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Boo!

Welcome to the October edition...

As soon as October hits we all start thinking about Christmas. But there's Halloween and Bonfire Night to enjoy first. Check out page 6 to see what you can do to get into the seasonal spirit and make the most of your time now that the nights are longer and colder.

With Christmas approaching, it's a time of year many of us set deadlines - we want the extension finished by then, the carpets professionally cleaned, the gutters cleared... whatever you need help with there are a range of local professionals who advertise in this magazine who are ready and willing to help.

Zoe Reece Tel: 07557 220585

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community events

Blossomfield Bonfire Night

7 November, doors open 6pm Blossomfield Club, The Wardens, Widney Lane, Solihull

Enjoy a professional fireworks display, fire performer, bonfire and independent food & drink stalls. Please note that car/vehicle parking is not available at the venue. To book visit www.trybooking. com/uk/events/landing/92186



29 October, 2-5pm Popworld Solihull

Calling all mini monsters, tiny terrors & baby bumpkins! Popworld Solihull is throwing a spook-tacular Halloween party for little ones and their





grown-ups. Including free pumpkin painting, a baby-friendly environment, and a party vibe that's just the right size for little ravers. Costumes welcome! Tickets available at www.popworldparty.co.uk/solihull/29-10-2025/little-ravers-halloween-special

Touchwood School of Magic and Wizardry

25 October - 2 November 11-3 (excluding 27 & 28 October) Touchwood Solihull

Take part in a treasure trove of magical adventures including an immersive wizarding school of magic, an enchanting sticker trail, and a wand collecting trail. And don't miss the Zombie Disco on the 27th October, and the Solihull BID Halloween parade on Friday 31st October. Book here: www. eventsattouchwood.co.uk/halloween

Simply Christmas

30 October - 2 November NEC

Simply Christmas is a charming craft fair showcasing unique gifts including glassware, jewellery, art, candles, ceramics and more. Immerse yourself in the festive spirit and kick off your holiday shopping whilst enjoying the vibrant atmosphere filled with festive food, drinks, and live music for a wonderful day out. Book tickets at www.thenec.co.uk

Pink Tribute Night

18 October

Knowle British Legion

From "Just Like a Pill" to "What About Us," Stacy Green covers all of Pink's greatest songs with incredible accuracy and passion. This is a night you really do not want to miss! Tickets from www.ticketsource.co.uk

6 Mention the Shirley Index when responding to advertisements

Grow your own mushrooms

ushrooms may not be the first thing that comes to mind when planning a garden but cultivating your own is a rewarding and surprisingly simple project. I've been enjoying a steady supply all year round since I started growing them back in 2020 (it was a Pandemic project... along with my sourdough!). As a bonus my kids were willing helpers because the results are pretty quick.

Mushrooms are nutritious, packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, and they bring earthy depth to countless dishes. Shopbought varieties are often limited to common button mushrooms, whereas growing your own opens the door to oyster, shiitake, and other more exotic species.

I started with oyster mushrooms which are one of the easiest to grow. They tolerate a wide range of conditions and can be cultivated on straw, cardboard, or even coffee grounds.

Like most amateur growers I began with a mushroom growing kit, widely available in the UK from garden centres and online suppliers.



It provided everything I needed: the growing medium, called substrate, which was inoculated with mushroom spawn - the fungal equivalent of seeds. It was an excellent way to learn the process without too much technical preparation and during lockdown that was important.

However, now I purchase mushroom spawn separately and prepare my own substrate. For example, oyster mushrooms grow well on pasteurised straw. Once inoculated, the substrate is kept in a warm, humid place until colonised by white fungal threads, called mycelium.

Mushrooms prefer cool, damp, and dark conditions which makes them perfect for basements, sheds, garages, or shady garden corners. A temperature range of 12-20°C suits most species. The most important thing is humidity, so you'll need to mist the substrate with water and

cover the growing area with a plastic sheet to help maintain moisture. Unlike most plants, mushrooms don't need light to grow, though once you get hooked (and I guarantee you will) and branch out to grow more exotic types, indirect light can encourage some varieties to fruit.

Mushrooms are usually ready for harvest within a few weeks of fruiting. They should be picked when the caps are firm and just before the gills fully open. Harvesting is as simple as twisting them gently from the substrate.

Top Tips

Keep the growing medium moist but not waterloaged. Wash hands before handling the substrate to reduce contamination. Try different varieties once you gain confidence; shiitake grown on logs will produce harvests for several years. My daughter describes growing mushrooms as a mysterious dark art, which makes it the perfect project for this time of year! But really it's an accessible and fascinating branch of gardening. With minimal space and a little care, you can enjoy delicious home-grown mushrooms whenever you like.

crossword

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 11 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 26 27

clues

Across

- 1 Motionless (6)
- 7 Leftover (8)
- 8 Partiality (4)
- 10 Dried grape (6)
- 11 Pin, tack (4)
- 12 Head of a monastery (5)
- 13 Highly contagious viral disease (7)
- 17 Stress (7)
- 19 Lightweight wood (5)
- 21 Clasp, clench (4)
- 23 Kitchen appliance (6)
- 25 Duty, function (4)
- 26 Camouflage (8)
- 27 Alcove (6)

Down

- 1 Deduct (8)
- 2 Slightly open (4)
- 3 Fresh, chilly (5)
- 4 Disjoined, apart (7)
- 5 Norse god (4)

- 6 Extreme scarcity of food (6)
- 9 Hairdressing establishments (6)
- 14 Ice dancer (6)
- 15 Lurch, reel (8)

- 16 Egotism, arrogance (7)
- 18 Insect with pincers (6)
- 20 Influence, authority (5)
- 22 Piece of paper, leaf (4)
- 24 Prickly plant with flowers (4)

answer on page 14

		5		9	3	4	7
		6		4	9		
4				2			
7		3	5		4		
9	6					3	8
		4		3	6		1
			9				3
		9	6		7		
6	2	7	4		1		

how to play SUCOKU

It's simple!

Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box, contains the numbers 1 through to 9 with no repetition. You don't need to be a genius. These puzzles use logic alone. Watch out! Sudoku is highly addictive.

answer on page 14

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How to Get the Haircut You Actually Want

anv of us have walked out of the salon disappointed, wondering why our new cut doesn't match the picture in our heads. The good news is that a little preparation and clear communication with your hairdresser can greatly increase the chances of leaving happy.

Bring Visual References

Words like "short" or "layered" can mean different thinas to different people. Bringing photos is the best way to show what you want. Choose realistic examples—styles that suit your hair type, face shape, and lifestyle.

Be Honest About Your Hair

A style that looks great on someone with thick, straight hair may not translate well to fine curls. Talk openly with your hairdresser about your natural texture, growth patterns, and how much time vou're willing to spend stylina each day. Choosina a hairdresser with a similar hair type to your own increases the chances they will understand what you are dealing with.

Discuss Maintenance

Some cuts need regular trims or daily heat styling. If you prefer low-effort hair, say so at the start. Your stylist can suggest



alternatives that achieve a similar look with less upkeep.

Keep Expectations Realistic

Perhaps most importantly, remember that no haircut can completely change hair type or face shape. A skilled hairdresser can enhance vour features, but the best results come when your expectations match what's achievable.



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a good read By Natasha Donovan

The Haunting of Hill House

by Shirley Jackson

Although it was first published in 1959, The Haunting of Hill House is a timeless, chilling, cerebral masterpiece that redefined the haunted house genre. With elegant prose and psychological nuance,



Jackson constructs not just a ghost story, but a deeply unsettling exploration of isolation, identity, and madness. This is the opposite of a gore-fest and it's the novel's restraint that gives it a lasting power. Jackson doesn't just haunt with spectres, she haunts with suggestion, silence, and the fragility of the human mind. The story follows Eleanor Vance, a fragile and lonely woman who joins a small team invited by Dr. Montague, a scholar of the paranormal, to spend the summer investigating Hill House - an estate with a dark and twisted history. Alonaside Eleanor are Theodora, a bohemian and enigmatic artist, and Luke, the future heir to the house. As the group settles in, strange phenomena beain to manifest: unexplained noises, cold spots, and messages scrawled on walls. But it's Eleanor's growing attachment to the house - and the question of whether the house is possessing her or merely reflecting her own inner turmoil - that drives the novel's psychological terror. Is Hill House truly haunted, or is Eleanor simply unravelling? The Haunting of Hill House isn't just a ghost story - it's a mirror held up to the mind's most shadowy corners, and a gothic classic that lingers long after the last page.

This Lie Will Kill You by Chelsea Pitcher This Lie Will Kill You is a

This Lie Will Kill You is a gripping YA thriller that blends suspense with high-stakes drama. The story follows five teenagers - Juniper, Ruby, Parker, Brett, and Gavin - who are invited to a mysterious mansion to compete for a \$50,000 scholarship.



However, they quickly realise they've been lured into a deadly game designed to expose the truth about a fatal incident that occurred a year prior. As the night unfolds, secrets unravel, and each character is forced to confront their past actions and the lies they've told. The narrative alternates between the present and flashbacks, gradually revealing the events leading up to the tragedy. Each revelation adds a new layer of complexity to the story. The story is intricately plotted and the atmosphere builds through fast-paced narrative and unexpected twists, delivering a story that's both engaging and thought-provoking. This Lie Will Kill You is a compelling read for fans of YA mysteries and thrillers, offering a dark exploration of guilt, deception, and the consequences of our choices.

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Self-help for Insomnia

of insomnia is adversely affecting your life, you should discuss this with your GP and ideally be referred to a sleep specialist. However, there are some tips from CBT-I which can be implemented at home straight away.

Keep a Consistent Schedule

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends, and avoid "catching up" on sleep with long lie-ins, as this disrupts your circadian rhythm.

Restrict Time in Bed - Only spend as much time in bed as you actually sleep. If you usually sleep for 4 hours but stay in bed for 8, reset your "sleep window" to 4 hours, going to bed only when you're tired, and getting up as soon as you wake. Gradually extend it as your sleep becomes more efficient.

Challenge Unhelpful

Thoughts - Replace anxious beliefs such as "I'll never function tomorrow if I don't sleep" with more balanced ones like "Even if I'm tired, I've coped before and I will again." Remind yourself that rest, even without sleep, is still beneficial.

Wind Down and Relax - Create a bedtime routine: dim lights, avoid screens, and practise relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation.



This signals to your body that sleep is coming, especially if you repeat the same ritual nightly. Keep a sleep diary - Track bedtime, wake time, and night-time awakenings to help identify patterns and monitor progress. This will also help if you do get referred to a sleep specialist.

local police contact for Shirley

Email: shirley@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk

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useful numbers

Misc

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Health

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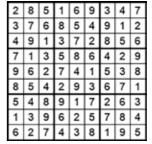
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Suduko Solution from page 8



Crossword Solution from page 8





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