



Horticulture on the curriculum from next year

Gardening will now be taught in schools from September 2014, a move very much welcomed by the RHS.

The consultation on reform of the National Curriculum states that pupils from Key Stages 1–3 will be taught 'to cultivate plants for practical purposes such as for food or for decorative displays' as a key activity in design and technology lessons.

The next challenge will be ensuring that all teachers are prepared for this important addition to the curriculum.

Source: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/News/Gardening-at-school>



Survey to find a National tree for Scotland

The Woodland Trust is asking people to take part in an online poll to find out which species they think best represents the nation.

It comes in the wake of a petition submitted to Holyrood calling for the "iconic" Scots pine to be made the country's national tree.

The results of the survey will be handed to the Scottish Parliament, which is currently considering campaigner Alex Hamilton's petition for the Scots pine to be made the official National Tree of Scotland.

Source: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=396>



UK must adapt for weather extremes

Britain must become more resilient to both drought and flooding, Environment Agency chairman Chris Smith has said. New figures from the agency show that one in every five days saw flooding in 2012, but one in four days saw drought. Rivers such as the Tyne, Ouse and Tone fell to their lowest and rose to their highest flows since records began, within a four-month period of the year.

Lord Smith said urgent action was vital to help "prepare and adapt" many aspects of Britain for such extremes.

Meteorologists fear that extremes of weather may increase as global temperatures slowly rise.

Met Office analysis has suggested that the UK could experience a severe short-term drought, similar to the drought experienced in 1976, once a decade.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-21651067>

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Brecon Beacons National Park wins dark sky status

The night sky above the Brecon Beacons National Park has been granted special protection.

It has become Wales' first and only the fifth destination in the world to be granted the status of an international dark sky reserve.

The park joins Mont Megantic in Quebec, Canada; Exmoor National Park in south west England; Aoraki Mackenzie in New Zealand; and Nambiarand Nature Reserve in Namibia with the status.

The status means the night-sky is protected and lighting controls are in place to prevent light pollution.

The national park said it already possessed some of the UK's darkest skies, which was ideal for stargazing.

Source: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=392>



Marine Conservation Zones

Our marine environment desperately needs protecting from damaging activities to ensure that the extraordinary diversity of marine life and habitats survives.

A network of 127 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) were proposed by DEFRA in September 2011 to help to achieve this.

These areas have been recommended through a stakeholder led process and now the government are choosing to consult the public on the designation of the first 31 of these sites.

It is vital to the future of our marine environment that the public make it clear to the government that this is an important issue. We in the outdoor sector have the potential to help to educate people on the importance of this issue.

Source: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=388>



Sugar-rich willow to boost biofuels' green credentials

Scientists have identified willow trees that yield five times as much sugar as ordinary varieties, "drastically reducing" the impact of biofuels.

UK researchers found that if the trees grew at an angle, they produced a special kind of wood that resulted in the higher sugar content.

Willow, a short rotation coppice crop, is widely grown as a source for the biofuel and biomass industries.

"It would drastically reduce [the environmental impact of biofuels] because you would not need such a severe pre-treatment in the conversion process, which is currently one of the highest energy consumption steps in the process of converting woody biomass to biofuels," explained co-author Michael Ray, a researcher at Imperial College London.

Source: <http://www.outdoor-learning.org/Default.aspx?tabid=118&Id=385>

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