



SIMPLE GUIDE TO THE VITAMINS AND MINERALS THAT BOOST YOUR HEALTH

SEE PAGE 32&33



CITY SHOCK

GOOGLE SHARES SUSPENDED AS PROFITS DIVE

SEE PAGE 2 AND CITY

NEW CHAOS OVER YOUR ENERGY BILL

Cameron fuels confusion over soaring prices

By **Alison Little** in London
and **Martyn Brown** in Brussels

DAVID Cameron's pledge to tackle Britain's soaring household energy bills descended into "shambles" yesterday as the Government struggled to explain how it would make firms charge the lowest prices.

The Prime Minister last night insisted he could make good his surprise promise to help families meet power bills.

But critics claimed the Government was in disarray and backtracking after Energy Secretary Ed Davey appeared to distance himself from the proposal.

Forced

Minister John Hayes was also forced to appear in the Commons to explain the policy but admitted he had not known Mr Cameron planned to make the announcement.

He promised only to "get people lower tariffs" with "different options" still being considered.

The confusion followed the Prime Minister's dramatic reply during Wednesday's rowdy Commons Question Time to a Labour MP's inquiry about soaring household bills.

The PM said: "I can announce that we will be legislating so that energy companies have to give the lowest tariff to their customers." The suggestion was widely welcomed but doubts

TURN TO PAGE 5



WHY TV'S HOLLY IS EVERY MAN'S PERFECT DATE

SEE PAGE 13

BEST URBAN GARDEN

Gold Award – Janine Pattison
Gold Award – Fisher Tomlin

BEST LANDSCAPED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Gold Award – Gillespies
Silver Gilt Award – St George West London
Silver Award – Liz Lake Associates

BEST MEMORY GARDEN

Gold Award – Nightingale House
Gold Award – Hallmark Healthcare
Gold Award – Aralia Garden Design
Gold Award – Colten Care

BEST RESTORED GARDEN/LANDSCAPE

Gold Award – St James

Silver Gilt Award – Jones Homes

BEST GARDEN: FAMILY HOME

Gold Award – Antler Homes

BEST COMMUNAL GARDEN/LANDSCAPE

Gold Award – Gillespies
Silver Gilt Award – Berkeley Homes
Eastern Counties

BEST LANDSCAPED RETIREMENT DEVELOPMENT (LUXURY SECTOR)

Gold Award – Richmond Villages
Gold Award – Audley Retirement Care

BEST RENOVATION PROJECT

Silver Gilt Award – Fisher Tomlin

BEST SHOWHOUSE GARDEN

Silver Gilt Award – Antler Homes
Silver Award – Taylor Wimpey East London

BEST OVERSEAS GARDEN/LANDSCAPE

Gold Award – Fisher Tomlin

GARDEN OF THE YEAR

St James

LANDSCAPE OF THE YEAR

Nightingale House

GARDEN DESIGNER OF THE YEAR

Fisher Tomlin

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT OF THE YEAR

Tim Lynch Associates



SPACIOUS: Antler Homes' best family home garden

Gardens of glory

DAVID HOPPIT reports on this year's bumper crop of awards

WE TOOK our time, strolling past the herbaceous border, tall hollyhocks still rivalling the dahlias for autumn colour, passing the children's playground and then a red phone box.

Our visit to see Great Aunt Charlotte proved to be both pleasant and stimulating.

Heading down the path we arrived at the shops. The post office had a window display including the latest ration books.

On seeing the books our great aunt became quite animated, recalling how as a teenager she left the family's ration books in the butcher's shop.

Sadly our dear elderly relative is in the late stages of dementia.

She wasn't sure who we were and certainly didn't know who the children were (although she pretended to) but her recollections of 60 and more years ago came flooding back as our walk along safe, box hedged paths progressed.

Gardens have many functions but those designed to stimulate memories struck a particularly poignant chord with our team of hard-nosed judges while agonising over a mountain of entries for the New Homes Garden Awards, which are sponsored by Express Newspapers.

The quality of entries has risen enormously since we launched the awards 10 years ago, most

noticeably in gardens built around properties designed for retirement and also those built in dense urban developments.

According to a recent report on urban gardens produced by the Royal Horticultural Society, 85 per cent of the UK population now live in towns and cities and their gardens and parks account for about 25 per cent of the total area.

These gardens, says the RHS, are the equivalent of an air conditioning system for urban areas and, of course, they provide havens for wildlife, often more valuable than land in rural areas where abundant crops are the priority.

The report concluded that gardens reduce energy consumption by providing shelter. They also prevent flooding and improve the wellbeing of residents.

The only possible negative points are carbon emissions from power tools and increased use of water.

As judges, we take note of efforts made to conserve rain and grey (waste) water.

This was only the second year that we included a category for memory gardens and the standard was so high that no fewer than four gold awards were recommended.

Dementia is not the sole preserve of the elderly. The wife of a dear friend succumbed to Alzheimer's at the age of only 39, but as people live longer it is a sad fact of life that statistically it will become a hurdle for more and more of us. These



MEMORY LANE: Nightingale House's Gold winner



WINNER: Gillespie's striking NEO Bankside effort

gardens provide dementia patients with a safe and familiar environment that stimulates the brain. Most also provide opportunities for them to do some growing in raised beds and spend time watching and communing with nature. Bird and bat boxes are familiar items in most.

THE other vital element that is provided is community spirit. The winning retirement gardens usually provide allotments for residents and these become meeting places for social discourse as well as the exchanging of plants.

Although women have always ruled many of our flower gardens it is only recently that they have challenged men's supremacy in the growing of fruit and vegetables.

Long waiting lists for allotments around the country are testament to the increasing enthusiasm for growing our own food.

So who are the garden champs of

2012? By my reckoning we had more gold medals than ever before. In the case of the luxury retirement developments, for example, two of the entries were considered worthy of gold medals.

They were a Richmond Villages development in Letcombe Regis, Oxfordshire, and Audley Retirement's Mote House, at Staines, Middlesex.

In the Memory Garden category four of the entries merited gold medals. They were Colten Care's St Catherine's View in Winchester; Park View Care Home in Ipswich designed by Patricia Fox of Aralia Garden Design; Hallmark Healthcare's Anisha Grange Care Home, in Billericay, Essex and Nightingale Dementia Care's Nightingale House, a care home in London for predominantly elderly Jewish folk.

Nightingale was also the judges' choice of Landscape of the Year and its designer, Tim Lynch Associates of Bradford on Avon, was their choice as Landscape Architect of the Year.

Among the other golden heroes

in this Olympic year was Gillespies for its remarkable urban landscape at NEO Bankside, London; Janine Pattison; Antler Homes; Fisher Tomlin, which won three golds as well as the coveted title of Garden Designer of the Year, and St James with its Roehampton House, entered in the best restored garden/landscape category.

This Grade One mansion, built in 1712, has a list of distinguished occupants but in 1915 it became a convalescent home for wounded soldiers and most of the garden disappeared beneath buildings for medical facilities and accommodation but since taking over in 2006 St James has restored water features, walls, wrought iron gateways and the remarkable rose garden, with 18 different species, as near as possible to the original.

Joining them on the podium with Silver-Gilt and Silver awards were Taylor Wimpey, Berkeley Homes, St George, Jones Homes and Liz Lake Associates.

INFORMATION: www.newhomesgardenawards.co.uk