across all age groups”*.

This is all well and good but if the weather is inclement it feels so much harder to embrace the idea of being outside, however, with a good jacket on and umbrella in hand you will be well prepared and you will feel the benefit of your efforts.

I am now six months pregnant and my growing bump has rather gotten in the way of my normal gardening duties. This has meant that I have taken over many administrative duties in the Garden office, while my colleagues undertake more work outside. There are days when I longingly look out at the sunshine, and others when I feel cosy and warm and the challenge to stretch my legs and take a walk around the Garden is very present. Once I've 'bitten the bullet' I come back to the desk with renewed vigour, feeling physically and mentally re-fuelled.

When spring arrives it has an innate ability to fill us with optimism, buds breaking, leaves unfurling, and blossom blooming, even when we do suffer the odd storm (or two). The Garden changes daily, and I am amazed as I walk up to the Treasury Office or venture out to open the Garden gates how much there is to see.

My maternity leave is due to start in five short weeks and the overwhelming task of handing over my role to other team members is in its full blows. I feel both excited and a little sad, as I will be departing at the time the Garden is exploding into life. So much happens in a year, whole cycles of seed sowing are undertaken, borders are planted, lifted, planted again, lawns cut, pots watered and interesting new plant specimens are acquired. Sophie Tatzkow, a previous Trainee at the Inner Temple Garden, is taking over during my maternity leave and I am very happy to be handing over such a fulfilling and rewarding role.

So, I think that now is the perfect time to seize the breaks in the weather and get out of the office for 15 minutes. Where else in central London has such immediate access to three acres of devotedly maintained ornamental Garden? Maybe even come out in the rain?! But steer clear of the storms!