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Happy New Year

Welcome to the January edition

Wishing you all a very happy 2025.

Here's hoping you've survived the mayhem of Christmas and are ready for a healthy and happy 2025.

If your aim for 2025 is to experience more fun events then see what's coming up on page 6, or if you've decided this is the year to get round to updating your house or fixing all those jobs you never get round to, we have a wide range of local businesses in here who can help.



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"THE FOUR Ds" tribute to DETROIT MOTOWN

31 January
The Lake at Barston

The Four D's are heading to The Motor City with this unstoppable hit machine paying homage to the unforgettable artists whose innovative music still fills dance floors across the globe. The Temptations, The Spinners, The Jacksons, Stevie Wonder, The Supremes and Lionel Richie all feature in this stunning representation of The Sounds



Of Detroit. Tickets from £10 per person. Call 01675 444890 to book.

Snow Patrol

16 February
bp pulse LIVE, NEC

SNOW PATROL have announced their eagerly awaited return with a brand new album 'The Forest Is The Path', their first album in six years. Now comprising the trio of Gary Lightbody, Nathan Connolly and Johnny McDaid, Snow Patrol offer the first taste of their extraordinary new album. Visit www.bppulselive.co.uk to book.

Zombie Prom

20-22 February
Malley Hall, Alderbook School

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roll off-Broadway musical, presented by SOSage Factory, is set in the atomic 1950s at Enrico Fermi High, where the law is laid down by a zany, tyrannical principal. A tuneful selection of original songs in the style of 50s hits keeps the action rocking across the stage. To book tickets please call 0121 704 6962.

Elvis Tribute Night

1 March, Shirley British Legion

Join in for a spectacular evening filled with the electrifying sounds and timeless charm of the King of Rock 'n' Roll himself! Get ready to experience the magic of Elvis Presley and pay tribute to his legendary music and iconic presence. Tickets from www.ticketsource.co.uk



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Fancy relaxing with a massage in Solihull?

There are so many benefits to having a regular massage. For some people it's a treat, to give them some time out from their busy schedule, and to help them relax. For others it's a necessity, to help remove muscle tension and ease painful joints. Having a regular massage is likely to improve your circulation, increase your flexibility, and reduce any muscle stiffness and joint inflammation you may have. It can also help to relieve stress, manage pain, and improve your exercise performance.

Types of massages

There are many different types of massages – some beauty

salons will just offer one or two standard ones like a back or full body massage, while others will offer a wide range from Swedish to Thai and aromatherapy to hot stones. If you're not sure which one would suit you best, chat to the beauty therapist when you make your booking and take their advice.

Where to get a massage in Solihull

You're spoilt for choice in Solihull as there are loads of different places that can give you a lovely relaxing massage.

- **Pure Retreat** in Dickens Heath offer a deep muscle or a relaxing massage for your back; or you can have a back, neck, shoulder, and

scalp massage; or a back, face, and scalp massage.

- **Serene Beauty** do a full body aromatherapy massage in Solihull, or you can choose a more focused leg and foot massage, arm and hand massage, or a back and shoulder massage.
- Why not indulge in a Himalayan hot rock salt massage at **Hampton Clinic in Knowle**? Following treatment, the salt rocks are yours to keep, to use in the bath, further benefitting your skin and wellbeing.
- In need of a more therapeutic sports massage? **Simon Evans Physiotherapy** in Solihull offer 30-minute appointments to help with muscle tension, aches and pains, and to improve movement and circulation.
- **Beauty by Ash** at Jiggs Hair & Beauty in Solihull offer a range of massages including an Indian head massage which involves stimulating the massaging acupressure points along the head, neck, and shoulders.



For more ideas on health and beauty treatments in Solihull please visit www.hellosolihull.com/articles

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Welcome to the asylum

Edward Augustus Bowles, known affectionately known as "Gussie," was a British horticulturist, plantsman, and garden writer, who transformed the gardens of Myddelton House into a horticultural masterpiece, introducing a diverse array of plants, including many rare and exotic species. He deserves to be better known for many reasons, but my favourite is that he devoted one corner of his garden to cultivating 'odd' plants... weird specimens which took his fancy. He called this his 'lunatic asylum' and the plants his 'maniacs'!

Like Bowles I enjoy collecting quirky specimens but rather than grouping them together in one corner I prefer to integrate the whimsical with the conventional, partly due to space restrictions and partly because I like it when visitors suddenly pause, do a double take, or raise an eyebrow and smile.

The first candidate for Bowles' 'asylum' was the corkscrew hazel. This is a variant of the common hazel and has fabulous spiral stems which are smothered in cheerful yellow catkins in the late winter and early spring.



I added a corkscrew hazel to my own plot a few years ago and admit that its twisted branches and sculptural appearance give me a lot of pleasure on cold grey winter days.

Another plant which Bowles coveted was the Plymouth Strawberry, (*Fragaria vesca muricata*). It looks like a strawberry with a freaky green

spiked hairdo. You can eat the fruit because the spikes are soft and harmless, but it's more usually grown for its ornamental properties.

If you only have a very small space, like a balcony, try *Ophiopogon planiscapus "Nigrescens"*. This intensely black grass looks like a small black fountain and grows well in a pot. It's a very attractive, unusual addition especially if set against white gravel or pebbles.

A favourite with children is *Tolmiea menziesii*, more commonly known as the 'piggyback plant' due to its strange habit of carrying its young on its leaves. Each little plantlet which sprouts can be potted up and established on its own. They make great teacher and office gifts!

Among my own personal collection of 'maniacs' my favourite is my small colony of pitcher plants (*sarracenias*) which look exotic but are actually quite easy to grow. They appeal to small boys (and lots of older ones!) because of their gruesome insect-eating habit.

If your garden is a bit boring and in need of a little spice why not try one of these more unconventional additions to your plot?

Sweet Potato and Cauli Coconut Curry

Infused with spices, this is a delicious creamy curry for a cold January evening. Its also perfect for Veganuary month!



Preparation time & Cooking time: 35-40 minutes
Serves: 4

Ingredients

500g sweet potatoes, scrubbed.
Vegetable oil
1 large cauliflower
1 onion, chopped.
Thumb-sized piece of peeled root ginger.
2 red chillies
5 garlic cloves
2 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground turmeric
2 x 400g tin full-fat coconut milk
1 x 30g pack flat-leaf parsley, leaves picked.

Method

Preheat the oven to 220°C,

fan 200°C, gas 7. Chop the unpeeled sweet potatoes into 2cm cubes. Toss in a bowl with a tablespoon of oil then season and place into a large baking tray. Roast for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the cauliflower. Remove the outer leaves and cut the head into florets. Add these to the tray with another tablespoon of oil and a little more seasoning. Toss the veg to mix then roast the cauli with the sweet potato for another 15 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Heat 2 teaspoons of oil in a frying pan then fry

the chopped onion for 5 minutes or until translucent. Deseed the chillies then thinly slice, and finely chop the ginger and garlic. Add these to the pan along with the spices and cook for 2 minutes. Add the coconut milk, 200ml of water and season to taste. Simmer gently for 10 minutes.

Remove the roasted sweet potato and cauliflower from the oven and stir the roasted vegetables into the curry sauce. Simmer for 3-4 minutes, then throw in the parsley. Adjust the seasoning to taste then serve the curry alongside jasmine rice.



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