



A blooming magnolia tree next to the maze at the National Trust's Glendurgan Garden in Cornwall. BEN BIRCHALL/PA

NATURE

Britons urged to celebrate blossoming

By Claire Hayhurst

The National Trust is urging Britons to emulate Japan's Hanami celebration – the ancient tradition of viewing blossom – every year.

In 2020, the charity piloted a Blossom Watch project just after the UK had entered a coronavirus lockdown, with thousands of people sharing images of trees in bloom on social media.

It is now making the campaign an annual tradition and hopes that the sight of blooms will help to lift spirits.

A YouGov poll, commissioned by the National Trust, found 36 per cent of adults said they were more aware of the changing seasons compared to the first lockdown. Of those surveyed, 67 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that spending time noticing nature made them feel happier in the current lockdown.

See Saturday's iweekend for a guide to spring blossom.

MEDICINE

NHS to offer cholesterol drug for those unable to tolerate statins

By Paul Gallagher
HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

Up to 100,000 people will be eligible for new cholesterol treatments on the NHS, the first oral treatments to be approved in more than a decade.

Patients will have access to two drugs for lowering LDL-cholesterol, often called "bad" cholesterol because it collects in the walls of blood vessels and is a leading risk factor for heart attacks and stroke.

England is the first country in Europe to be granted access to the treatments: bempedoic acid and a combination of bempedoic acid and ezetimibe.

Doctors behind the drugs said the recommendation from the National Institute of Health and Care

Excellence (Nice) is an "important milestone" for patients, especially those who are unable to tolerate statins, the cholesterol-lowering drugs. Around eight million people in the UK take statins, making them the most common drug in the country, though many complain of side-effects and stop their treatment.

More than seven million people in the UK are affected by cardiovascular disease and it is estimated that close to half of the adult population is living with cholesterol levels above national guidelines. The NHS recommends changing diet as a way of reducing cholesterol, advising

people to cut down on fatty food, especially that containing saturated fat.

Kausik Ray, Professor of Public Health at Imperial College London, said: "Today's announcement is fantastic news for patients as it marks the first new oral treatment options for high cholesterol to be made available in over a decade.

"Availability of treatments such as these is essential in tackling cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death in the UK. When it comes to heart health and cholesterol, there is no such thing as 'too low LDL-C', highlighting the importance of treatments for high-risk patients."

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The number, in millions, of people in the UK affected by cardiovascular disease

Jules Payne, the chief executive at the cholesterol charity Heart UK, said: "The impact of high LDL-C levels cannot be underestimated and account for one in four heart and circulatory disease deaths in the UK.

"High cholesterol is a silent killer and a condition that does not usually come with signs or symptoms, which is why we urge all adults to get a cholesterol check and know their numbers, regardless of age or how healthy they feel."

The new treatments will be accessible to patients via their GPs for those who complain of side effects from statins.

PEOPLE

Tom, 2, goes the extra mile for Down's charity

By Max McLennan

A two-year-old boy with Down's syndrome has made his mother "the proudest mum in the world" by raising more than £1,000 for charity.

Tom Albrighton, from Birchmoor in Warwickshire, is approaching the end of a daily half-mile walking challenge ahead of World Down Syndrome Day on Sunday.

The money raised during his 21-day effort will go to Positive About Down Syndrome (Pads), an initiative which supported his mother Kelly after he was born.

Ms Albrighton, a children's mental health nurse, said: "The amount of hard work and extra effort it takes from him just to even walk half-a-mile is incredible and I'm hoping people can see that.

"He's proved those paediatricians wrong, and for me that's way more than I ever thought would happen."

She said Tom has had 90-minute weekly sessions to help his physical development since he was nine months old.

It takes him "about an hour" to complete each half-mile walk.



SOCIETY

MP 'disappointed' by Sikhs' Census exclusion

By Serina Sandhu

The decision not to include Sikhism as an ethnicity option in the forthcoming Census is "disappointing", according to the UK's first female Sikh MP.

Many Sikhs may have historically listed their ethnic group as Indian and their religion as Sikh. But some UK community leaders, who believe Sikhs are both an ethnic and religious group, are urging them to label them-

selves as such for the corresponding questions on the online Census, which takes place on Sunday.

Preet Kaur Gill, the Labour MP for Edgbaston, said the Office for National Statistics' decision against including a separate ethnic group tick-box for the community was "disappointing".

The campaign for the tick-box was born out of concerns that the needs of the Sikh community were not being met. Ms Gill said public bodies used



Smeaton's Tower in Plymouth is lit up to mark Census Day 2021 on Sunday

the ethnicity data to fund and plan local services.

"The data is still not reflective of the population because Sikhs are invisible," she told.

Amrik Singh, chair of Sikh Federation UK, said the lobby group was advising Sikhs to reject the existing ethnic group options and write or type Sikh under "other".

"In the Census 2011, over 83,000 [Sikhs] rejected the existing ethnic tick-box options and chose to select other and write Sikh," he said. "We hope to at least double this in Census 2021."