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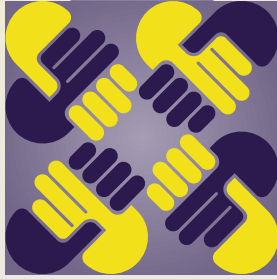
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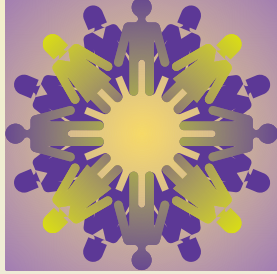
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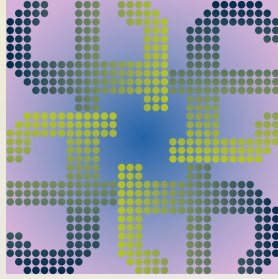
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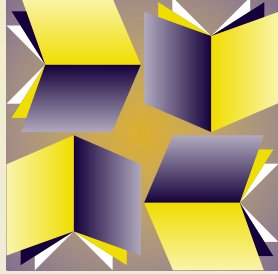
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Welcome to the November edition...

By the time this arrives Christmas will only be about 6 weeks away! Check out page 6 to see what local Christmassy events are on. If you fancy treating yourself to a night out before the main event, find out what's on at the cinema and the Core theatre in November on page 32.

You've just about got time to make any last-minute changes to your home in time for Christmas so remember to support local businesses as they really value their customers – we have a great collection of local tradespeople and businesses who are local and are looking for your custom.

Here's hoping the pre-Christmas build up isn't too hectic and that you find the time to relax, maybe over a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie!

Until next month...



Zoe Reece

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www.solihullindex.com



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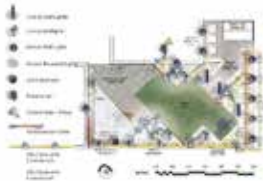
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community events

Christmas Craft Fair

23 November, 10am – 4pm
Bentley Heath Community Hall, Bentley Heath.

There will be a selection of stalls selling Christmas Craft gifts and decorations as well as Tombola, Bottle, Cake and Home Produce stalls. Refreshments, including lunch, will be available all day and Father Christmas will be making an appearance too! Proceeds in aid of St Philip's Building for the Future Project.

of the Cake and much more to enjoy. If you need a rest - tea, coffee and home-made mince pies will be available. Father Christmas will be looking in too. This is a Knowle Village Hall Fund Raising Event. Do join us.

Silver Celebration

14 December, 7.30pm
Knowle Village Hall

It is 25 years since the Strolling Players began to sing at Knowle Village Hall and so, to remember this, they are presenting "Silver Celebration", a concert for the Festive Season. The programme includes some G. and S. folk songs, numbers from the musicals, Christmas music and more - a very tuneful mixture. Tickets £10 from David Duggins 01564 772071. This concert is in support of the Alzheimer's Society.

Christmas Fayre

30 November, 10am – 1pm
Knowle Village Hall

The Knowle Village Hall Association and the Knowle Flower Club invite you to a Christmas Fayre. There will be the Flower Club's lovely Christmas Door Wreaths for sale, cakes and preserves, cards and gifts, a Tombola, Guess the Weight

Christmas in the Park

1 December, 12noon – 3pm
Brueeton Park, B91 3HA

Father Christmas is making a special appearance in the park so come and visit him in his grotto to receive a small gift! Book a time slot in advance - 0121 704 8000. Other entertainment includes carols at 1pm, a festive treasure trail and a Christmas craft activity at the Parkridge Centre. £3 per child. Meet by the car park.

Lunch with Santa

8 December
Ramada Hotel, Solihull

For the adults a delicious 3 course meal and a chance to kick back and relax whilst the children enjoy a whole host of activities! They will enjoy a 2-course buffet, disco, activities and of course meet Santa and get a gift from him! To book please contact: 0121 711 2121 / sales@ramadasolihullhotel.co.uk

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- **Councillor's Surgery** - these are face-to-face meetings held by councillors for local people to raise issues in their area. First and last Saturday of the month, 10.00am-12.00pm
- **Rhyme Time** - Wednesdays 10.15am to 10.30am, term-time only. A short interactive session for 0-2s that includes finger and action rhymes and songs. Come along and meet up with other parents/carers and discover what the library can offer your child.
- **Meet and Play** - Fridays 10.15am to 11.15am, age 0 - 2 years (term time only). Our new Meet and

Play session offers the chance for young families to meet up, relax, chat, play, sing or make music together! The session is for families, led by families. Toys and musical instruments are provided. For more information contact 0121 704 6965.

- **Homework Club** - Tuesdays 3.45pm to 5.15pm, term time only
- **Silent Reading Cafe** - Held once a month on Thursday evenings, this is a chance to unwind and read in a cosy, informal environment without distractions. It begins with an hour of silent reading from 6pm with a chance to chat (if you want) between 7pm and 7.45pm.

Festive Feast and Outdoor Cinema

16-22 December
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The Festive Feast will be back for another year! Get your last-minute stocking fillers and a tasty bite to eat for lunch. Also look out for the return of the free Christmas outdoor cinema.

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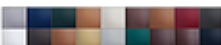
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Reduce your plastic footprint

Stop straws - If a straw is a must, instead of a plastic one purchase a reusable stainless-steel straw and carry it with you.

Invest in reusable produce bags - A single plastic bag can take 1,000 years to degrade. Purchase or make your own reusable produce bag but be sure to wash them often.

Give up the gum - Chewing gum is made of a synthetic rubber which is actually plastic!

Buy boxes over bottles - If your laundry detergent comes in a box it will be more easily recycled than a plastic bottle.

Buy from bulk bins - If possible, purchase food, like cereal, pasta, and rice from bulk bins using your own container or bag. Not only will you save on packaging you'll also save money.

Take your own cup to coffee shops - Some establishments offer a reduction in price for this!

Ditch the disposables - Disposable nappies are a huge source of landfill. Modern cloth nappies are nothing like the monstrosities of yesteryear. Check them out, reduce your baby's carbon footprint and save money in the process.

Squeeze your own - Make your own fresh squeezed juice or eat fruit instead of buying juice in plastic bottles. It's healthier and better for the environment.

Lead with your lunch - Pack your own lunch in reusable containers and bags.

Use a real razor - with replaceable blades instead of a plastic disposable razor.

These are all simple steps but if more of us follow them they have the potential to make a big impact on our collective plastic footprint.

By Kath McLean



Heaven Scent

Home fragrance

What's the first thing a guest notices when they walk into your home? Your antique coat stand? The ornate mirror? The pristine hardwood flooring? No, it's actually the smell. Smell is our most powerful sense and will override the other four senses if something foul wafts our way. So, if your house smells like musty wet dog, stinky shoes, or last night's fish supper, none of the other details will matter. How your home smells leaves an impression on visitors so it's nice to make that impression a good one, and of course it's nicer for you too; after all you live there!

There's a whole industry devoted to home fragrance, so you have lots of choice. But the secret to a nose-friendly atmosphere isn't synthetic scents. Aside from being overly perfumed, they often contain chemicals that can irritate some sensitive people, particularly asthma and migraine sufferers.

Let the outside in - The simplest most effective way to freshen up your home is to open doors and windows yet very few of us do it on a daily basis. Stale air is a health hazard and a mood zapper. I'm not suggesting that you leave the windows open all day in November, but just five minutes will give you an instant, and totally free, air refresh.

Grow an indoor herb garden - Fresh herbs such as basil and mint give off a lovely aroma in the kitchen. If you're feeling ambitious try planting a herb box overflowing with marjoram, lemon balm and rosemary. Sweep your hand across them to agitate the foliage and spread the fragrance around the room.

Chop up a few lemons and limes - For a quick and easy fresh smell, you can't beat citrus. Slice a few lemons, limes and oranges into thin wheels and bake them at a very low temperature for several



hours until they are dry to the touch.

You can pretty much forget about them while they are in the oven except for the fact your house will smell incredible. When they are done you can make potpourri. Thread some on a string with a cinnamon stick and some star anise and hang in your kitchen or pop them in a pretty glass bowl.

Bonus tips

Make citrus salt - Grind the citrus wheels to a powder in a spice grinder and mix with flaked sea salt.

Make citrus sugar - Same as above but mix with sugar.

Make sweets - Dip them in dark chocolate and sprinkle with flaky sea salt.

Buy quality scented candles - Organic beeswax scented candles are very different to synthetic chemically fragranced varieties. Try them and you won't look back. If you are wondering which scents to try, fresh citrus scents have universal appeal; incense and patchouli are lovely at this time of year. Vanilla has long been named as the most popular choice among air-freshener companies and in candle form it takes on an even warmer, more mellow quality.

Make your own air freshener - For a quick-fix, all-natural air freshener, fill a pan with water, add fresh rosemary or lavender and bring to the boil, then simmer for an hour and let the vapours drift around the house, scenting the air. Later, you can let the mixture cool and decant the liquid into a spray bottle. Store in the fridge and spritz a little as needed.

By Sarah Davey



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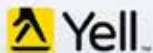
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What to do in December?

Germany Best for Christmas done properly

Christmas markets are synonymous with Germany, and not just because they also go by the name of German Christmas markets. Everything about Germany's cities is picture-perfect when it comes to a festive get together, from the snow-dusted cathedral spires and gothic architecture to the bustling crowds escaping the chill with a warming cup of Glühwein.

For one of the oldest and most famous Christmas markets in all of Germany, Nuremburg is the place to be. Historians believe it began during the early 17th century, and the traditions of old are still present to this day. Each year, a child from the city is chosen to be the cherub that leads the parade through Nuremburg's central square, and there's something undeniably warm and festive about the whole thing. The Christkindlesmarkt opens on the first weekend of December, and runs until Christmas Eve.

New York Best for Christmas shopping

Throughout December, the Big Apple becomes the pinnacle of Christmas

excess. New York is full of festive things to see and do, and on every corner there's a must-visit attraction. It goes without saying that any trip to New York over Christmas absolutely has to include a visit to the Rockefeller Center to see its enormous Christmas tree. A major celebration in the city, the switching on of the Christmas tree lights draws in huge crowds of people ready to experience the festive magic, and it's one of those 'It's not Christmas until...' moments. Make this one top of your list.

When it's time to hit the shops, iconic stores like Macy's and Bloomingdale's are a shopaholic's go-to and make it oh-so-easy to part with those dollars in exchange for gifts and souvenirs. Just make sure you pack light so you've plenty of room for all those goodies on your return flight.

The Caribbean Best for escaping it all

Don't worry, Christmas-phobes; we've got you covered. If the first mention of the 'C' word fills you with dread, there are plenty of places around the world to escape to. For winter sun, there's no better destination than

the Caribbean. The weather is firmly on the beach-friendly end of the thermometer, so there's definitely no need for a Christmas jumper (thank goodness). A December break to the Caribbean will see you swapping a scarf for a snorkel, swimming with dolphins instead of basting the turkey, and building sandcastles instead of snowmen. If you're a fan of Christmas but not the cold, the Caribbean is home to an array of unique festive traditions. You'll find Christmas markets in Jamaica, Juckanoo (a huge parade and colourful party) in the Bahamas, and St Lucia National Day over in – you guessed it – St Lucia. This national day is officially marked on the 13th December, but the party goes on throughout the month with feasts, sports events and lights to commemorate the 'Saint of Lights', aka St Lucia.



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Help!

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Who do you call to help a struggling child?

If your child is struggling in school the chances are that you are struggling to figure out how to find the most effective help for them.

There are many reasons why a child might fall behind. Some children find that despite a lot of effort, they are frustrated by learning disorders. Some fall behind because they have a hard time focusing on learning or making an organized effort to get homework done.

Some children will get the support they need to succeed from specialists in their school, in the classroom or in sessions outside of class. But every year many parents feel that their child is not receiving adequate assistance and end up sourcing their own help.

This is where things can get confusing. What sort of help might be best for your child? Think carefully about your child's needs.

Subject support – Sometimes a child falls behind in a particular subject for an obvious reason: they were off sick for a while, or they've had a succession of supply teachers, or disrupted lessons. If your youngster is failing in one particular subject, a specialist tutor might be the way to go.

It's easy to understand what a tutor is and does: They are knowledgeable in a particular subject area and can bolster a child's success in that

subject by filling in background information your child might have missed and offering deeper explanation and practice to help the student acquire the necessary skills. **These people are specialists so expect to pay between £20-40 per session depending on subject and area.**

Homework support - If your child's challenge isn't a particular subject, but trouble settling down to tackle the work itself, a homework helper might be what you need. A homework helper provides structure and support. Many parents find themselves filling that role for their kids, being present and providing back-up when kids get confused or unfocused. But for some children who are really struggling with focus and organisation (many kids with ADHD and autism fall into this category) homework becomes a major area of conflict, so having a professional homework helper on the case can be a big relief for both parents and kids. Helping a child succeed at homework without involving parents can remove a lot of stress from the whole family's evening. The person does not have to be a specialist teacher, they do have to be good at helping a child to organise their thoughts and their time.

Learning support - For a child with serious learning issues, an educational therapist can work with them to strengthen the skills they need to be able to keep up. Educational therapists come to the task with a range of professional skills, from special education to speech and language therapy to psychology. What they have in common is that they will work with an individual child's learning style, and then help him develop skills and strategies that will enable him to build on strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Children with dyslexia particularly benefit from this approach.

By Tracey Anderson



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COMPETITION



WIN 4 TICKETS

to see **Santa in Love**

on 20th-24th December, various times
The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

For your chance to win these tickets, visit the Core Theatre website page for this event - www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk - to find the answer to this question:

Who wrote this show?

Email your answer to: thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk –
and please put 'Santa' as the subject line.

Closing date for entries is 1st December. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

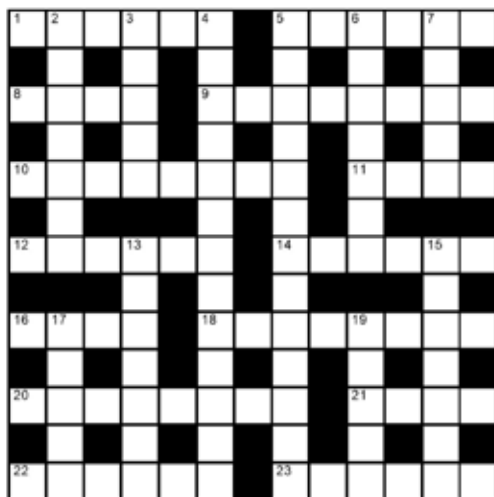
Please note there is no cash value nor exchange for this prize so please don't enter if you cannot attend one of the dates shown above.

About the show:

A festive play written especially for very young children and their families with lots of opportunities to join in, including sing-along games. The show (around 40mins) is then followed by a photo opportunity with Santa and a gift for each child.

Join Santa and his friends in this fun filled family musical complete with games, giggles and all your favourite Christmas songs.

crossword



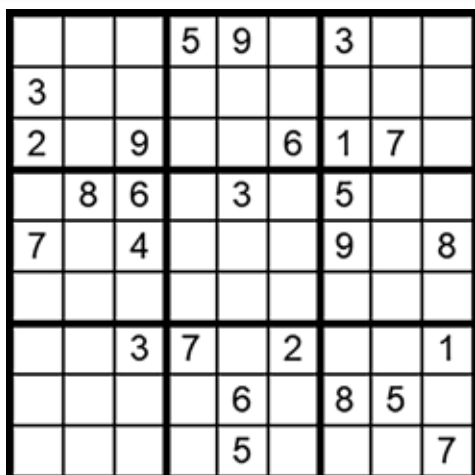
clues

Across

- 1 Affirms (6)
- 5 Grabbing, seizing (6)
- 8 British aristocrat (4)
- 9 Rest, break (8)
- 10 Defensive walls of a castle (8)
- 11 Part of the foot (4)
- 12 Athletic throwing event (6)
- 14 Apologise, atone (6)
- 16 Scrap, fight (4)
- 18 Members of the crow family (8)
- 20 Remove the riding seat from a horse (8)
- 21 Enclosure for chickens (4)
- 22 Pacify (6)
- 23 Arduous, irritating (6)

Down

- 2 Giant rogue wave (7)
- 3 Bind, fasten securely (3,2)
- 4 Not at all intoxicated (5,2,1,5)
- 5 Large box filled with riches (8,5)
- 6 Thick sweet tomato sauce (7)
- 7 Female relation (5)
- 13 Small edible fruit, may be black, white or red (7)
- 15 Infant (7)
- 17 Christmas theatre show (5)
- 19 Atrophy (5)

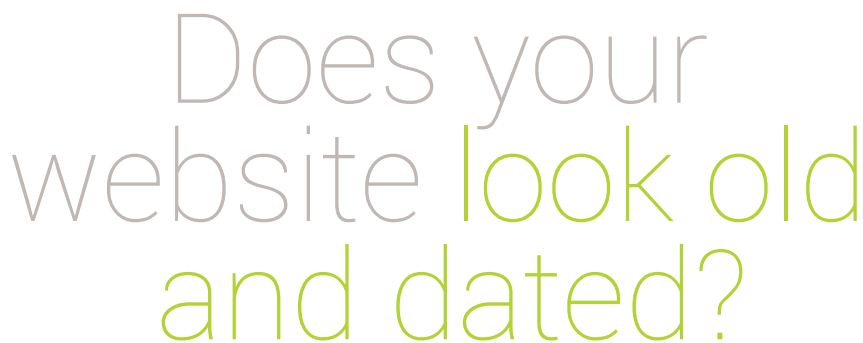


how to play sudoku

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.

answers on page 36



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The Geek Shall Inherit the Earth!

Get started in coding for a brighter future

Technology runs the world. Almost everything we touch these days has a computer inside. From the obvious things like our laptops and smartphones all the way down to our televisions, cars, fridges, and even toasters. Many of these are now also connected to the Internet and **large software systems collect and analyse our information 24 hours a day.**

As our demand for technology increases every year society is in desperate need of more people who can build and program these devices and software. Our school system has finally caught on to this idea and started to bring computer science into the classroom but there is a nationwide shortage of specialist teachers. But outside of schools there is a fantastic eco-system of passionate companies and **individuals who want to develop the next generation of software and electronics developers.** You just need to know where to look and where to start.

The biggest hurdle in exciting your child about technology is to capture their imagination. Almost every kid plays computer games, so these are one of the best places to start. Learning how to code computer programs can be tedious, especially using the traditional textbook teaching methods. But put the coding exercises into a gaming environment and suddenly the subject comes to life. Programming your own spaceship to move around the screen and fire bullets opens up a whole world of gaming possibilities.



But where do you start?

Technology again comes to our rescue, this time in the form of YouTube, probably the best home learning tool there is. You'll find a whole range of tutorials and exercises all based around learning to code by writing your own games programs. But the sheer amount and variety of these videos can be overwhelming. Which one will work for your child? **Is the tutorial at the right level? What happens if your child gets stuck?**

To cut through the confusion I've been developing games programming courses for 10's and over to take them from absolutely zero experience through to A-level programming standards and beyond. I've been through the process with my own 10-year-old. **I've seen his frustration when things are hard to set up, don't work first time or simply left him stranded with no idea what to do.** My course uses software that installs in under a minute and lets you get your first game up and running in less than half an hour, all using "proper typed in code" as my son calls it. From there they can take one of the full programming courses and learn all the software techniques needed to write your own programs. Everything, including all the software is absolutely free.

So why not have a look at bytesnbits.co.uk and get your child on the road to becoming the next Bill Gates or Steve Jobs.

By Louise Addison

Parsnip Soup

An easy luxurious autumnal soup

Preparation time: Less than 30 mins

Cooking time: 30 mins

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 600g/1lb 5oz parsnips, cut into 1cm/½-inch cubes
 ½ tsp dried red chilli flakes, plus extra to serve
 1 litre/1¾ pints hot vegetable stock
 200ml/7fl oz double cream
 salt and freshly ground black pepper
 For the croutons
 3 thick slices good bread, such as sourdough, cut into 2.5cm/1-inch pieces
 1 tbsp olive oil
 55g/2oz Gruyere cheese, finely grated

Method

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6. Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Add the chopped garlic and cubed parsnips and fry for 4–5 minutes, stirring occasionally. When they are golden add the chilli flakes and fry for one more minute.

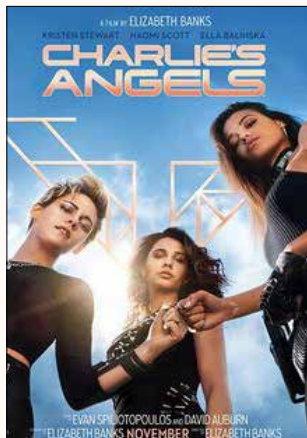
Pour in the stock, stir and bring everything to a simmer. Cover with the lid and cook for 12–15 minutes, or until the parsnips are tender. Meanwhile, for the croutons, place the pieces of bread on a baking tray in a single layer and drizzle with the olive oil. Sprinkle over the cheese, and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 5–10 minutes until crisp and golden. Remove the soup from the heat and blitz with a stick blender until smooth. Return to the heat, stir in the cream and heat through gently. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve the soup topped with the croutons and a sprinkling of chilli flakes for a little more kick.



Preparation time: Less than 30 mins
Cooking time: 30 mins

a taster of what's coming up...

CINEMA



Charlie's Angels from 29 November

Charlie's Angels have always provided security and investigative skills to private clients, and now the Townsend Agency has expanded internationally, with the smartest, most fearless, most highly trained women all over the globe - multiple teams of Angels guided by multiple Bosleys taking on the toughest jobs across the world.

Midway from 8 November

The Japanese raid on Pearl Harbour during the Second World War was the greatest intelligence failure in American history. But a follow-up attack was foreseen: the battle of 'Midway'. The American navy were underdogs with an undermanned fleet. Up against an overwhelmingly



powerful adversary, they fought a decisive battle that would be a turning point in the War.

The Good Liar from 8 November

Career con artist Roy Courtnay can hardly believe his luck when he meets well-to-do widow Betty online. As Betty opens her home and life to him, Roy is surprised to find himself caring about her, turning what should be a cut-and-dry swindle into the most treacherous tightrope walk of his life.



To book please visit www.cineworld.co.uk

THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull



Twist and Shout 15 November

The greatest musical era of the 20th century comes alive at The Core Theatre with a nostalgic look at the golden age of British pop. When skirts got shorter and hair got longer! Sing and dance along with an all-star West End cast to the music of The Beatles, Hermans Hermits, Gerry & The Pacemakers, The Rolling Stones, Cilla Black, Manfred Mann, Dusty Springfield, Lulu, Sandy Shaw and many more...

Blake

27 November

Brit-Award-winning Blake present a new Christmas-themed uplifting show of fabulous harmonies, choir and great heart-warming songs. Inspired by the lush trio harmonies of The Three Tenors and The Bee Gees they'll perform songs like; When a Child is Born, O Holy Night, Walking in the Air, Frosty the Snowman, Silent Night and Last Christmas with an eclectic mix of classical, pop, rock and musical harmony plus their super on stage banter.



The Producers 19-24 November

Those of you familiar with Mel Brooks' work will know that you are in for an enormous amount of fun and laughter with The Producers! Based on the 1968 film, it follows Max and Leo's plan to make more money with a flop of a show than they ever could with a hit! With no shortage of show-stopping musical numbers, and Brooks' signature humour, brought to the stage by St Augustine's MTC, this is one musical that is sure not to be a flop!



To book please visit www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Kids' Page

Garden Bird Word Grid

W	C	H	A	F	F	I	N	C	H	E	B	P
O	T	Q	B	L	A	C	K	B	I	R	D	G
O	H	S	T	A	R	L	I	N	G	U	Q	O
D	R	R	G	N	J	T	Y	N	Z	H	G	L
P	U	Y	B	W	Y	Z	I	M	W	J	R	D
I	S	G	B	Q	C	W	C	Y	K	R	E	F
G	H	J	A	L	D	N	W	M	H	I	E	I
E	M	D	T	E	U	O	Q	X	E	R	N	N
O	J	A	R	X	R	E	C	X	Z	R	F	C
N	W	N	G	R	Y	N	T	X	S	O	I	H
M	Z	H	A	P	V	E	L	I	H	B	N	U
N	O	P	E	G	I	W	T	P	T	I	C	L
G	S	L	W	A	M	E	L	B	G	N	H	Z

Can you find all the garden birds in our letter grid?

blackbird

robin

blue tit

sparrow

chaffinch

starling

goldfinch

thrush

greenfinch

wood pigeon

magpie

wren

redwing

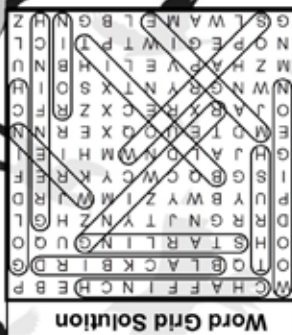
Riddle-Mi-Ree

I'M FOUND ON A FARM BUT I'M NOT A TRACTOR
I CAN BE ROASTED BUT I'M NOT A PEANUT
I HAVE FEATHERS BUT I'M NOT A PILLOW
I'M FOWL BUT I'M NOT DISGUSTING
WHAT AM I?

A chicken!

Fun Fact

Did you know that birds have hollow bones? This reduces their weight so they can fly!

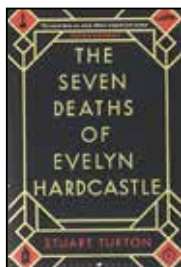


a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle

by Stuart Turton



Murder mystery stories have been popular for centuries. However, I would say that you have probably never come across a murder mystery story quite like this. Debut author, Stuart Turton, admits to being inspired by the novels of Agatha Christie, but this is far from the likes of Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot. Set in a large country house in the early 20th century our protagonist wakes up in the middle of a wood. He is not wearing his own clothes and he soon realises that he is not in his own body. Confused by what is going on he hears a gun shot and stumbles his way through the wood to Blackheath House. He is greeted by a man who calls him Sebastian Bell, but this name means nothing to him. Eventually he is visited by a mysterious man in a plague doctor's mask. Our protagonist is called Aidan Bishop and he has until the end of the day to solve a murder. If he fails then the day will start all over again, but this time Aidan will not be Sebastian Bell. He will live the same day over in eight different 'hosts' and so he has eight days to solve the murder of Evelyn Hardcastle. Evelyn has been murdered hundreds of times. Part Agatha Christie, part Quantum Leap, this novel will keep you guessing with plot twists appearing throughout. Oh, and expect to feel confused: Turton has done a stunning job of weaving the eight different days together. Just go with it and enjoy the journey!

Enchanted Palace

by Rosie Banks



It is clear from the minute you look at this book who it is aimed at. A pink and sparkly cover welcomes young readers into the world of 'The Secret Kingdom'. This is the first instalment of this successful series of books that follow the adventures of best friends Ellie, Summer, and Jasmine.

As the book begins, the three friends are helping their teacher run a stall at their local jumble sale. As they are packing up, they find a strange-looking locked wooden box. Too late to sell it they take it home with them to try and open. What happens when they do shows them a world they never knew existed: The Secret Kingdom. King Merry needs their help. His wicked sister, Queen Malice is plotting to destroy the kingdom and turn it from a joyful place, full of unicorns, fairies, and mermaids, into a dull and dreary land, making everyone as miserable as she is. Can Ellie, Summer, and Jasmine, solve the riddles that will let them save the Secret Kingdom from the Queen? Join them on an adventure of a lifetime, riding on the backs of the royal swans and rainbow slides.

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Councillor surgeries these are face-to-face meetings held by councillors for local people to raise issues in their area. Held at The Core Library, Solihull on the first and last Saturday of the month, 10am – 12 noon.

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

Sudoku Solution

from page 27

S	T	A	T	E	S	T	A	K	I	N	G
S	I	O	R	E	E	I					
D	U	K	E	B	R	E	A	T	H	E	R
N	U	E	A	C	C						
R	A	M	P	A	R	T	S	H	E	E	L
M		A	U	U							
D	I	S	C	U	S	R	E	P	E	N	T
U	A	E									
S	P	A	R	J	A	C	K	D	A	W	S
A	R	U	H	E	B						
U	N	S	A	D	D	L	E	C	O	O	P
T	N	G	S	A	R						
S	O	O	T	H	E	T	R	Y	I	N	G

Crossword Solution

from page 27



Mindbenders Solution

from page 16

Pots of cabbage!

By Rachael Leverton

November can be a bit of a grey, miserable month. My kids would call it 'meh'. I like to inject some colour with winter bedding plants. A cheerful pot by the front door can make you smile on the gloomiest morning.

Obviously, the choice of plants for winter is not as large as during the summer months but there are enough varieties around to make very attractive combinations for pots. **My favourite plant for winter pots has to be the ornamental cabbage.**

These robust beauties come in wonderful colours including cream, pink and purple – with either attractive frilly or very spiky leaves. They pair beautifully with winter-flowering pansies and hardy cyclamen.

Try planting three pots of different sizes using a colour scheme which co-ordinates with the cabbages. Plant a 50cm / 20inch pot with four large ornamental frilly cabbages surrounding a central spiky one, to give some height to the display. Then choose a smaller pot (38cm / 15inches) and plant one frilly ornamental cabbage surrounded by pink and purple winter-flowering pansies. Finally plant a small pot (25cm / 10inches) with a mixture of hardy cyclamen and white pansies. The resulting display will give you pleasure through November, December and January.

Tips

Select a frostproof container because these pots need to withstand wintery conditions. The most dependable pots are made of fibreglass, lead, iron, heavy plastic, or stone. Most terracotta



will crack in cold temperatures, but some glazed varieties are frost-proof.

Use a good general-purpose compost.

There are mixes specifically made for use in containers, which provide the essential drainage that plants living in pots need.

Make sure you place plenty of drainage material in the bottom of the pots.

A good compost will contain enough slow release fertiliser to maintain the plants for several weeks during autumn and winter. If they still going strong as winter turns to you can give them a bit of a feed, but by February or March you will want to think about replanting your pots with spring bedding.

Think about gravel – I like to use a layer of gravel over the soil of my winter pots for several reasons. It gives the planted pots an attractive finish, keeps rain from splashing back on to the plants, provides some insulation for the soil and reflects light and warmth in any winter sun thus creating a little microclimate in which the plants will be happier.

Water them! The plants will need moisture around their roots so water as needed unless the soil in the container is frozen. Do not water frozen pots because the plants are unable to absorb the water.

Happy gardening.

The Hardest Decision - Putting Your Dog to Sleep

No dog owner wants to think about putting their dog to sleep, but it's a decision that you may find yourself faced with at end of your dog's life.

Although its heart-breaking, sometimes the kindest option for your pet is to let them go. It's never easy to agree to put your dog down but doing your research before the day arrives may help you to come to terms with the decision.

If your dog's quality of life is suffering with no sign of getting better you are faced with a difficult choice; on the one hand you want to spend as long as possible with them but, on the other hand, you want to make the best decision for them.

Usually you will have at least a few days to think things through. A good vet will be happy to discuss the process with you. They will also have a good insight into how your dog's health issues will affect their quality of life. They will help you consider things like mobility, appetite, breathing, comfort, happiness and response to treatment, but ultimately the final decision to put your dog to sleep will be yours.

Your dog is probably an important and much-loved member of your family so the decision will be hard for everyone, especially children. If you can, discuss the situation with them honestly.

They will be upset but try to focus the discussion on what is best for your dog. Reassure them that the reason the procedure is called '**putting a dog to sleep**' is because it is a very peaceful procedure and will help their beloved pet



pass away with as little pain and distress as possible. The vet administers a measured overdose of a drug, similar to an anaesthetic, which will put your dog into a deep and permanent '**sleep**.' If you want to, you can stroke or cuddle your dog as they drift off.

Afterwards you have a number of choices. You can take your dog home and bury them in your garden. Bear in mind that some councils place restrictions on home burials, and you will not be permitted to do this on public ground or if you are in rented accommodation. You may arrange for your dog to be buried or cremated at a pet cemetery or **you can ask the vet to arrange a cremation.**

In the days and weeks after loss of your dog, try to focus on the good times you had together, and take comfort in the fact that the final decision you made for your pet was the best one for them.

By Tracey Anderson

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