

THE MASTERCLASS WEEKEND

in association with the NVS



Friday 30th - Sunday 1st November 2026

THE ROYAL VICTORIA HOTEL LLANBERIS

PROGRAMME OF SPEAKERS

Friday 30th October

16.00 - 18.30 Arrive at The Royal Victoria Hotel to check in and relax before dinner.

18.30 - 19.30 A three course evening meal will be served (you may order wine at your table)

19:45 - 20.45 Growing for Showing in a Small Garden with Keith Able FNVS



Think you need a large plot to grow prize-winning vegetables? Think again!

In this engaging and practical talk, experienced grower and Northern Branch, National Vegetable Society member Keith Able will demonstrate how even the smallest garden can produce an impressive harvest and exhibition-quality vegetables.

Drawing on his wealth of experience, Keith will share valuable tips on making the most of limited space, careful crop selection, succession planting, and cultivation techniques that maximise both yield and quality. Whether you're a beginner with a modest garden or an experienced grower looking to improve your results, you will come away inspired and equipped with practical ideas to help you grow more, and perhaps even grow for the show bench.

20:45– 21.00 Question and Answer session.

21.00- Time to relax after your long journey and perhaps share your gardening experiences with some of the speakers, fellow growers, and exhibitors. Why not even enjoy a night cap at the bar before retiring!

Saturday 31st November

8.00 - 9.00 Cooked Breakfast.

9.00 – 9.15 Photo call, bring your camera along and take a group photo as a memento of the occasion

9.15 – 10.30 – Pot Leeks: Tips from an Experienced Exhibitor and Judge, Joe Keeler



Joe Keeler, an experienced pot leek exhibitor and judge from the Northeast of England, will provide insights into the tradition of competitive pot leek growing. Joe will share practical advice on how to grow successful pot leeks.

The talk will also cover common pests and diseases, along with what judges look for under Club and Institute Union (CIU) and Pot Leek Society rules, where cubic volume, shape, symmetry, and condition are key.

Pot leeks have been part of Northeast England's mining communities since the 19th century and remain a unique part of the region's horticultural heritage.

10.30 - 10.45 Question and Answer session

10.45 – 11.00 Coffee / Tea Break

11.00 - 12.15 – Hidden Kingdom: The Role of Fungi in Productive Gardens with Jodie and Lorraine Bryan



Fungi are one of the most overlooked yet essential partners in successful gardening. In this engaging and thought-provoking talk, Jodie and Lorraine will explore how fungi build healthy soils, recycle nutrients, support plant health and contribute to productive vegetable gardens. They'll also share practical advice on growing edible mushrooms at home, insights from running one of the UK's leading mushroom farms, and stories from their RHS Gold medal-winning exhibits at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Whether you're an experienced vegetable grower or simply curious about the hidden world beneath your feet, this talk will leave you with a fresh appreciation of fungi and plenty of ideas to take back to your own garden.



Jodie and Lorraine Bryan are the sisters behind Caley Brothers Mushrooms, an award-winning West Sussex mushroom farm dedicated to sustainable mushroom cultivation, education and public engagement. Their work has been recognised with RHS Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and they have collaborated with the Royal Horticultural Society and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew on educational projects that celebrate the importance of fungi in horticulture. They are also co-authors of *Project Mushroom*, published by Kew Publishing, and are passionate about inspiring gardeners to discover the remarkable role fungi play in healthy, productive gardens.

12.15 - 12.30 Question and Answer session

12.30 – 13.45 A buffet lunch after which you can choose to attend the Growers Marketplace or alternatively take a walk around the grounds of the Royal Victoria Hotel and perhaps a walk down to the Snowdon Mountain Railway in the village of Llanberis.

13.45 – 14.45 – Growers’ Marketplace!

Growers’ Marketplace is a chance for speakers and attendees to formally swap or sell seeds, plants and sundries or chat with fellow growers

Tables will be available, so bring what you like to sell or share.

14.45- 16.00 ‘How to collect, process and store seeds for future use with Dr Robin Probert



Robin worked at Kew’s seed bank in West Sussex for 37 years. He retired in 2013 as Head of Conservation and Technology at Kew’s Millennium Seed Bank which was described by David Attenborough as the most important conservation project ever undertaken. During his career, Robin published over 70 peer reviewed papers on various aspects of seed biology.

His talk will highlight the work of the Millennium Seed Bank and explain how the very same technology can be adapted for smaller-scale seed storage by individual growers, community projects and seed companies. A keen gardener of vegetables all his life, Robin will describe his approach to seed storage and demonstrate his own mini seed bank.

16.00 - 16.15 Question and Answer session.

16.15 – 16.30 Coffee / Tea Break

16.30 - 17.45 Growing and Showing Roses with Neil Duncan



Neil Duncan is from Andover, Hampshire and is an active member of the Rose Society UK. A passionate rose exhibitor and grower, Neil has been exhibiting show roses for over 20 years, attending competitions and events from March through to October each year. Growing around a thousand roses, he brings a wealth of practical experience and enthusiasm to his talk on growing and showing roses.

As Neil likes to say "Have roses, will travel."

17.45- 18.00 Question and Answer session.

18.00 - 18.30 Time to relax and do your own thing before your evening meal, you may even feel the need to enjoy a drink at the bar!

18.30 - 19.30 You can now indulge yourself in a three-course evening meal. (you may order your wine at the table from the Victoria's reasonably priced selection)

19.30 - 20.45 Growing Exhibition Tomatoes and Cucumbers with Chris Spree



Chris Spree, an active member of the National Vegetable Society will share his knowledge of growing high-quality tomatoes and cucumbers for both the kitchen and the show bench. Chris will share his personal journey into competitive growing, along with insights gained from many years of successful exhibiting and judging.

The talk will cover early January sowing techniques, propagation methods for tomatoes and cucumbers, grafting techniques for both crops, and the advantages and disadvantages of conventional growing compared with Autopots.

Chris will also demonstrate how to identify and manage common pests and diseases, while gaining valuable tips on producing outstanding results worthy of the show bench.

20.45 - 21.00 Question and Answer session.

21.00 – Raffle

This year's raffle features a fantastic selection of prizes. All proceeds will go toward supporting novice classes within the National vegetable Society, helping to encourage and support the next generation of growers.

Spot prizes are also warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated, every contribution makes a difference.

Sunday 1st November

8.00 - 9.00 Cooked breakfast

9.00 – 9.15 Check Out - Following breakfast, please allow time to return to your room to pack and check out at reception.

9.15 - 10.45 Growing Vegetables for a Large Collection – Niall Currie



We are delighted to welcome Niall Currie from the Isle of Bute, Scotland, one of the NVS top growers, as part of our seminar programme. Niall has been showing vegetables for around 35 years, beginning at local shows and progressing through to National level competition.

In his morning talk, Niall will discuss growing vegetables for a large collection, including winter preparation of beds, barrels and growing areas, along with the growing methods he uses for 20-point vegetables. He will also demonstrate how he lifts and prepares vegetables for exhibition and share practical advice on transporting produce to shows and setting it up on the show board.

This session will offer valuable insights and practical tips for exhibitors of all levels from one of Scotland's most experienced competitive growers.

10.45 - 11.00 Question and Answer session.

11.00 - 11.15 Coffee / Tea Break

11.15 - 12.00 'Gardeners Question time with the Speakers'. A roundup of the weekend. It doesn't matter how well you listened to the talks, there's always that gardening problem or question that you forgot to ask that may be still bothering you. It allows you the opportunity to ask the speakers further questions on growing that may not even be related to any subject discussed during the seminar, why not challenge them with a problem that's been a source of worry to you for so long.

12.15 - Traditional Welsh Sunday Lunch before departing.