

Ask The Gardeners MT20

1. Questions:

Just wanted to say thank you for what you do, and for making Wadham look beautiful year-round!

Thank you so much for making the gardens such a lovely place to be, and for always being up for a good chat - you make the college a much better place, and I always walk around the gardens to de-stress from work!!

Andrew: Thank you for your positive feedback , it is good to know that the job we enjoy gives pleasure to other people.

2. **Question:** What can I do with the plants in my room over the holidays? I don't want them to die but I'm flying home so I can't take them with me 😞

Andrew: All you can do is find someone to look after them for you.

3. **Question:** Do we have a herb garden? :)

Andrew: We don't have a herb garden, but only herbs randomly planted around the garden for looks only.

4. **Question:** What is the name of the tree on the left hand side of the garden (near the wall that borders the warden's garden) that has flakey red bark that looks like filo pastry? I've been here 7 years and haven't been able to id it.

Andrew: Acer griseum. (paper bark maple) It is so beautiful.

5. **Question:** Two questions:

My ficus robusta has had some yellow leaves and also the leaves are turning downward, like the plant has been pulled through a pipe from the tip. I know the cardinal sin of overwatering, so have avoided that. Is it just the cold weather? Are there opportunities to learn from you through an internship of some kind?

Andrew: Your Ficus robusta could be suffering from the cold, they do like to be warm. Also because it is such a dark time of year, a little extra light might help . In the spring repotting and a little feed will help.

6. **Question:**

Whats the most exciting plant you have in the gardens? Whats the oldest tree in the gardens? PS thank you for keeping them looking so amazing!

Andrew: In my eyes we have such a lot of exciting plants but in the Fellows Private garden we have a Wollemi Pine which was thought to be extinct and only existed in fossil records dating back to the dinosaur era. Then it was discovered growing in a national park.

The oldest tree in the gardens is the American Tulip tree in the Wardens garden which was planted in 1701.

7. **Question:** Hi Gardeners! I've been growing a lemon tree from a tiny twig over the past three years, and even though it is growing steadily, it seems to struggle with different types of pests. I think there are two main culprits: 1) some leaves and the surface under the tree are covered in sticky liquid and on the branches and leaves there are small brownish patches that I can wipe off. I think it's scale? 2) There's a lot of cobweb-like stuff on some leaves, which seems to prevent them from unrolling properly and creates holes in the leaves. Do you know what causes these issues, and what to do about them? Many thanks - also for keeping the Wadham gardens as nice as they are! Best, J

Andrew: Your lemon tree does sound like it has scale and the other pest could be mealy bug or red spider mite. If you clean the leaves with a damp cloth or tissue with a weak solution of washing up liquid it would help discourage the pests.

8. **Question:** Any tips for looking after house plants in a student room? Thank you:)

Andrew , In a student room through the winter houseplants should be watered sparingly , not put too close to radiators, and placed near natural light.

9. **Question:**

Hello, thank you for all the work you do to make Wadham beautiful! Currently, I'm trying to keep my lovely fern alive through the cold dark winter months and was wondering if you might have any advice? Not sure if I'm over or under watering or there's just not enough light but she's looking increasingly sad :(would appreciate any tips. Thanks again!

Andrew: , In a student room through the winter houseplants should be watered sparingly , not put too close to radiators, and placed near natural light.

10. **Question:** My friend's lavender plant is dying. How should we keep it alive?

Andrew: Lavender plants in the winter should be kept on the dry side, over watering is bad for them. They will appreciate as much light as possible.

11. **Question:** How do you water a potted plant? From the bottom or from the top?

Andrew: In the winter watering from the bottom will stop the stem lying wet and rotting.

12. **Question:** So I saw that we have palm trees in the gardens, yet I've only ever seen such trees (also bamboo for example) in warm climates. How do you make sure these plants survive in the cold English weather (or are they just very weather resistant plants?)?. Also, I really love the wadham gardens so thanks for your hard work in keeping them so nice:))

Andrew: The palm trees and bamboo all come from China and can survive low temperatures .

In fact the bamboo can stand -25 degree C.

13. **Question:** What are your favourite plants in the Wadham Garden? Why?

Andrew: My favourite plants are trees. In the Fellows Private garden, we have a Mexican Weeping Pine which I love, also a Japanese Pagoda tree in the Public garden which flowered so well this summer and looked amazing.

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14. **Question:** Should you bring herbs inside for winter? And what are some bee-friendly plants I can easily keep alive in a student garden?

Andrew: Some herbs that you bring inside for the winter will carry on growing ,like parsley and basil if it is not already dead. Others like thyme and rosemary will be fine outside in a sheltered place.

Some bee friendly plants are lavender, rosemary, borage, bluebells

15. **Question:**

Hi! What is the name of the very pretty flower in the college gardens next to the bamboo trees (the white one with purple interior)?

Andrew: I think the flower might be a passionflower called ' Purple Haze ' which is growing on some trellis in the corner. Very beautiful.

16. **Question:** Is there some history behind the little bamboo forest in the gardens?

Andrew: The area where the bamboos are has a disease called honey fungus which has killed a lot of trees and shrubs off. The bamboo was planted about 15 years ago because its resistant to honey fungus . It has worked really well.

17. Question:

Is there a plant in the college gardens that has a particularly interesting history (how the college got ahold of it)?

Andrew: A lot of our plants have a history.

18. Question: I have a *Nertera granadensis* ("pincushion") houseplant and I'm finding it really difficult to figure out how much water it needs! The information I've seen online says that during the winter I should be careful not to over-water it but that the roots should be kept in water constantly, which is pretty confusing. Every time I pour water into the dish under it, the plant drinks it up within a day or two, so then I give it some more water, but I'm worried about giving it too much. At the same time, the first week I had it, I placed it in direct sunlight so that some of the berries shrivelled and the leaves discoloured. I've moved it to somewhere without direct sunlight now and it seems to be doing better, but will giving the plant more water help counteract the shrivelling, or is that a lost cause now? Sorry about the very specific and long **Question** - any advice appreciated!

Andrew: *Nertera* in the winter should only be kept a little moist, or it may rot. Any shrivelling that has happened is too late to rectify . This time of the year the sun should be too weak to hurt it.

19. Question: I am really really passionate about exotic hardy trees and have been trying to grow a few species from seeds at home. I recently realised how impressive the array of species are at wadham, including a *Wollemi* pine?! I currently have a sapling *Araucaria angustifolia* (parana pine, related to monkey puzzle and from brazil, one of my favourite trees) and I was wondering if you would consider giving it a home at some point in the fellows garden, or somewhere in the wadham grounds? It needs a forever home and I think it would fit right in and it has a really interesting history as a species, having nearly gone extinct from overlogging! Thanks!!

Andrew: A Parana pine would be great in the garden, but I would worry about its hardiness. But I would love to try it.

20. Question: Is there anything in particular you would consider planting in the gardens that isn't there already?

Andrew: There are so many plants that I would like to try, whenever I visit another garden they always have plants I want.

21. **Question:** Do you have any giant rhubarb or any tree ferns? Two of my faves!

Andrew: We don't have any tree ferns but we do have a type of giant rhubarb (*rheum palmatum*) in the corner in the public garden. It is not the same as the giant rhubarb that grows on the edge of water. (*Gunnera manicata*)

22. **Question:** please tell us about the bees! where are they? how many do we have? do we have wadham honey?

Andrew: The bees have not had a good year . They were attacked consistently by wasps throughout the summer and have been wiped out . I am going to have to start again.

23. **Question:** what kind of animals do we get living around the gardens? do any of them come into the garden at night?

Andrew: We have a great selection of birds living and visiting the gardens such as woodpeckers, jays, nuthatches, 4 types of tits , and the UK 's smallest bird the Goldcrest.

Foxes live in the Fellows Private garden , and badgers visit regularly.

24. **Question:**

I have collected and planted some chestnuts last year, and some of them grow in pots in my garden now. I wonder what to do with them for the winter, will it be too cold for them to grow in pots? Can I plant them into the ground somewhere? Or shall I take them inside? Thank you for the opportunity to ask **Questions!**

Andrew: The chestnuts for the winter could be planted in their pots in the ground slightly below soil level . That should protect them from the bad weather.

25. **Question:** What little-known fact about the Wadham gardens would you like people to know?

Andrew: The Wadham gardens back a couple of hundred years ago were very formal with parterres and little box hedges set out in patterns. At the centre of the parterres in the public garden was a raised mound with a statue of Atlas on it . I would have loved to have seen it.

26. **Question:** tips for growing a plant collection and how to care for an orchid that has been underwatered/ showing little sign of life

Andrew: If you want to grow a plant collection then you need to understand all their different needs, such as the watering , feeding, light requirements, temperature etc. Orchids that have been neglected are very difficult to bring back. Keep warm and not too wet.

27. **Question:** Do you plant any species eg. wildflowers with the aim of encouraging native insects?

Andrew: We don't plant many wildflowers, but we do grow a lot of plants that are insect friendly. On top of the grad. centre we have lots of insect friendly plants, also through the garden we have plants like foxgloves and buddleia . Of course, we have a lot of mature trees which are ideal for a wide range of insects.

Andrew:

Thank you for your **Questions** . My name is **Andrew** and if you see me around the garden, please feel free to ask me anything. I am the one with the beard.