



## RHS Community Awards Press & PR Guidance 2021

The RHS press and PR team works throughout the year to promote Britain in Bloom in the media including the RHS Community Awards.

This involves looking for opportunities to promote your work via the press. For example, in national newspapers, magazines and on TV and radio.

Groups are encouraged to share their stories with the RHS to help us line up media opportunities and so we can provide information to journalists who ask us for examples e.g. of groups helping their communities, or groups who are working on any particularly unusual/creative/heart-warming projects etc.

While the RHS focuses primarily on national media, please do use your involvement in the RHS Community Awards to help with securing your own press coverage. For example, in your local newspaper, community magazine or on your local radio station.

The RHS press and PR team is available throughout the year to support groups with PR activities – please read the tips below and contact us should you have any queries or need any assistance.

### Top tips for a good story

A story can come from many angles and it can help to think creatively. For example:

- What impact has your work had on the community? (i.e. not just what you're doing but why) E.g. Lifted people's spirits, helped people develop new skills, provided fresh and healthy produce, helped tackle loneliness, reduced anti-social behaviour, provided a habitat for wildlife etc.
- How has Coronavirus impacted the work of your group? E.g. Have more volunteers joined or have you had to work in creative new ways?
- Is there anyone in your group or wider community with an interesting story to tell? E.g. Unsung heroes, new volunteers who discovered gardening over the pandemic, volunteers who overcame a health condition or other issue through gardening etc.
- Are you doing anything unusual or creative? E.g. using technology in new ways, delivering growing kits/plants to people, growing food in unusual places, creating a novel display to bring a smile to people's faces etc.

### Images

Don't forget to take good-quality photographs to illustrate your story. These can make a big difference in getting your story covered.

### Sharing your story

Once you have a story idea that you think will be of wider interest to people in your area, there are a number of ways you can try and secure coverage (remember, journalists will only use stories they consider interesting and relevant).



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A press release is useful for sharing the same story with several different journalists/media outlets at the same time but contacting an individual journalist by phone, email or social media with a tailored story idea for them (also known as a pitch) is often more effective.

Keep pitches short and to the point while including enough key information to pique the journalist's interest. For example:

### Example email pitch

Subject line: XXX in Bloom surprises local residents with sunflower deliveries

Dear (name of journalist),

Volunteers from XXX in Bloom have been surprising local residents with doorstep deliveries of sunflower seedlings this week. Over 100 plants have been gifted so far, aiming to lift people's spirits and help bees and other garden wildlife.

XXX in Bloom is one of XX groups participating in the RHS Community Awards this year - the new virtual awards replace the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals competition for 2021.

Would you like further information, photos or to speak to one of our group / a sunflower recipient?

Best wishes,

Name and contact details (phone and email)

### Top tips on writing a press release

- Be accurate and informative – get someone else to proof it for typos!
- Don't waffle; the ideal press release is one side of A4.
- A punchy, eye-catching title will capture attention.
- Key information should come in the first paragraph: What is happening? Why? Where? When? Who is involved? Many press releases don't get read below the opening paragraph so make sure you sum it up here.
- Include a quote or testimonial from yourself, a sponsor, a local dignitary, a volunteer or celebrity supporter.
- Make sure your contact details are in the 'Notes to Editors' at the end of the release for any follow up queries e.g. images, interview requests etc.
- If you can supply an image to illustrate your story, mention that in the "Notes to Editors". Often a good picture will get a story featured.
- Always write "Press Release" across the top of the page and include the date together with any logo. Include the date to be released (for example "For Immediate Release", or "Embargoed until 30 May 2021").

### Regional radio and newspapers

Consider where you want your story to appear and note down the names of journalists who cover relevant topics such as gardening and community stories e.g. perhaps your local radio station has a gardening show, or your regional newspaper has a particular reporter who covers news in your area etc.



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Printed publications such as newspapers usually include their contact details inside (try the news editor with your story if you're unsure who is the right person) or go online to search. Many journalists / media outlets have Twitter accounts, for example (who can then be contacted privately using a Direct Message).

Try to maintain good relationships with local journalists, particularly those who have shown an interest in your group's work, and update them on your upcoming projects and plans.

### **Specialist and other media**

Think beyond the local paper - are there any regional gardening magazines, tourism newsletters, county-wide glossy magazines, council news updates that might be interested in covering your story?

Be aware that the editorial schedule that magazines work to can be as much as three months in advance for monthly publications and even longer for quarterlies.

### **Events**

If you're organising an event, consider inviting the local newspaper or any other press contacts along.

Think about photo opportunities that might appeal to press. For example, volunteers holding up their freshly harvested vegetables, a tree planting or cutting a ribbon to open a local plant swap (these could be used as a photo call where press are invited at a designated time for a short period (e.g. 15 minutes), enabling them to get the photos/information they need to cover the story).

### **RHS press office contact details**

If you have any queries about your press or PR, please contact Claire Weaver, Press Office on [claireweaver@rhs.org.uk](mailto:claireweaver@rhs.org.uk) or call 07590 930 047.

If you would like to share your story with the RHS for use in our own communications channels and publications, please send it in the first instance to the Communities Team: [communities@rhs.org.uk](mailto:communities@rhs.org.uk)