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Boo!

Welcome to the September 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

Little Ravers Halloween Special

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

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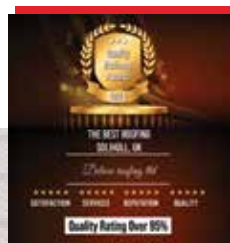
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Grow your own mushrooms

Mushrooms 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. Shop-bought 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 waterlogged. 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.

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a good read

By Natasha Donovan

The Haunting of Hill House

by Shirley Jackson

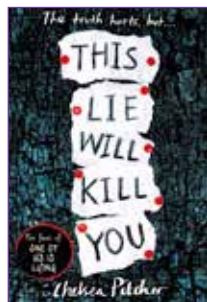
Although it was first published in 1959, *The Haunting of Hill House* is a timeless, chilling, cerebral masterpiece that redefined the haunted house genre. With elegant prose and psychological nuance, Jackson constructs not just a ghost story, but a deeply unsettling exploration of isolation, identity, 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. Alongside Eleanor are Theodora, a bohemian and enigmatic artist, and Luke, the future heir to the house. As the group settles in, strange phenomena begin 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 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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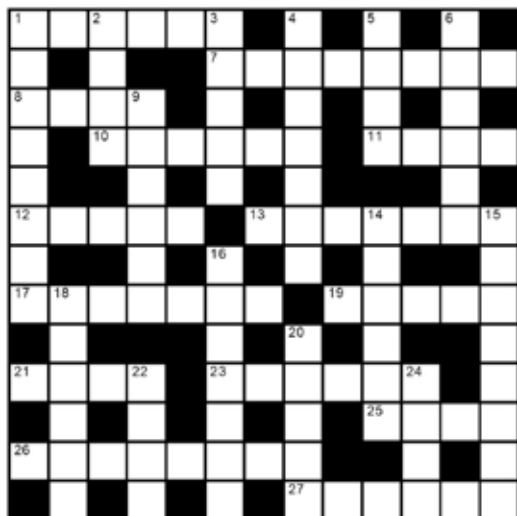
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crossword



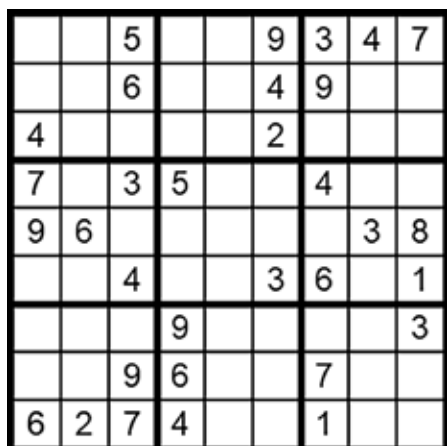
Across

- 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



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.

answer on page 14

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Sardul Marwa MBE

Tel: 07940 775122

sardul.marwa@solihull.gov.uk

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Tel: 07515 527345

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Samantha Gethen

Tel: 07360 648047

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local police contact for solihull

Solihull Police Station: 0845 113 5000 or 101

Misc

Solihull Council

0121 704 8001

Health

NHS non-emergency

111

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Spire Parkway Hospital

0121 704 1451

Grove Surgery

0121 705 1105

Northbrook Group Practice

0121 746 5000

Hobs Moat Medical Centre

0121 742 5211

Daleswood Health

01675 489489

Utilities

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Severn Trent Water

0300 034 2222

Severn Trent Water (emergencies)

0800 783 4444

Travel

National Rail Enquiries

03457 484950

Network West Midlands (buses)

0345 303 6760

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 Saturday of every month, 10am – 12 noon, excluding bank holidays, for both Silhill and St Alphege residents.



Crossword Solution
from page 14



Sudoku Solution
from page 14

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