



Hello and welcome to
our January newsletter

WOW! A whole year of The Natters and what a year it has been. We're excited to continue this journey with you and share more of the news, updates, and special moments, Thank you for being a part of our family—here's to another year of connection and inspiration!

This January we look at winter wildlife sightings, winter gardening tips as well as some seed recommendations.

We discuss the benefits of waiting to sow seeds, and leave you wondering about a series of five books from the author Sarah J Maas.

We finish with a small piece on what mental health can mean for us.

Winter Wildlife sightings for January

From early spring flowers and garden birds to frosty footprints there's plenty to look out for this month.

Drifts of snowdrops may be poking through along with the common daisy bringing some flowering cheer.

Hazel catkins may start to emerge to look like yellow lamb's tails.

Look out for many birds like Water rails, Bitterns and Cetti's warblers skulking around the waters edge hunting for food.

It's important for our mental health to stay connected with the natural world, even during the dark months so getting outside to spot wildlife may help keep the bleakness away.

Did you know?

January is fox mating season- listen out for the vixen calling in the night. Her call is quite distinct.

Winter is a good time to look out for wildlife footprints in mud, frost or snow. Look for signs of deer, badgers, birds, mice, squirrels and rabbits.

Winter gardening tips

Destroy weed seedlings Take a hoe out into the garden and knock out those weed seedlings before they get too big, saving you time and effort in the spring. Annual weeds can go on the compost and perennial weeds should be dug up with as much root as possible and binned!!

Spread organic matter When the soil is hard, a job to do and save time is spreading well rotted manure or garden compost. Rain and earth worms will mix it into the soil.

Collect decaying leaves Continue to collect those leaves, they go on forever it seems! Paying particular attention to clearing your perennials, they do not like being damp and are likely to rot.

What does mental health mean to you?

Do we all thrive all of the time? If we are honest with ourselves we know the answer to be no. It's hard at times to be resilient and carry on as normal so we put that brave face on, not wanting to burden others. This is something I can honestly say I struggle with.

One of my issues is being isolated. I've moved away from all my support network and making new friends or being accepted into new circles has been and is difficult. I'm two years in and it's still tough. I've joined many clubs and seem to have done the right things but I can honestly say it has taken a toll on my mental health. Do I follow the list below?

Talk about your feelings

Keep in touch

Ask for help

Take a break

Do something you are good at

Accept who you are

Care for others

Keep active

Eat well

Drink sensibly

In all honesty the answer is no! Why? Because i don't want to burden people, so I put on a brave face and carry on as if everything is fine.

How many of us mask in this way? Quite a few i'm sure.

As mentioned above getting outside can help alleviate our mental health and well being as well as remembering to be kind to ourselves.

Mental Health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community. Our mental health is determined by a complex interplay of individual, social and structural stresses along with our own personal vulnerabilities. All of which is integral to our well-being.

The need for action on peoples mental health is indisputable and urgent. We need it to be affordable, effective with feasible strategies in place to promote, protect and restore ones mental health.

Remember to REACH out and ask for help. YOU ARE WORTHY.

To sow, or not to sow? Fighting the urge to sow too soon...

I am sure for many keen gardeners by January your green fingers are twitching, and you are desperate to get compost under your fingernails once more! I have fallen foul many times of being too keen and starting seed sowing too early. If you are a hobby gardener or only have a select number of seeds to sow, I would honestly suggest holding off until early March.

Yes, you may feel like you are getting a head start, but you are definitely going to make more work for yourself.

Starting seeds at the right time is crucial for a thriving garden. By considering your regional climate, frost dates, and the specific needs of your plants, you'll be well on your way to a successful growing season.

Early sowing is difficult even with heated propagators and lights. Often when I have started seeds early, my seedlings have ended up leggy and poor quality.

Aim to be sowing after the last frost.

The UK's last frost dates vary widely by region. For instance:

- Southern England: Late March to early April
- Midlands: Mid to late April
- Northern England and Scotland: Late April to early May Check a local frost date calendar to ensure accurate planning.

However, if you are unable to fight the urge, here are our top tips:

- 1. Read Seed Packets:** Seed packets are a valuable resource, providing specific information on when and how to sow each variety.
- 2. Use Propagators:** For early sowing, propagators or heated trays can help seeds germinate when outdoor temperatures are still low.
- 3. Prepare the Soil:** For outdoor sowing, ensure the soil is well-drained and free of weeds. Adding compost can improve fertility.
- 4. Stagger Plantings:** To enjoy a continuous harvest, sow seeds in small batches every couple of weeks.
- 5. Monitor Weather Conditions:** Be mindful of unexpected frosts, especially in spring, and cover seedlings if needed.



January's big read...

A Court of Thorns and Roses is a young adult fantasy series by American author Sarah J. Maas, known for her science fiction, young adult and fantasy works. The story follows Feyre, a hunter who is unexpectedly drawn into the realm of faeries. Over the course of the series, Feyre faces numerous challenges, growing stronger with each trial. Key characters include Rhysand, Tamlin, and Lucien. Amid the supernatural events, Feyre embarks on a journey of self-discovery, finds love, and redefines her relationships as she learns from her past. Dive into an enthralling adventure filled with unexpected twists, perilous encounters, and enough intrigue to keep you hooked until the final page.

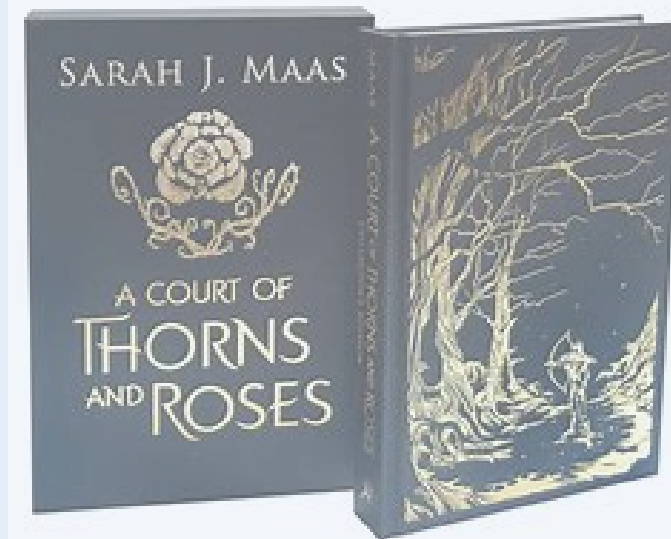
I thoroughly enjoyed this series of books. I have read them over several months not just in January! I would advise that they are adult reading material only!

I appreciated the relatable storytelling and escapist fiction that opened my imagination. The characters are well-developed and relatable, making it easy for me and other readers to fall in love with them. It's full of girl power, romance and adventure. If you love fairies, monsters and an escape these are the books for you.

Natalie J

The other books in the series are:

1. A Court of Thorns and Roses (2015)
2. A Court of Mist and Fury (2016)
3. A Court of Wings and Ruin (2017)
4. A Court of Frost and Starlight (2018)
5. A Court of Silver Flames (2021)



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