



Late Summer & Autumn: A Warm Welcome to Nature's Grand Finale at Whatley Manor

As the vibrant energy of summer gently gives way to the golden serenity of autumn, the gardens at Whatley Manor are bustling with life, colour, and careful preparation. It's a truly magical time—a period of both harvest and thoughtful renewal—and we're delighted to share what we've been up to as the season turns.

Our Green Commitment: Circular Thinking and Sustainable Practices

Our dedication to sustainability is central to everything we do, and the gardening team proudly plays a crucial role in supporting the hotel's EarthCheck performance and commitment to reducing carbon emissions.

We passionately embrace circular thinking in our waste management, ensuring that garden waste is reused, repurposed, and recycled through our on-site compost bays. This wonderful compost then naturally fertilises the soil for our kitchen garden, closing the loop perfectly. We are deeply focused on water conservation, relying on our on-site bore hole for our watering needs. Our eco-friendly practices extend to our no-dig kitchen garden, which helps reduce soil disturbance, limit weeds, and minimises erosion. We love our community involvement!

Local beekeeper John Stevens looks after the on-site hives, and we often use foraged materials from the grounds to create natural features like wildlife ramps and plant supports.

Well done, Whatley!



A Bountiful Harvest: A Phenomenal Year for Fruit

What an incredible year for fruit! Our young orchard was exceptionally generous. 2025 has been both an “on-year” for fruit-bearing trees and a Mast year for nut and seed trees like Oak and Beech. If you've not encountered a Mast year, it's when certain trees produce a vast, coordinated super-abundance of nuts or seeds—a crucial event for the natural regeneration of woodland.

We also spotted gummosis on our plum trees. While it might look a little sticky or concerning, this is the tree's brilliant self-healing response, where it exudes sap to seal a wound or injury. If you notice a substantial amount, it's a gentle reminder to check the tree for any underlying issues and give it a little extra care.



Our Newest Residents and Seasonal Beauty

August was a buzz of excitement as we installed our four commissioned Bee Hives. These beautiful additions were specially designed to subtly mirror the hotel's classical architecture, making them a stunning and fitting feature in the landscape. To give our busy residents the best start, we also planted a scattering of wildflower seeds around the hives, creating a welcoming, food-rich environment for them to enjoy.





We performed a perfectly timed bit of maintenance, trimming the woodland acer bank. We strimmed it just right, as soon after, the beautiful pink flowers of the Cyclamen popped their heads up. It's a wonderful seasonal moment, contrasting the elegant structure of the Acer trees with the tiny, vibrant blooms.

September Snippets: Our Dahlia Propagation Project

September saw us attempt a late but thankfully very successful propagation project: taking soft tip Dahlia cuttings! We'd love to give you a quick, step-by-step overview of the process—it's truly rewarding.

First, we carefully collected soft tip nodal cuttings from three Dahlia cultivars, creating a small heel using secateurs or by pulling off directly, always ensuring we cut just above the node and that at least three nodes were available. To keep them fresh, the cuttings were immediately placed into a pre-misted bag and rushed back to the glasshouse. Next, we created a well-draining 50:50 mix of perlite and compost, poured it to overfill fifteen 9cm pots, tapped the pots down, and struck off the protruding soil to level the surface. We made sure our cutting implements were sharpened and sanitised. The cuttings were then snipped below their third nodes, with the bottom leaves carefully knifed off, and dipped into a rooting compound. A pencil was used to create the hole in the soil to avoid damaging the cutting, and the cutting was then inserted so the bottom leaves were just above the soil. To finish, each pot was labelled and dated and gently watered with a watering can rose. They are now standing down on a misting propagation bench with a bottom heat of around 20°C, with the blind closed to prevent direct sunlight.



Kitchen Garden & October Layers: Tucking in and Preparing for Spring

The No-Dig Winter Prep

Our no-dig kitchen garden is now being lovingly prepared for the winter months. We removed the sweetcorn stover (the stalks) but, crucially, left the roots in the ground to benefit soil structure and allow for slow decomposition. A light hoe was used to remove surface leaves, and then we applied a thick layer of nutrient-rich mulch (taken from our on-site compost bays) of between 5cm -7.5 cm. After a light raking to break up any clods and remove debris, Phacelia seeds were broadcast sown, followed by a final light rake and a water. This Phacelia will sprout to act as a green manure, enriching the soil beautifully and protecting it over winter.



Lasagna Layering Tulip Method

October is all about planting lots of tulips using the ingenious Lasagna layering method! This technique ensures a stunning, sequential flower display that lasts from early spring right through to the end of May. For example, our two pots by the stepped entrance had 'Menton' and 'Dordogne' 20cm down, then 'Apeldoorn Elite' and 'Daydream' 15cm down, and finally 'Artist' and 'Pacific Pearl' 10cm down, with a muscari mix around the top edge. We included some existing ivy as a spiller and planted viola on top for immediate autumn interest. A bit of AI wizardry to show what these may look like.





Autumn Highlights: Light, Shadows, and Lanterns

Autumn is starting to visibly sweep through the trees. We captured a lovely picture of a Beech tree with one side turning yellow, as if you can visibly see the season moving from west to east through the garden. The sun is moving ever lower in the sky, casting incredibly long shadows across the grounds—a beautiful reminder of the year turning.



A Dangerous Beauty

November brings the satisfying task of clearing the borders of dead herbaceous stems. A lovely example of nature's delicate beauty we encounter is the Chinese Lantern plant (*Physalis alkekengi*). We've got a lovely image of the delicate wire leaf cage surrounding the berry inside—a true architectural structure. This beautiful plant is a nice thing to look at, or even eat the fruit if ripe, but please remember that because it is part of the nightshade family, you should always handle it with care.

