



PAUL HOLLYWOOD

I've no guilt over marriage breakdown

BAKE OFF JUDGE SPEAKS OUT: PAGE 9



The TV star with his wife Alexandra

ENERGY BILL PRICE HIKE WILL KILL THOUSANDS

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HOW TO TACKLE BACK PAIN HELL

New advice as the number of sufferers soars

By **Jo Willey** Health Editor

MILLIONS of Britons could be spared the agony of crippling back pain by seeking early treatment, a new report has revealed.

Experts say prompt help can enable patients to get on with their lives and return to work – and slash the risk of them developing other serious conditions.

Research by the Work Foundation think-tank found that Britons now take an amazing 35 million working days off a year because of back pain. The figures are the second worst in Europe and leave Britain lagging behind countries such as Estonia, Romania and Slovenia in tackling the mounting problem.

The foundation's report claimed that family doctors are not taking back pain and similar conditions seriously enough because they are not life threatening, and making sure patients are fit to work is not regarded as important as other "clinical" priorities.

It warned: "Too often, GPs do not regard work as a clinical outcome to which they

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Proud Andy Murray shows off his OBE yesterday with girlfriend Kim Sears

Why Murray was in a hurry for his big day at the Palace

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BUILDERS AND DESIGNERS WHO HELP WILDLIFE ARE HONOURED IN THE NEW HOMES GARDEN AWARDS

Buzzing with imagination

By David Hoppit

THERE'S nothing like a major disaster to highlight the need for action, even one hardly anyone notices. Last winter more than a third of our honey bee colonies were wiped out, which was more than double the amount lost the previous winter.

Add to this the struggle other forms of wildlife such as hedgehogs, bumble bees and butterflies are facing and we see a crisis looming, not least because a third of the food we eat depends upon pollination. Without bees the world really could starve.

The need for action is constantly highlighted by organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the British Beekeepers' Association (BBKA).

Even the Government is joining the crusade, with Lord de Mauley, a minister in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, pledging to publish a pollinator strategy and an urgent review of the decline in bees by the end of this year. But what has all this to do with homeowners and their gardens?

Enter several leading British house builders, galloping to the rescue by teaming up with the British Beekeepers' Association to agree profound changes in the way they landscape open spaces and plant the gardens of their new properties.

In the past 10 years we, the judges, have



STUNNING: Excelsior Homes won four Gold Awards for this garden (above). A feature in a Fisher Tomlin & Bowyer winner (left) and Gold Award winner Sally Court's garden in Moscow

been running the New Homes Garden Awards, with the support of Express Newspapers, our judges have placed great significance on 'green' features and notice is taken when entries place emphasis on planting that will encourage wildlife.

We have always maintained that the garden is the most important room in the house. Never has this been more so than in the present climate, especially in urban environments. According to research conducted by agent Chesterton Humberts, people crave outside space more than anything else in a home. London properties with balconies command a 20 per cent premium over those that do not.

Their figures show that buyers would choose a balcony in preference to an extra internal room, a situation that would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

The National Association of Estate Agents insists that a well-landscaped garden increases the value of a property by as much as six per cent but, according to Chesterton Humberts, the figure is much higher in urban areas, especially London.

Over the years that we have organised the New Homes Garden Awards we have witnessed a remarkable improvement in the quality of entries for gardens and landscaping around new residential property. Many of the real triumphs, however, have come from garden designers and landscape architects.

This is often reinforced by planners insisting that well-considered landscape plans are drawn up when applying for permission to build.

With a few notable exceptions many builders still seem to be content to build houses with very ordinary gardens, a lawn framed with a few shrubs and with no particular theme. Gardens should be exciting places and even in small ones there should be areas for growing a few vegetables and entertaining friends, with room for children too. One has only to look at the vast waiting lists for allotments around the country to comprehend our desire to grow at least some of our own fruits and vegetables.

Now, in addition to providing gardens that are nice to look at, many house builders are committed to improving the environment and helping the honey bees.

MARK Clare, chief executive of Barratt Developments, David Wilson Homes' parent company, said: "We are pleased to announce our partnership with BBKA and with its advice over the next three years bee-friendly planting will become standard practice in all our show home gardens and open spaces. "We will be advising home owners on the best way to create bee-friendly environments, whether they have a window box, a roof terrace or a flower meadow."

Jane Moseley, operations director of BBKA, welcomed the initiative. She said gardens should have at least two plants that are in flower at any one time from early spring to late summer. There should be water for the bees, drifts of flowers in sunny corners and no use of pesticides when plants are flowering.

When buying plants people should keep a special eye out for those that carry the 'Bee friendly' label of the RHS as well as those recommended by BBKA, with a label declaring 'Good for honey bees'.

Among the stars of this year's awards (winners listed left) was CGD Landscape Design, with a superb garden on a hill above Moscow, which won Best Overseas Garden Landscape and Landscape of the Year.

We were hugely impressed by the work of Aralia Garden Design in the Best Renovation category and Michael Wilson Restorations, together with Chelminster Estates, in the Best Renovation project.

Fisher Tomlin & Bowyer scooped four awards and PS Gardens also won a Gold. Among the house builders to win top (Gold) honours were Excelsior Homes, (Best Garden Family Home) and Antler Homes, which won Best Showhouse Garden. Antler also won Garden of the Year, with Redrow Homes and Taylor Wimpey also meriting Silver Gilt and Silver awards respectively.

In the specialist category of Best Memory Garden there was success for Colten Care, Greensleeves Homes Trust and David Fountain Designs.

BEST URBAN GARDEN

Gold Award – Fisher Tomlin & Bowyer (St George's Hill, Weybridge)
Gold Award – Fisher Tomlin & Bowyer (Roundhurst House, Haslemere)
Gold Award – Fisher Tomlin & Bowyer (Amberwood, Kingston)
Silver Gilt Award – Fisher Tomlin & Bowyer (St James', London)

BEST LANDSCAPED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Gold Award – PS Gardens
Gold Award – Excelsior Homes

BEST GARDEN FAMILY HOME

Gold Award – Excelsior Homes
Silver Gilt Award – Antler Homes

BEST RENOVATION PROJECT

Gold Award – Aralia Garden Design

BEST RESTORED GARDEN/ LANDSCAPE

Gold Award – Michael Wilson Restorations/Chelminster Estates

BEST OVERSEAS GARDEN/ LANDSCAPE

Gold Award – CGD Landscape Design

BEST SHOWHOUSE GARDEN

Gold Award – Antler Homes
Gold Award – Excelsior Homes
Silver Gilt Award – Redrow Homes
Silver Award – Taylor Wimpey West London
Silver Award – Redrow Homes (Mary Twill Grove & Heritage Park, Flint)
Silver Award – Redrow Homes (Stretton Green, Cheshire)

BEST MEMORY GARDEN

Silver Gilt Award – Colten Care
Silver Gilt Award – Greensleeves Homes Trust
Silver Award – David Fountain Designs

GARDEN of the YEAR

Gold Award – Antler Homes

LANDSCAPE of the YEAR

Gold Award – CGD Landscape Design