

It seemed appropriate, that after nearly three weeks of gloom and rain, our February meeting was an engaging and positive talk from Clive Boase from the Climate Change Gardening Charity. Clive's talk was titled "Climate Change, Gardening and Us", and after pointing out that private gardens are the third largest land use in the UK, (after agriculture and forestry/open land), and more than 20 million people enjoy gardening, Clive discussed the strategies that we, as individual gardeners, can use to mitigate both the impact of climate change and climate change itself.

For us in the UK, climate change can be summarised in two simple statistics: average temperatures gradually increasing across all seasons, and drier summers with wetter winters.

Clive suggested that there were four options for gardeners wanting to respond to these changes:

Accept and Adapt

This would involve growing different plant species better able to cope with the climate changes or perhaps introducing raised beds to avoid winter water-logging.

The dry garden at the Beth Chatto, Cambridge Botanic and RHS Hyde Hall are all good examples of what can be achieved with this strategy.

Clive mentioned that he knew several gardeners who were now having great success growing sweet potatoes!

Soften the Impact

This includes actions that we might take to reduce the impact of climate change, such as collecting rainwater and grey water and providing cooling shade to try and keep living spaces more comfortable.

Providing habitats for wildlife is also important, so making a garden pond and introducing plants that provide early and late season nectar and pollen is also helpful.

Initiatives like "no mow May" are helpful, but even more so if the grass is left uncut all summer. A mown path around the edge can maintain a tidy look, if needed.

Reduce Our CO₂ Emissions

We can achieve this by switching, for example, from petrol mowers to electric for grass cutting or from electric hedge trimmers to manual shears.

Home-grown fruit and veg have a much lower carbon footprint than the equivalent imported or purchased products.

Other ways include going peat-free or adopting the no-dig method, as promoted by Charles Dowding in his book "No Dig".

Carbon Capture

Through the process of photosynthesis all foliage captures carbon dioxide during daylight hours, so planting more perennials and trees is helpful.

Replacing some hard-surface areas in our gardens with planting is also helpful.

Mulching with garden compost is also a good way to return carbon to the soil.

In conclusion, Clive reminded us not to try and do everything all at once and to start with a modest project and small achievable goals.

The Climate Change Garden Charity has an excellent informative website that can be found at: <https://climatechangegardening.org>

The next Horticultural Society meeting is on Thursday 9th April 2026 when we will enjoy a talk from Jim Paine titled "From mighty acorns: the story of the British Oak".