# Residents angered as cherished Cotmandene hollyhocks die after council weed spraying



Residents of Cotmandene, a rural area within the conservation district of Dorking, Surrey, have expressed anger and disappointment after a well-known wall of flowers—predominantly hollyhocks—that had long adorned the area suddenly died. The flowers, which have been a cherished feature lining the historic walls around Cotmandene, were discovered to be completely withered approximately three weeks ago.

Cotmandene is described by locals as a small, open expanse consisting mainly of two large fields bordered by a varied mix of properties including traditional houses, lifted buildings, and council flats. The old walls lining the area once formed part of the Deepdene Estate and have long been home to hollyhocks sprouting from small gaps where the walls adjoin the tarmac.

Speaking to SurreyLive, an anonymous resident shared their sense of pride in the floral display and described how the hollyhocks have been a consistent and distinctive presence: “The old buildings of Cotmandene have big high walls because they used to be part of the Deepdene Estate. So there's a very old walls lining lots of the areas around here. At the base of each of those walls where the tarmac meets the brick there's generally a little tiny gap, small enough for seeds to get in. There have been lots and lots of hollyhocks for the whole time I have been here.”

The resident went on to recount the shock upon finding the flowers dead: “My first reaction was sadness. It was just so sad to see it. It sounds extreme when there's terrible things happening but it was just sad to see something being just wantonly destroyed. Then we were angry and I'm sort of starting to get more angry now.”

The community suspects that the decline of the flowers resulted from weed spraying carried out by council contractors. The resident explained, “The man comes around occasionally as they do in most streets in most small towns, to get rid of the weeds. They come with a backpack and a pump action sprayer and they spray weeds that are appearing in places that could crack the paving or do harm to a telegraph pole and they spray around those places. They have never before, not in any of our memories sprayed the edges of the walls.” The sprayed plants “look dead. Just completely dead,” the resident added, noting the distinctiveness of hollyhocks and their recognisable leaves even when dormant.

In response, Surrey County Council acknowledged that the bases of the walls in Cotmandene were weed sprayed in March as part of routine highways maintenance. However, the council maintains that the hollyhocks themselves were not deliberately targeted. A council spokesperson told SurreyLive, “At this point in the year Hollyhocks would be very small and largely indistinguishable from other weeds on the highway, therefore any that were treated by the spraying would not have been done so intentionally.”

The spokesperson further noted that the council is engaging with Mole Valley District Council “about adapting the weed spraying schedule in the area to avoid this happening again in future. These discussions are ongoing.”

Locals have called for better training of contractors or implementation of measures, such as maps indicating no-spray zones, to prevent recurrence of similar incidents. The resident expressed cautious hope for the flowers' recovery: “Hollyhocks have quite deep roots so it's possible that they'll reinvigorate, but I doubt it. They can survive really harsh frosts and things like that but I don't think there's anything in their DNA to let them survive being sprayed with toxic chemicals.”

The incident has highlighted tensions over the balance between routine maintenance and preservation of local natural heritage in this picturesque Surrey community. The future of Cotmandene’s hollyhocks remains uncertain as residents await the outcome of council discussions on weed control practices.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/deepdene-estate-dorking-surrey-21656876> - This URL relates to the Deepdene Estate, which historically encompassed the area of Cotmandene with its old walls where hollyhocks would grow. While the specific article does not mention hollyhocks, it provides context about the estate's historical significance.
2. <https://www.surreylive.co.uk/news/surrey-news/heartbreaking-reason-most-beautiful-flower-7653259> - This URL could potentially host an article discussing the impact of weed spraying on local flora, similar to the hollyhocks in Cotmandene, although the exact article isn't available here.
3. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is mentioned as a source for the article but does not provide specific information about the incident described.
4. <https://www.leatherheadlocal.co.uk/areas/dorking/> - This URL offers general information about Dorking, a nearby location to Cotmandene, which helps contextualize the local environment.
5. <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/news/article/1732/mppn-pesticides> - This URL could relate to Surrey County Council's policies on pesticide use, including weed spraying practices, which are relevant to the incident in Cotmandene.
6. <https://www.molevalley.gov.uk/> - This URL represents the Mole Valley District Council, which is involved in discussions with Surrey County Council regarding adjustments to weed spraying schedules to protect local flora.
7. <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/fury-flowers-wantonly-destroyed-pretty-31507183> - Please view link - unable to able to access data