

System and District

u3a

learn, laugh, live

APR
2026

Vitality!

Official newsletter of the System and District u3a

CHARITY No 1180152

FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Hi Everyone,

The daffodils are in full bloom, my Magnolia tree is full of blossom and everywhere is looking a lot brighter, but still cold.

Once again we are fast approaching our AGM and this year several of our committee members have who have served their 3-year term in office including myself. You will shortly be receiving an email / letter explaining the procedure for volunteering for a position on the committee and the timeframe in which you can apply.

I hope to see at the next Members meeting when Leonne Town from Seven Trent will talk about What Happens When You Turn on the Tap

See you soon.

Clive

NB - YOU MAY NEED TO CHECK YOUR SPAM/JUNK MAIL FOR THE AGM MESSAGE

WE WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW

HAVE A QUERY? WANT TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE?

Occasionally, some members (or potential members) may prefer to speak to someone about an aspect of our u3a, rather than locating an email address or looking on our website.

So, we now have a contact number for System & District u3a, which is:



0300 102 1381

At the moment, this number goes through to Steve Kenney's (Webmaster) mobile phone, and if he is unable to answer the query, then he can advise who to contact.

GROUP NEWS

NEW GROUP IDEAS

If you have any ideas for a new group, please contact Barbara Sargeant our groups co-ordinator sadu3agroups@gmail.com or speak to her at one of our monthly general meetings. Alternatively contact her assistant Angie Baker email sadu3agroupsasst@gmail.com Acting as a group organiser doesn't have to be onerous, it doesn't have to be down to just one person, and it doesn't mean you have to organise everything the group does.



Potential New
Group
Wind and String

Do you have a guitar you used to play?
Do you have a clarinet you used to play
or any other wind instrument?
Do you fancy getting together to make
beautiful music?

**We have a member who is keen to start a new
group where everyone can play together for
their enjoyment.**

Please email me at the below address and I
will pass on your details

sadu3agroups@gmail.com

UKELELE GROUP



The U3A ukulele group has many bright moments, but none shine quite like Len. As he turns 80, the group is celebrating not just a birthday, but the man who has kept their music alive with his humour, patience, and unmistakable enthusiasm.

Len has a gift for making everyone feel welcome, whether they're mastering their first chord or confidently leading a song. His sessions are filled with laughter, stories, and the kind of camaraderie that only music can create.

So, when his milestone birthday arrived, the group knew exactly what to do: surprise him with a ukulele-themed cake, and Leicester city beach towel and hat for his holiday. The look on his face said it all — pure joy, mixed with the warmth of a community he helped build.

Here's to Len: 80 years young, still inspiring, still strumming, and still the heart of the group.

LITTER PICKING GROUP

Seven litter pickers met this morning in Barkby, 6 bags of rubbish were collected, a microwave, a tyre and lots of plastic piping. All reported using the 'Love clean streets' app for collection. Then we treated ourselves to a well deserved beverage at Churchview garden centre.

Next month we meet as usual the 3rd Thursday in the month April 16th at 10am and are litter picking in East Goscote, meeting in the Car park.



FAMILY HISTORY GROUP

We're now settling in well at the library, but a recent influx of four new members – with the Open Day still to come – means we may soon have more people than the IT nook can comfortably hold.

If that happens, there's no need for concern. We'll look at setting up a second group, and the library staff have already said they would be happy to support that.

If you're interested in starting family history research but feel unsure about joining a mixed-experience group, you may prefer a dedicated beginner's group. That's one of the options we're considering if numbers continue to grow.

And if you've been holding back for exactly that reason, we'd be very glad to hear from you – your interest will help us shape what happens next.

Come and talk to us at the Open Day to find out more or contact juliedjohnson@yahoo.com.

WALKING GROUP

After both January and February walks having to be cancelled due to bad weather and poor conditions underfoot, it was a great relief to be able to walk around Cotgrave Country Park, with its mainly man-made footpaths avoiding any mud.



And, what a day we had, with full sunshine for most of the day (How did that happen?)

We started in the village, which dated back to Anglo-Saxon times, and headed out towards the Grantham Canal, which had opened in 1797 for the purpose of taking coal from the collieries roundabout into Lincolnshire.



By doing a couple of loops, we were able to reach the 2 viewing points, whereupon a large panoramic display board pointed out various places of interest over Nottingham. Our descent back into Cotgrave allowed those of us lunching to visit the lovely café called 'The Pig and Pudding', where we were made most welcome and were served with delicious snacks.

Dave Palmer

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Last month we briefly met Walter Prest, the medieval wool magnate from Melton. This month we found out what happened to his considerable wealth when he died with no sons to inherit – and how some of that money ultimately found its way into the hands of the Woodfords. We also explored the Folvilles, the family who were Lords of the Manor at Ashby Folville through the 12th–14th centuries, until they faced the same problem as Walter Prest: no male heir.

So, what's the connection?

Alice Prest, Walter's daughter, married Sir John Woodford; and a generation later the Folville heiress Mabel married his grandson, another Sir John — meaning that *both* the Prest inheritance and the Folville estate ended up with the Woodfords.

But before we reached that marriage, we had to explore the trials and tribulations of the 13th- and early-14th-century Folvilles — in particular the infamous Folville Gang of the 1320s and 1330s. They were the six gentry brothers of the Lord of the Manor, opinions still differ as to whether they were simply well-trained, well-organised thugs for hire, or whether they were champions of the oppressed, balancing the scales in a period when justice was a weapon used by powerful men to feather their own nests.

If you'd like to know more about the history of our county, come and join us. Contact the group organiser email: juliedjohnson@yahoo.com

CRAFT GROUP

Last month I shared a picture of one of our members weaving a sash which will be worn for reenactments over the summer. This is now complete and modelled by Helen in the whole outfit. Also, Marie is still spinning the flax that she grew and carded and is going to produce a piece of cloth from it. have included a picture of her in action. The rest of us are continuing with our own knitting and crocheting projects and enjoying the social aspect of crafting.



You can find more information on our groups via this link [Groups | Syston & District](#)

OPEN DAY

Thursday 16th April 11 am – 2 pm.

at Grosvenor Snooker Club, Syston, LE7 2EN.

Of interest to everyone not in full time work. A new opportunity to make new friends, discover new hobbies, be more active and have FUN.

Eager to learn more details? good, drop in and see what is on offer and have a chat with those who organise a wide variety of activities as well as current members who enjoy belonging to Syston & District U3A.

Create innovative leisure time with this chance to learn what you could be missing plus a warm welcome.

Hello to all our wonderful members who support and spread the word about this great organisation. I would like you to read the following – no, don't skip through, this is one small thing you can do without cost and helps enormously.

You are already a member BUT are you aware of all the groups we have? Fancy trying something new? Come along to explore other group opportunities and chat with group organisers and members attending who you have yet to meet. WE would welcome you, friends, family or anyone who is not a member and interested in knowing what is available. New members accepted provided not in full time work. Simple, show up and receive a warm welcome and an interesting time.



IDEAS - One Off Events

1. Chocolate making
2. Spring hanging basket/Christmas table decoration making
3. Dry or wet felting
4. Quilting
5. Curry night
6. Sedgeway riding
7. Disco night
8. Cruise on the Rutland Belle
9. Archery
10. Air rifle shooting
11. Go Karting
12. Quad biking
13. Foraging experience - Charnwood Foraging
14. Trips out - eg Birmingham Jewellery Quarter
15. Willow weaving
16. Alpaca walking
17. Cross bow shooting
18. Kayaking

Please contact me Angie Baker
at the the below email address
If you are interested in any of
these suggestions or you have any other
ideas and are willing to organise
the event with my help
sadu3aevents@gmail.com

WHAT'S ON NEXT

GENERAL MEETINGS

In the Brookside Room at the Community Centre – talks usually start 10.30am
Tea/coffee and mingling from 10.00am

Wed, Apr 8 at 10:30 AM

APRIL - Severn Trent



Wed, May 13 at 10:30 AM

MAY - HEARTLINK, Children Charity



Wed, Jun 10 at 10:30 AM

JUNE - VAL - Voluntary Action Leicestershire
System Community Centre



Helping people change
their lives for the better

NATIONAL U3A ITEMS

u3a TALKS



Richard Nixon- a truly complex man

Paul Carter looks at Nixon's political life travels across the landscape of post-war US and the world.

Thursday 16 April at 2pm

Free - online via Zoom



Anglo-Saxon England

From the dark ages to the Viking age

Charles Boundy continues his exploration of early English history with the third of his detailed talks, this time taking us from the so-called Dark Ages through to the first Viking incursions that began to reshape the country in the centuries after Roman rule.

Tuesday 21 April at 2pm

Free - online via Zoom

Helmet by Leo Reynolds via Flickr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



Oi! Mind yer language!

Exploring our English language, as the essential human skill - history, structures, usage, mysteries, magic and more.

Thursday 30 April at 2pm

Free - online via Zoom

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

Book [here](#)

More talks can be found [here](#)

Sharing this from the National U3A website.

Dialing 159 in the UK connects you directly to your bank's fraud team to report scams or suspicious calls. If you receive an unexpected call about a financial matter, hang up and dial 159, which supports over 99% of UK bank accounts. It acts as a safe, un-spoofable, and easy-to-remember hotline to prevent fraud: <https://stopscamsuk.org.uk/campaign/get-help-now/>



stopscamsuk.org.uk
STOP, HANG UP, CALL 159 - Stop Scams UK

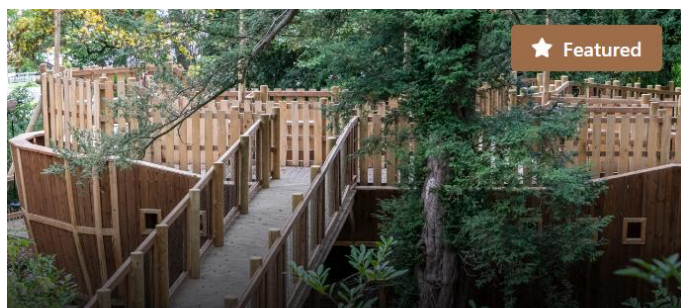
NOT u3a BUT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED



Spring Fayre 2026

🕒 Saturday 11th April, 10am to 4pm

Come along to our annual Spring Fayre



The Easter Egg Adventure at Belvoir Castle

📅 Monday, March 30, 2026 to Sunday, April 19, 2026

📍 PLAYGROUND

[View Details >](#)



My Favourite Things

A night of Musical Theatre and Gilbert and Sullivan Classics

Friday 17th April 2026
7:30pm

Syston Methodist Church
High street,
Syston
LE7 1GP

Retiring Collection and
Raffle

CHRISTCHURCH
Gilbert & Sullivan Society



Old John Tower Walk April 2026

This unique walking tour in the upper park offers the rare opportunity to see inside Old John Tower!

Start: 11th April, 2026 at 2:00pm

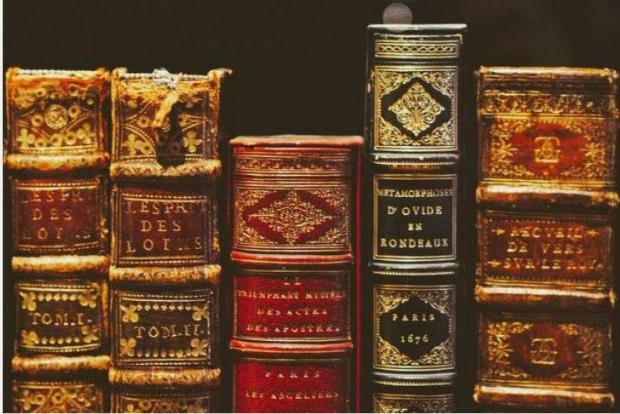


Geology Walk

This walk is for anyone interested in geology looking at a wide variety of rocks, covering a time span of 560 million years.

Start: 25th April, 2026 at 1:00pm

Both of the above at Bradgate Park



RESTING IN PEACE – A TALK BY JOANNE VIGOR-MUNGOVIN

21st April

The Guildhall, Guildhall Lane, Leicester, LE1 5FQ

[Book now](#)

Just click on an image to take you to the website (if there is one) with more information and links to book a place.

Indian Takeaway
With Bharat Patel,
Award winning TV journalist

An evening
of comic tales
and a Gujarati feast

24th July at 7pm | Tickets £15
St Mary's Church Barkby

Reverend Bidy 07597921051
Sarah Smith 07743536071

All proceeds to
cancer research

Bharat Patel on 846 889199 | All profits from book sales to Hope Cancer Research charity

FROM OUR MEMBERS

What To Do With Spring-Flowering Bulbs Once They've Finished?



Every spring, gardeners face the same question: once the daffodils, tulips, crocuses and hyacinths have finished their display, what should happen next? There isn't one "right" answer — different gardeners take different approaches, each with its own logic. Here's a clear, balanced look at the main options.

1. Leave the foliage to die back naturally

This is the classic, time-honoured method.

- **Let the leaves die back on their own.**
- **The foliage continues feeding the bulb** for next year's flowers.
- **Wait until the leaves turn yellow and come away easily** before removing them.

Pros:

- Best for long-term bulb health
- Reliable flowering year after year

Cons:

- Untidy for several weeks
- Can look messy in small or formal gardens

This is the approach most often recommended for anyone who wants bulbs to naturalise and perform well over many seasons.

2. Cutting back or tidying the foliage

Some gardeners prefer a neater look and take a more hands-on approach. This includes two distinct practices: **cutting the foliage back with scissors** and **bending or tying the leaves**.

A. Cutting back with scissors

- The green foliage is trimmed soon after flowering.
- Borders and pots look instantly tidier.
- Often used in front gardens or high-visibility areas.

The trade-off:

Green leaves are still feeding the bulb. Removing them early can reduce flowering next year, especially for daffodils and crocuses. Some gardeners accept this in exchange for a tidier garden.

B. Bending or tying the leaves

- Leaves are folded, knotted or bundled to keep them out of the way.
- Once widely recommended as a compromise between tidiness and function.

Why it's fallen out of favour:

It reduces the effective leaf area, slowing the bulb's ability to replenish itself. Many gardening organisations now advise against this method if you want bulbs to thrive long-term.

Why people still do it

For some, six weeks of floppy foliage simply isn't an option. In well-fed gardens, robust bulbs (like many daffodils) may cope reasonably well, but fussier bulbs — especially tulips — can decline faster.

Pros:

- Immediate visual improvement
- Useful in small, formal or front-of-house spaces

Cons:

- Can weaken bulbs and reduce next year's display
- Not ideal for long-term naturalising

3. Lift and store the bulbs

A more deliberate, “gardener-in-control” approach.

- Lift bulbs once the foliage has fully died back.
- Dry, clean and store them somewhere cool and airy.
- Replant in autumn.

Pros:

- Helps prevent disease in tulips
- Useful if you want to redesign beds or rotate displays
- Ideal for bulbs grown in pots

Cons:

- More work
- Some bulbs (especially many modern tulips) don't reliably reflower even with careful storage

4. Treat some bulbs as annuals

A surprisingly popular modern approach: **enjoy them, then compost them.**

This is especially common with tulips, which often give their best performance in the first year.

Pros:

- Guarantees a fresh, vibrant display every spring
- No need to manage fading foliage or store bulbs
- Ideal for containers and small gardens

Cons:

- Less economical
- Doesn't suit gardeners who prefer plants to earn their keep long-term

5. Feed and forget

A relaxed, middle-of-the-road option.

- Leave bulbs in the ground.
- Give them a feed as the flowers fade.
- Let nature take its course.

Pros:

- Minimal effort
- Works well for daffodils, crocuses, snowdrops and other reliable naturalisers

Cons:

- Not always effective for tulips
- Bulbs may gradually decline in poor soil

🌱 So which approach is “right”?

It depends on the bulb — and the gardener.

- **Daffodils, crocuses, snowdrops:** usually happiest left to die back naturally, perhaps with a light feed.
- **Tulips:** more variable; many gardeners now treat them as annuals or lift and store them.
- **Hyacinths:** often decline after the first year; lifting or replacing is common.
- **Bulbs in pots:** usually benefit from lifting or replacing due to nutrient loss.

In the end, it’s a balance between tidiness, effort and how much you want next year’s display to sparkle. If you’d like, I can also produce a **boxed “Quick Tips” sidebar** or a **short intro paragraph** to sit above this in the newsletter and draw readers in.

○ The Nearly-Forgotten Easter Egg Customs of Britain

Rolling, Jarping, Shackling and Other Charming Traditions

Easter in Britain has always been about more than chocolate. Long before foil-wrapped eggs took over the shops, families across the country celebrated the season with a whole assortment of egg-based games and customs. Some survive, some have faded, and some are now enjoying a quiet revival. Here’s a tour of the most distinctive traditions.

🌀 Egg Rolling

Still practised today — most famously in **Avenham Park, Preston** — egg rolling is one of Britain’s most enduring Easter customs.



- Children decorate hard-boiled eggs.
- Everyone gathers at the top of a hill.
- The eggs are rolled down, and the winner is the one that travels furthest without breaking.

The symbolism is debated: some say it represents the rolling away of the stone at the tomb; others see it as a simple springtime game. Either way, it’s a lively, communal tradition that has survived remarkably well.

○ Egg Jarping

A North-East speciality, still played competitively in places like Peterlee and Durham.

- Two players tap the pointed ends of their hard-boiled eggs together.
- The uncracked egg wins.
- Champions often swear by secret techniques for choosing the strongest egg.

It’s simple, noisy, and surprisingly competitive — a perfect Easter-Sunday diversion.

🧺 Egg Shackling

An East Anglian curiosity.

- Eggs are placed in a sieve or basket.
- The basket is shaken vigorously.
- The last uncracked egg is declared the winner.

It’s chaotic, noisy and great fun — a reminder that Easter gatherings were once full of playful competition.

🥚 Egg Decorating

Before chocolate eggs, decorated real eggs were the Easter gift.

- Onion skins were used to create rich, mottled dyes.
- Wax-resist patterns were common in some regions.
- Children often exchanged decorated eggs on Easter Sunday.

It's a gentle, creative tradition that still survives in many families.



🌸 A Tradition Worth Remembering

These customs remind us that Easter in Britain has always been a blend of play, community and seasonal celebration. They're quirky, local and full of character — and they offer a lovely glimpse into how families once marked the arrival of spring.

How the Chocolate Egg Took Over Easter

From Handmade Treats to a British Institution

Today it's hard to imagine Easter without chocolate eggs, but they're a surprisingly recent invention. Their rise from luxury novelty to national obsession is a story of craftsmanship, technology — and a little bit of Cadbury magic.

The First Chocolate Eggs

The earliest chocolate eggs appeared in **France and Germany** in the early 19th century.

- They were made from dark, bitter chocolate.
- They were often solid, because moulding techniques were limited.
- They were expensive, handmade gifts for the wealthy.

These early eggs were beautiful but rare — nothing like the mass-market treats we know today.

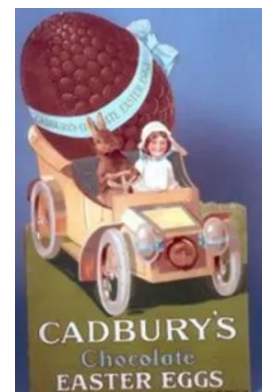
Cadbury Changes Everything

Britain's chocolate-egg revolution began in the 1870s.

Cadbury developed:

- a smoother, creamier chocolate
- better moulding techniques
- the ability to produce **hollow eggs**, which were easier to decorate and far more affordable

By the early 20th century, chocolate eggs were becoming a familiar Easter treat across Britain.



The Rise of the Hollow Egg

Hollow eggs weren't just cheaper — they opened the door to creativity.

- Decorative moulds became more elaborate.
- Eggs could be filled with sweets or small toys.
- Packaging became part of the excitement.

By the 1950s, the hollow chocolate egg had become the dominant

Easter gift, helped along by post-war prosperity and the growth of branded confectionery.

The Modern Easter Egg Explosion

Today's Easter eggs are a world of their own.

- Luxury eggs with hand-painted shells
- Novelty shapes and themed characters
- Giant eggs, mini eggs, filled eggs, and everything in between
- Supermarket ranges that appear earlier every year

What began as a niche European craft has become one of Britain's most recognisable seasonal traditions.



More Than Just Chocolate

The chocolate egg's success lies in its perfect blend of symbolism and indulgence. Eggs have always represented new life and spring; chocolate simply made the tradition sweeter, more accessible and more fun. From handmade treats to supermarket shelves, the chocolate egg has become a true British Easter icon.

Why This Year's Easter Eggs Are Smaller — and More Expensive

The Double Whammy of Cocoa Shortages and Shrinkflation

If you've picked up an Easter egg this year and thought it looked a little... thinner... you're not imagining it. Across all the major brands, eggs are **smaller than last year and noticeably pricier**, and there are two main reasons behind it.

1. Cocoa Prices Have Soared

The biggest factor is the **global cocoa crisis**.

Extreme weather in **Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire** — the world's main cocoa-growing regions — has devastated harvests, pushing cocoa prices to record highs. This has driven chocolate inflation far beyond general food inflation.

- Chocolate prices have risen by **9.7% year-on-year**.
- Some branded eggs now cost **two-thirds more** than in 2023.

Manufacturers simply can't absorb those increases, so the cost is passed on to shoppers.

2. Shrinkflation Has Hit the Seasonal Aisle

Alongside rising prices, many eggs have **quietly shrunk** — fewer grams of chocolate, fewer mini-packs inside, or smaller shells.

Examples from this year's ranges include:

- A Galaxy Extra Large egg dropping from **252g to 210g**, while rising in price from £4.98 to £5.97 — a **44% increase per gram**.
- An M&M's Crispy egg shrinking from **192g to 156g**, yet costing more — a **40% increase per gram**.
- A Maltesers egg reduced from **231g to 194g**, but up from £6 to £7 — a **39% increase per gram**.

This is classic **shrinkflation**: keeping the box looking familiar while reducing what's inside.

3. Other Costs Are Rising Too

Even beyond cocoa, manufacturers are facing higher costs for:

- **Sugar**
- **Energy**
- **Labour**

These pressures have pushed up the price of chocolate confectionery across the board.

The Bottom Line

This year's Easter eggs are smaller and more expensive because:

- **Cocoa shortages** have pushed raw-material prices to record highs.
- **Shrinkflation** is being used to keep headline prices from rising even faster.
- **General production costs** (energy, labour, sugar) are also up.

It's not your imagination — it really *is* a case of paying more for less.

POETRY CORNER

Easter Morning

The light comes softly, pale and thin,
A quiet promise breaking in;
The hedgerows stir, the blackbirds call,
And spring leans lightly over all.

The fields remember winter's hold,
The frost, the dark, the biting cold;
Yet here we stand, as mornings do,
Between the old world and the new.

No trumpets sound, no banners fly,
Just lengthening days and bluer sky;
A warmth that wasn't there before,
A sense of turning towards "something more".

And so we greet this Easter day,
In simple, steady, hopeful way;
Not with fanfare, but with grace —
A little light in every place.

Egg Rolling

Down the hill the children run,
Chasing eggs and chasing fun;
Painted shells in reds and blues,
Rolling fast with scuffed-up shoes.

Laughter carries on the air,
Parents watching from the stair;
Some eggs crack and some survive,
Some arrive as barely five.

Traditions change, and years move on,
But still the simple joys belong;
A hill, an egg, a hopeful roll —
A tiny race that lifts the soul.

After the Daffodils

The daffodils have had their say,
Their golden moment, bright as day;
Now petals fade and colours fall,
A quiet ending, after all.

Yet underground the work begins,
In patient bulbs with hidden skins;
They store the sun, they bide their time,
Preparing for another climb.

So let them rest, and let them be,
Their cycle moves more faithfully
Than any clock or calendar —
A promise kept, year after year.

The Chocolate Egg

Once they seemed enormous things,
Wrapped in foil that crinkled, sings;
Treasures on the mantelpiece,
Symbols of a springtime feast.

Now they sit in tidy rows,
Slimmer shells and smaller bows;
Still they hold that childhood gleam,
A sweet, familiar Easter dream.

For though the sizes rise and fall,
The joy remains inside it all —
A simple treat, a yearly cheer,
A taste of spring that says, "We're here."

And finally.....

The Easter Egg That Got Away

I bought an Easter egg early this year, determined — absolutely determined — that I would *not* eat it before Easter Sunday.

It lasted three days.

I blame the foil. It rustled every time I walked past the cupboard, whispering, “You know I won’t be here in April.” Reader, it was right.

Signs of Spring (According to Real Life, Not the Calendar)

- The weather app says “sunny intervals”, but the sky says “don’t you dare leave without a coat”.
- The daffodils are up, but so is the heating bill.
- Birds are singing enthusiastically at 5am, which is lovely unless you were hoping to sleep.
- Every shop has Easter eggs on display, and every shopper is pretending they’re “for the grandchildren”.
- You open the windows for “fresh spring air” and immediately close them again because it’s freezing.

A Short Conversation With a Chocolate Bunny

Me: I’m saving you for Easter.

Chocolate Bunny: Of course you are.

Me: I mean it this time.

Chocolate Bunny: You said that last year.

Me: I have willpower.

Chocolate Bunny: I’m hollow. You don’t stand a chance.

Gardening Notes From a Realist

- “Hardy annual” means it will survive anything except your garden.
- “Plant in full sun” means “good luck finding any”.
- “Low-maintenance” means “you’ll still forget to water it”.
- “Self-seeding” means “you’ll be pulling it up for the next decade”.
- “Thrives on neglect” means “finally, a plant for me”

A Final Thought

Spring is the season of optimism — the time of year when we all believe we’ll get more done, eat less chocolate, and finally sort out the shed.

