

Growing Communities



Issue 06 • Summer 2011 www.rhs.org.uk/communities

The RHS Community update

Let's get Britain buzzing

Plants that are Perfect for Pollinators

Wildlife in the Garden

RHS Affiliated Societies

Britain's largest network of gardening clubs and societies

Low Carbon Gardening

Growing Communities Online



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Cover: Hoverfly on *Calendula officinalis*
Image: RHS Carol Sheppard

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Your magazine

Welcome to the summer issue of *Growing Communities*, the magazine for all RHS “in Bloom” and It’s Your Neighbourhood participants and RHS Affiliated Societies.

Following feedback from Affiliated Societies we are introducing a regular RHS advice section into the magazine. We hope that this will support your projects and activities. If you have any specific subjects you’d like us to consider for future issues, please send them through.

As ever, we’re always looking for groups’ stories to publish. Please send your news and ideas to sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118.

Many thanks,
Sophie Dawson, Editor

Meet the team

The Community Horticulture department at the RHS is responsible for managing the RHS Britain in Bloom and It’s Your Neighbourhood campaigns, as well as the RHS Affiliated Societies scheme.

The team works with 17 regional and national “in Bloom” bodies around the UK to coordinate the Britain in Bloom and It’s Your Neighbourhood campaigns.

In managing the RHS Affiliated Societies scheme, the team coordinates all renewals, correspondence, benefits delivery and insurance payments.



Stephanie Eynon (left) **Community Horticulture Manager** Stephanie oversees all three campaigns, ensuring their ongoing development for the benefit of all participants.

Caroline Hall (middle) **Departmental Administrator** Caroline manages the team’s administration and is the first point of contact for groups’ queries.

Lucy Reid (right – left in image) **Community Horticulture Programme Coordinator – Events and Operations** Lucy coordinates key campaign events, such as the RHS Britain in Bloom awards ceremony, and is the main point of contact for groups’ insurance queries.

Sophie Dawson (right – right in image) **Community Horticulture Programme Coordinator – Communications and Development** Sophie coordinates the production of the department’s printed materials, including this magazine and all campaign support packs and publicity materials.

Should you have any queries about any of the schemes, please email communities@rhs.org.uk or phone **020 7821 3069**. With just four of us in the department, we’re grateful for your patience if we’re unable to respond to queries immediately.

The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK’s leading gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting gardening. Our goal is to help people share a passion for plants, to encourage excellence in horticulture, and inspire all those with an interest in gardening.

Our community campaigns support more than 5,000 groups in creating greener and more interconnected communities. For more information about RHS Britain in Bloom, RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood and RHS Affiliated Societies, please visit www.rhs.org.uk/communities

Free trees for communities

This spring, over 300 “in Bloom” and It’s Your Neighbourhood groups planted free packs of trees provided by the Woodland Trust, helping bring thousands more trees into our towns, villages and cities.

There are now 1,000 more free tree packs available for groups to receive in autumn. The deadline for applications is 23 September, though if you miss this, you can apply for more trees next spring (deadline 1 February 2012).

Find out more and apply today by visiting www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/rhstrees

Any groups requiring assistance with their tree planting can contact one of the Woodland Trust’s 66 UK-wide Woodland Creation Champions for advice. To find your nearest Champion, please email rowenagrew@woodlandtrust.org.uk

The Woodland Trust are also offering training to any community groups who would like to extend their tree-planting knowledge and become a Woodland Creation Champion. Please visit www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/jointhechampions for more information.

New planning guidance for communities

Locality, the new organisation that has replaced the Development Trusts Association and Bassac, has announced that it will be delivering a scheme to enable communities to help plan their own neighbourhoods.

The Building Communities scheme will help communities take a more active role in the planning process to ensure what is being built meets local needs. It will offer expert advice, assistance and guidance from a range of specialist providers to enable people to plan how they want their neighbourhoods to be.

The scheme is set to launch soon and more details will be available at www.locality.org.uk

New funding for English waterways

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has announced £110m of funding to improve the health of more than 880 lakes, streams and other water bodies in England, while boosting local involvement in caring for our blue spaces enjoyed by millions every year.

A significant portion of the funding will support local projects across the country through a Catchment Restoration fund, which will be available from 2012. For more information, please visit www.defra.gov.uk



Boswell Road It’s Your Neighbourhood group in Crawley with their native tree saplings

RHS News

New communities map

The RHS has launched the first-ever, easy-to-use web page for people looking to volunteer with community gardening activities. Initially launched to encourage volunteering in conjunction with Volunteers’ Week, the map will eventually be a tool for finding any community gardening group, including RHS Affiliated Societies.

The map, at www.rhs.org.uk/getinvolved, includes nearly 15,000 groups and schools involved in RHS Britain in Bloom, RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood and the RHS Campaign for School Gardening.

New pollinator-friendly plant label

The RHS has launched a new pollinator-friendly plant label, highlighting over 300 plants that the RHS recommends as best for pollinating insects. You can view the full list of plants at www.rhs.org.uk/Plants-for-pollinators and the label will appear in garden centres and nurseries from autumn 2011.



Urban greening review released

The RHS has launched a review of scientific research highlighting the value of growing plants in towns and cities. RHS Scientist Tijana Blanus examined dozens of pieces of existing research that tell us about the positives and negatives of gardening in urban areas, drawing together a clear picture about the environmental and health impacts of gardens and gardening.

The full report can be downloaded from www.rhs.org.uk/urbangreening

After receiving a fantastic number of entries in the urban greening competition, we are delighted to announce that North Summerfield Residents’ Association, an RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood group in Birmingham, was selected in the prize draw.

In addition to winning two tickets to the Chelsea Flower Show, the project will also receive a visit from an RHS horticultural expert in August, who will help to develop plans to plant up two neglected strips of land. “We’re hoping to do something that will be a pleasure to see, easily maintained and yet good for the environment and wildlife,” said Secretary Christine Bean.

Get your Grown-ups Growing

Get Your Grown-ups Growing (GYGG) is an exciting project encouraging schools to invite grandparents, parents and friends to help in their garden this October. Schools need to register to the RHS Campaign for School Gardening and sign up to GYGG to receive a free pack which includes seeds: www.rhs.org.uk/gygg

Dig Together Day – deadline extended

Affiliated Societies now have until 24 July to sign up their events for this year’s Dig Together Day. The campaign provides a great opportunity for Affiliated Societies to raise their profile and recruit new members. Groups can register any of their events taking place in September, as long as they are open to the public and aimed at engaging people in gardening.

A support pack containing ideas for activities can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/digtogetherday where you can also register your events online. Alternatively, please call us on 020 7821 3069 to request a registration form in the post.

Take action for bees



Honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) on *Crocus tommasinianus*

There are more than a few reasons to admire the humble bee, whether it's for their pollination of our crops, their inexhaustible daily toil or the sweet honey they give us.

But bee populations are in trouble. In the UK, bumblebee numbers have fallen by about 60 % since 1970 and honeybee numbers are also in decline. A worrying trend, and most seriously for the impact it could have on our dinner plates: the UN Environment Programme estimates that of the 100 crops which provide 90 per cent of the world's food, over 70 are pollinated by bees and other insects.

Scientists are still trying to understand what is leading to this decline, but a variety of factors are thought to contribute, including changes in farming practices which remove traditional wildflower food sources, increased use of herbicides and insecticides, and the deadly effect of the parasitic *Varroa* mite. *Varroa* was first detected in Britain in 1992, after spreading into Europe from Asia, and now infests bee hives throughout Britain and Ireland. While sucking bee 'blood' (haemolymph) from the larvae, pupae and adult bees, the mites spread several debilitating viruses within the hive. Unless beekeepers take steps to control *Varroa*, infested colonies weaken and die within two or three years.

Helen Bostock, RHS Senior Horticultural Advisor and project manager for the three-year biodiversity project 'Plants for Bugs', stresses that gardeners can make a difference. "Studies suggest gardens and the plants they offer are not just a nice little extra for pollinating insects but play a vital role in providing food when flowers in the wider countryside are in short supply. Gardeners wanting to give bees a helping hand should choose flowering plants for all seasons. And the more ambitious can even join the ever-increasing band of beekeepers!"

To help gardeners choose the best plants for wildlife, the RHS has launched a new pollinator-friendly plant label, highlighting over 300 plants the RHS recommends as best for pollinating insects. These include hoverflies, moths, butterflies and other flower-visiting insects, as well as bees. You can view the full list of plants at www.rhs.org.uk/Plants-for-pollinators and the label will appear in garden centres and nurseries from autumn 2011.

Bees can be categorised into three broad groups.

- The honeybee (*Apis mellifera*) is a social bee that forms large colonies. It can be kept in hives and is the source of honey and beeswax. A strong honeybee colony in mid summer may contain about 60,000 bees.
- Bumblebees (*Bombus spp.*) are also social bees but their nests die out in late summer or early autumn. There are 23 bumblebee species in Britain but only about 12 are commonly seen in gardens. At peak strength in midsummer, a bumblebee nest may contain up to 200 bees.
- There are about 265 species of solitary bee in Britain, some of which are rare species confined to restricted habitats. Common types of garden solitary bees include some of the *Andrena*, *Osmia*, *Megachile*, *Lasioglossum* and *Nomada* species. Solitary bee nests are even smaller and with these non-social bees, each female constructs and provisions her nest on her own.

What can you do?

- **Build a bee nest site in your garden**
Find out how at www.rhs.org.uk/biodiversity
- **Grow flowers that bees like**
Honeybees are active from late winter to autumn, so try and have bee-friendly plants in flower for as much of that time as possible. Use pesticides sparingly. Those based on fatty acids or plant oils and extracts pose little danger to bees but will not control all pests. Avoid spraying open flowers and if possible do spraying in the evening when bees are less active.
- **Become a beekeeper**
The British Beekeepers' Association lists details of county beekeepers associations and training courses www.britishbee.org.uk

Making honey in Wilberfloss, Yorkshire



Margaret (right) and fellow beekeeper, Trudy, examining the hives

...it's the atmosphere, the nature, and the peace and quiet. You see everything – rabbits, hares, even deer.

Margaret Langstaff, Chairperson of Wilberfloss in Bloom,

Margaret Langstaff, Chairperson of Wilberfloss in Bloom, has been keeping bees for over 22 years and currently owns 12 hives.

A self-avowed honey addict, she's been hooked on beekeeping since attending a beginner's course in the 80s. She loves being outside with her hives: "It's the atmosphere, the nature and the peace and quiet. You see everything – rabbits, hares, even deer," she says.

This year she's been working with a neighbouring farmer to establish a new 'bee road' around his fields. "We'll be planting a 4 x 87 metre strip of land with a mixture of wildflowers to provide a food corridor for the bees," she explains. Is she leasing the land? "No, it's paid for with honey! He's a big fan so I take him a load of it every now and then." Margaret's new bee road will connect to others, ultimately

spanning over 30 miles from Beverley to York. It is hoped that eventually a national network of bee roads will stretch across the whole of Great Britain, encouraged by the new 'Plan Bee' campaign from The Cooperative and Buglife.

Margaret's enthusiasm for bees is palpable; she's already planning her retirement around them. "I might get some turpentine and start making furniture cream with the wax – it's got a wonderful smell, like eucalyptus," she says.

On average, she spends two to three hours a week looking after her bees in high season, but extracting honey can take a full day. Margaret harvests and sells around 80lbs of honey a year from each of her hives. What advice does she have

for a novice beekeeper? "You really need a mentor and you must join an association. Do be sensible about where you site your bees too: you need it to be somewhere secure that's not too obvious – hives do get stolen unfortunately.

"But it's a wonderful thing to do. There have been times in my life when I've had a lot on, but I could never give it up!"

Margaret's top tip for keeping wasps out of the hive

A jar of sugar syrup placed at the hive entrance with a hole in the lid will fill up with wasps, but the bees won't go near it.

New wildlife pond for London garden



Work complete! Volunteers from the Barbican Wildlife Group survey their new pond

Fann Street Wildlife Garden in central London has been given a makeover by the City of London in Bloom and the Barbican Wildlife Group.

The garden, maintained by local residents, was created with wildlife in mind and features log-piles, shrub cover for nesting birds, winter bird feeders, a native hedge, and a wide range of other wildlife-friendly plants. The only thing missing was a pond.

After seeking advice from the Pond Conservation Trust, an area was dug out with contoured, step down levels to provide different depth habitats. Pebbles and stones were used to create beaches for wildlife to access the pond and aquatic plants were chosen to aerate the water without the need for an oxygenating pump.

How they did it:

1. Dig out pond levels
2. Cover with 5cm of soft sand
3. Cut and lay geo-textile layer above sand; Epalyn liner on top of this, followed by an additional geo-textile layer
4. Cover with 4cm of aquatic soil and a large amount of pebbles of various sizes, to create nooks and crannies for wildlife habitat
5. Add aquatic, bog and marginal plants

Help our hedgehogs



Champion Alison Daykin creating a log pile for hedgehogs

Over the last two decades, hedgehog populations have plummeted by up to 50% in some areas of the UK.

Now, more than ever, urban and suburban gardens and parks offer important refuge sites for hedgehogs, especially where the surrounding countryside has become inhospitable for them due to intensive farming practices.

Two wildlife charities, People's Trust for Endangered Species and British Hedgehog Preservation Society, have joined forces to research the reasons for the hedgehogs' decline. They have also launched Hedgehog Street, a nationwide campaign to empower local communities, through volunteer Hedgehog Champions, to take small steps to improve their neighbourhood for hedgehogs. Hedgehogs travel up to one mile each night within suburban habitats in their quest for food and to find mates and so whilst improving

individual gardens is great for wildlife, the campaign advises gardeners to work with their neighbours to create links between adjoining gardens so they can roam freely.

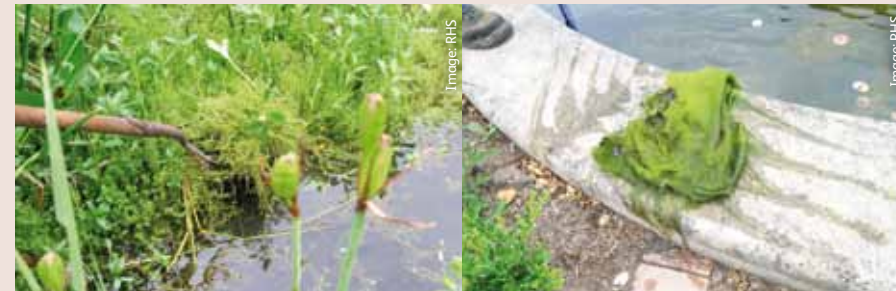
The project was trialled last year by 15 pilot Hedgehog Champions and it proved to be a great way of bringing together communities. Fiona Van Es, a mother of two from Loddiswell in South Devon, rallied her neighbours into action through garden parties, hedgehog quizzes and talks in her local village.

If you'd like to become a Hedgehog Champion, please visit www.hedgehogstreet.org (when you sign up you'll receive an advice pack, information and a dedicated forum, to discuss your ideas and experiences with other Champions).

RHS Science & Advice

Welcome to the new RHS advice section of the magazine, with tips and news from RHS Scientists and Advisors. If there is a particular topic you would like us to consider for a future issue, please contact sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118.

Summer pond care



Invasive aquatics, *Crassula helmsii* (left) and blanket weed (right)

Now is the time to top up ponds and water features if necessary – a spray attachment on the hose will aerate the water, and help the fish in sultry weather as oxygen levels are lower in such conditions. Pumps on water features should be left on so that fountains and other features agitate the water.

Ponds can get choked in summer. Remove dead foliage and blooms from waterlilies and other aquatic plants. Cut back any marginal plants that are getting out of hand. Floating weeds, such as duckweed, are an especial menace, but

skimming with a net, rake, scoop or wooden board can keep them down. Leave weeds on the side of the pond for 24 hours to allow trapped creatures to return to the water, before adding the weed to the compost heap. Algae or blanket weed is more troublesome. It can be pulled out by twirling a stick through the water to dredge it out, but in the long term making conditions less suited to them is the only remedy. Shading by marginal plants to the south, and floating plants can help, as can adding bags of pads of barley straw to the water.

Peat-free gardening



Peat Reduced Compost

In June 2011, the Government called for a complete ban of peat usage by amateur gardeners by 2020. While the RHS recognizes that the ban will be challenging, we welcome the policy and believe that we all must work hard to make it achievable. Amateur gardeners used almost 70 % of the 3 million cubic metres of peat used in horticulture in 2010.

Good quality peat-free growing media are available but require slightly different management than peat, especially greater care with watering. It is important to read and follow any specific instructions on the bag as plants growing in peat-free composts may need slightly different treatment. Further information is available on the RHS website www.rhs.org.uk/peat

The RHS will continue to work with Defra, growing media manufacturers and others to ensure that gardeners have the products and advice they need to enjoy successful, peat-free gardening. In a very small number of situations the RHS recognises that peat may have to be used, such as the cultivation of some carnivorous plants. The RHS has raised its concerns about this specialist minority use with Defra and it will also be working to see if even these plants can be grown in peat-free growing media.

To help us develop our advice please let us know of your notable successes or indeed disasters when going peat-free: gardeningadvice@rhs.org.uk

Pear rust survey – please help us to monitor this disease



Rust on Pear

We need your help this summer to record sightings of European pear rust. It's not a new disease – it was first recorded over 200 years ago – but the RHS Advisory Team has recorded a steady increase in this particular problem over the past 10 years and we need your help to work out why.

The symptoms are striking: bright orangey red spots, followed by galls which form on

the underside of pear leaves. It also affects junipers, causing perennial canker-like swellings on the branches which enable the fungus to survive over winter.

By gathering data the team hope to examine the bigger picture and find an underlying cause. Please help us by taking part in the online survey, created in collaboration with the charity Treewatch: www.treewatch.org.uk

This survey is a small element of the extensive work that the Science team carries out. New and often important pests and diseases are constantly being monitored, tracked and researched. One of the main ways this is done is through members and groups sending enquiries to the RHS Advisory Service. This enables the team to investigate problems and create advice that benefits all gardeners.



Banded demoiselle damselfly

Wildlife gardening – tips for summer

A birdbath can be a vital source of drinking water for birds in summer. Models are available to attach to windows, walls and sills, if space is limited.

Damselflies and dragonflies are out in abundance. They are usually spotted near ponds and lakes. Damselflies have a lazier, zig-zagging pattern of flight, whereas dragonflies take a faster and more direct flight path. This is their breeding season, and you may see them mating in mid-air, or laying their eggs around the pond. Both feed on insects such as flies and midges contributing to making the garden free of annoying forms of wildlife.

Hoverflies are in abundance in July. They are good garden 'pest catchers'; both adults and larvae feed on greenfly for example. Wasps, despite their reputation as fruit blemishing, jam loving, stinging pests, are

good controllers of many garden pests, including flies and grubs. They are also useful pollinators of flowers. Where possible, try not to persecute them.

This is peak bat-watching season. British bat species are garden friendly, eating midges and tiny insects that cause annoyance on summer evenings. Bat boxes might bring more of these useful creatures to your garden.

Spring-flowering wild flower areas can be cut and mowed this month, after the flowers have formed seeds. Rough cutting and removal of clippings is all that is necessary, but closer mowing allows the area to be used as lawn for the rest of the summer. Meadow cuttings were traditionally used for making hay, but they can also be used on the compost heap – just remove any pernicious or flowering weeds, so that they don't spread in the compost.



Damselflies have a lazier, zig-zagging pattern of flight, whereas dragonflies take a faster and more direct flight path.



Image: RHS Carol Sheppard



Image: RHS Tim Sandall

Late summer cuttings

Late summer is the ideal time to take cuttings of evergreen shrubs and groundcover plants. Gather suitable shoots, 10-15cm long in plastic bags, remove leaves from the lower half, pinch out fleshy tops and insert in pots of gritty compost. Cover to prevent them drying out – even a plastic bag will do.

Sharing school-gardening expertise in Norwich

Award-winning Academy helps local schools to shine with support from Norwich in Bloom and the RHS Campaign for School Gardening



Ormiston Academy is an exemplar school garden in Norfolk which other schools can visit for ideas and advice...

Alison Findlay,
RHS Campaign for
School Gardening
Regional Advisor



Above: Chloe and Saffron, two Year 10 Environmental and Land-Based Science students, preparing the greenhouse for planting. Top right: Year 7 members of the Gardening Club planting a Victory Oak at the school entrance. Bottom right: The Olympic Wildlife Garden eight years since its development.

Ormiston Victory Academy on the outskirts of Norwich is a school used to winning. Last year they picked up Norwich in Bloom's top award for 'Composting' and 'Best School Project (12 – 18 years)' and came second with their fruit and vegetable plot. In 2009 they were the overall school winner, with no less than five awards achieved.

Their Grounds Force Gardening Club is run by Pauline Williamson, Environmental and Outdoor Learning Co-ordinator at the school, and attended by up to 15 pupils of all ages. They look after a wildlife garden, an allotment and decorative containers throughout the school grounds. Vegetables from the allotment are used in the school kitchen and in cooking sessions. They are also one of 50 secondary schools in the UK participating in the 'Fruit-full Schools' scheme and are creating a community orchard with regional varieties of fruit trees, with the aim of re-engaging students and the community with the tradition and value of growing apples and other fruit.

The development of the garden and

gardening activities at the school have been supported by the RHS Campaign for School Gardening Regional Advisor, Alison Findlay, and Norwich in Bloom.

Friends of Norwich in Bloom have supported schools in Norwich for 25 years and their Schools Liaison Officers Maureen Street and Jo Chiddick have been impressed by the development of whole-school approaches to 'looking after our world'.

Recently they used their contacts to put other schools in the area in touch with Ormiston Victory, so that ideas could be shared and expertise spread.

The pupils of the gardening club are delighted to show off their achievements. Pauline Williamson says, "Maureen spreads the word about what we do and as a result we have hosted visits from local schools, one of which used their experiences and photos of their time in the wildlife garden as inspiration for establishing similar areas at their school."

On occasion Norwich in Bloom are also able to help the school with gifts of seeds or bulbs which have been used to enhance their floral displays.

Alison Findlay says, "Ormiston Academy is an exemplar school garden in Norfolk which other schools can visit for ideas and advice, and it is great that Norwich in Bloom are able to help with this through their contacts".

Seasonal tips

- Like Schools Liaison Officers Maureen and Jo you could facilitate contacts between your winning "in Bloom" schools and those that are new to gardening.
- Find out if your local school is taking part in the Campaign for School Gardening's 'Get your Grown-ups Growing' initiative to be held in October. If not, encourage them to enrol (visit www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening for further details).
- Schools often struggle with watering during the long summer break. You might like to contact your local school and see if they would like some assistance during the holidays.

Philip Windle

RHS Head of Horticultural
Qualifications and Bursaries

RHS Qualifications is a nationally recognised awarding body offering a range of accredited qualifications for both professional horticulturists and keen gardeners. Qualifications offered range from basic practical skills up to the Master of Horticulture (RHS), a degree level award for professionals.

Why should a community gardener or leisure gardener be interested in RHS qualifications?

I think everyone who loves gardening and plants, whether as a professional or as an enthusiast, would like to learn more and to improve their skills and knowledge. We have developed a wide range of qualifications, covering different areas and at different levels. For example we have a qualification in Plant Growth, Propagation and Development, which covers topics such as plant nutrition and plant health. Another qualification is in the Principles of Garden Planning, Establishment and Maintenance. As well as covering aspects of planning and plant selection, it includes a unit on growing outdoor vegetables and fruit. Successfully completing a course leads to greater confidence and provides inspiration to try new things.

So the qualifications are not just for professional horticulturists?

Not at all. They certainly cover the knowledge

and skills someone working within the profession needs, but the same knowledge and skills are equally relevant for anyone wanting to grow plants, whether that is in their own garden, or a community garden or allotment. The qualifications are all designed for part-time study so offer great flexibility. Typically courses are run one day per week or as evening classes.

Are there any formal entry requirements for studying for an RHS qualification?

At levels 1 and 2 all that is needed is an enthusiasm for plants and gardening, and the desire to learn more.

Where can someone study for a qualification?

Courses are available at over 100 approved centres throughout the country. Those covering the practical skills obviously require appropriate facilities, but the qualifications that focus on the underlying principles can be

taught in a wide range of centres, and also by distance learning. A full list of approved centres and distance learning providers can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/courses/qualifications

You are also responsible for managing the RHS Bursaries Scheme – what does that involve?

Every year we award a number of bursaries to support a wide range of projects, such as expeditions and study tours, voluntary work placements at gardens, or attendance at conferences. They are open primarily to professional horticulturists and students, but bursaries are also available to support community groups with projects that benefit the community or have an educational value in a horticultural field. Further information can be found at www.rhs.org.uk/courses/bursaries

Low-carbon gardening

Transition Towns

Environmental sustainability sits at the heart of RHS community campaigns. Affiliated Societies, “in Bloom” and Neighbourhood groups are constantly striving to reduce the demands that their activities place on the natural environment, whether by introducing community composting schemes, creating gardens using local or recycled materials or propagating from seed.

Several groups are also involved in the Transition Network, an umbrella movement that encourages communities to work together to reduce their dependence on oil. Using their horticultural expertise, groups are able to help others to develop the practical skills required to grow their own, a key requirement for reducing the energy used in transporting food.

Becky Richards, Project Manager at the Kent Enterprise Trust, which runs the Neighbourhood

project Stream Walk Community Garden, explains, “Lots of people believe in the ethos of lower energy use, but they don’t necessarily have the practical skills they need to make it a reality. Our project helps to teach people about growing their own, how to make compost and improve their soil, when to prick out their veg”.

Stream Walk’s partnership with Edible Whitstable, the Food Group for Transition Town Whitstable, is mutually beneficial. “The Transition Network helps us to reach large numbers of people and we run the garden in partnership, with dedicated spaces for volunteers to cultivate vegetables and learn about wild foods, medicinal herbs and permaculture,” she explains.

Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition Network, believes that growing some of our own food is one of the first things we can do to make our lives and our communities

more resilient. “The results are clear for all to see – and taste! – and create a powerful impression on people that something exciting is changing around them,” he says.

Further information:

- Transition Network supports community-led responses to climate change www.transitionnetwork.org
- Landshare connects people who have land to share with those who need land for cultivating food www.landshare.net
- For advice on environmentally sustainable gardening, visit www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening

Garden sharing in Malvern

Transition Malvern Hills’ garden-share scheme, Let’s Grow Together, introduces those who are willing to share an area of their garden to those who want to grow their own food but don’t have access to any land.

“It’s wonderful as it brings together people of all ages,” explains Wilma Harrington, the group’s Chair. “People who were once active gardeners, but are no longer able to be so, enjoy seeing their gardens come to life again. Others might have space in their garden but no time to ‘grow their own’. This is an ideal way to enjoy some home-grown produce without all the hard work!”

While there is no cost involved, an agreed percentage of the produce is offered to the garden owner. There are currently seven gardens in the scheme and the group hopes to expand the project. To support new gardeners, Transition Malvern Hills also refurbish unwanted garden tools and lend them to those who need them.

Transition Malvern Hills garden-share volunteers Sue Wolfendale and Kristy Teele at the Old Croque garden, which is part of the scheme.



Celebrating RHS Affiliated Societies

The RHS has been supporting horticultural clubs and societies for over 100 years. The idea of a 'union' between the Horticultural Society of London and the various provincial societies of the day first emerged in 1858. By 1877, 55 societies had joined the scheme, each paying five guineas a year in order to receive show medals and horticultural advice.

Today there are nearly 3,000 gardening clubs and horticultural societies affiliated to the RHS, making it the largest network of gardening clubs in the UK. The scheme represents an enormously diverse mix of groups including specialist plant societies, allotment groups, community gardening initiatives, school gardening clubs and overseas gardening groups among many others. In the next few pages, we introduce just a few of these clubs and societies.

Are you an Affiliated Society?

Did you know that there are at least 13 free benefits for you to enjoy, including advice from our horticultural specialists, a monthly copy of *The Garden* magazine and free entry for up to 55 of your members to an RHS Garden every year. Last year, 96 % of Affiliated Societies rated membership as good value for money. To find out more about joining the scheme, please visit www.rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocieties

Please note, in order to qualify for the scheme you must be a gardening club or society with a remit to promote horticulture at a local level and hold regular meetings or an annual show.

Overseas: Royal Agricultural & Horticultural Society, Australia



Royal Adelaide Show, Goyder Pavilion

In 1839 the South Australian Agricultural Society was formed "for the advancement of agricultural and pastoral knowledge, and to promote the development of the natural resources of our noble colony."

The Society merged with a horticultural organisation in 1844 and staged its first

combined exhibition in a marquee in Botanic Park, Adelaide, marking the birth of the Agricultural & Horticultural Society. The Royal prefix was granted by Queen Victoria in 1869.

Today the Society has approximately 4,000 members and organises the State's largest annual event, the Royal Adelaide Show, which attracts 30 % of the State's population and features displays of orchids, bonsai, ferns, camellias, daffodils, trees, shrubs, native plants, fruit and vegetables.

In 2006, to support South Australian farmers the Society provided funding for the establishment of the Adelaide Showground Farmers Market and in 2007 the Society's Education Foundation was born to promote ongoing education in the fields of agriculture and horticulture.

Society President Richard Fewster says the establishment of the Education Foundation and Farmers Market has proven extremely successful.

"Four years on and the Market attracts approximately 3,000 people weekly, buying direct from the Farmer. The Education Foundation has provided support for many individuals looking to further their education in agriculture or horticulture," he said.

www.rahs.com.au



Royal Adelaide Show

Specialist: The Cyclamen Society

The Cyclamen Society was founded in 1977 by a group of people with an enduring fascination for these small tuberous perennials.

The Society exists to encourage cultivation and conservation, and to disseminate and extend knowledge of the genus and its species, forms and cultivars. It combines scientific study with all the activities of a society for enthusiasts who cultivate the plants. Today there are over 1,300 members worldwide, predominantly in Europe though the fastest growing branch of the Society is in Japan.

Chairman Melvyn Jope explains, "We cater for all levels, from those with a general interest to those with specialist scientific knowledge. We're also well known for the quality of our research, with regular field trips to Turkey and Greece to study the plants in their native habitats."

Field studies help members to learn more about the genus and examine appropriate conservation measures that can be taken to protect the plants. With the approval of their host country, the team usually collects a small number of samples to bring back to

the UK for DNA and cytological research.

The Society is also the international Registration Authority for cultivars of all species of *Cyclamen* except those of *C. persicum*. Anyone wishing to register a new cultivar can contact them for assistance in formal registration.

The Society holds three shows a year at RHS Garden Wisley in Surrey and one show each September in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

www.cyclamen.org



Chairman Melvyn Jope photographing *C. sieberi* on Mt Chelmos, Greece



Cyclamen rhodium ssp. peloponnesiacum

Allotments: Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (BFALG)



Cray's Road Allotment holder Terry Goulding

Bill Row, Chairman of the Bexley Federation of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners, is rightly proud of the impact his club has made over the past decade. "We had the council threatening to close down 23 of our 36 allotment sites about seven years ago. They were half empty and the council said they'd tried everything so that was it," he said.

"We challenged them on it – there was a

lot of public protest – and we managed to get all of them saved, with the help of a local councillor. We've now taken on the publicity of the allotments, from the council, and all the sites are full. We've actually got 200 on a waiting list at the moment."

Promoting the borough's allotments forms a large part of the Federation's workload. "It's all about getting positive messages into the papers," explains Bill. "Rather than a shed's been broken into, we want to see stories about how great it is to grow your own."

Set up in the 1940s, in the country's wartime drive towards self-sufficiency, the Federation has been encouraging the residents of Bexley to grow their own ever since. Run by six voluntary officers and 41 allotment representatives, BFALG attends shows and events to raise the profile of local food growing.

In 2009, BFALG volunteers took on the daunting task of clearing an underused allotment which had become overgrown with trees and a magnet for dumped rubbish. With support from a local business and neighbouring residents the site was

fully cleared in four months. Retired taxi driver John Parsons is the new Cray's Road Allotment Site Rep. He says, "It's certainly brought everyone together and there's a great mix of people – we've got four from Mauritius, an Australian, Chinese, African and Eastern European. For friendship and meeting people, it's an ideal place".

www.bfalg.co.uk



Plots at the restored Cray's Road site



Pupils Lucy McLean & Lydia Bulmer working in the greenhouse with Cropwell Bishop co-founder Sue Ward

School support: Cropwell Bishop Gardening Club

Established in 2008, in response to local demand, Cropwell Bishop's gardening club brings people together and aims to improve the village environment by installing plants and flowers throughout the public green spaces. After receiving a request for help from a local school, several of the club's 50 members have also found the time to set up and run a very successful school-gardening club.

The group meets once a week after school to grow fruit and vegetables with the children. After three years it is now so popular that teacher Lucy Brodie has started a five-week rota, to allow everyone to get their hands dirty. She says, "The children get a massive sense of achievement from the garden. They enjoy watching and nurturing the plants and the gardening club provides a welcome addition to the school day."

The children compost the school's kitchen waste and in return their fruit and vegetables are provided for the annual Harvest Festival, as well being taken home by the young gardeners.

Co-founder of Cropwell Bishop School Gardening Club, Judy Thomas, says, "I just love the enthusiasm of the children: they literally run into the garden each Tuesday and can't wait to get going. They are not fussy or precious about getting muddy or wet and are gentle with any living creatures in the garden. It's great that we have a generation of children who know how their food is grown and how to grow it."

Pupil Lucy McLean, aged 10, agrees, "I like the gardening club because I like watching things grow and I like eating fruit and vegetables...raw!"

www.cropwellbishopplan.co.uk/gardening

The children get a massive sense of achievement from the garden. They enjoy watching and nurturing the plants and the gardening club provides a welcome addition to the school day.

Lucy Brodie,
Teacher

Community focused: Strood Gardening Club

When her search for a local gardening club ended in disappointment, Rita Hunt decided to start her own. With funding from the Kent Community Foundation to cover the cost of a meeting place for a year, publicity and set-up costs, the club was formed in 2007. Four years later they have 80 members and cater for gardeners from all walks of life.

In addition to a busy programme of shows and speakers, the group funds and supports 11 after-school gardening clubs at local infant and junior schools.

Some enthusiastic members have also lent their support to local improvement projects, such as the rejuvenation of the church flowerbeds and the maintenance of Rede Common, a site of horticultural and environmental interest.

In 2010, the Rede Common group took up the challenge to create the Strood Community Trail with funding from the Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership Scheme and Heritage Lottery Fund. Connecting existing footpaths, open spaces and heritage sites, the trail extends for five miles through Strood's most

charming neighbourhoods.

Entering this year's It's Your Neighbourhood campaign, Rita hopes to raise the profile of the voluntary work that is taking place in Strood. "All our projects are aimed at the local community, trying to bring people together, to improve pride in our environment, while at the same time promoting gardening and our wonderful open spaces and wider countryside," she says.

Visitors enjoying the new Strood Community Trail as it runs alongside the River Medway



All our projects are aimed at the local community, trying to bring people together, to improve pride in our environment, while at the same time promoting gardening and our wonderful open spaces and wider countryside...

Rita Hunt



The launch of Strood Gardening Club

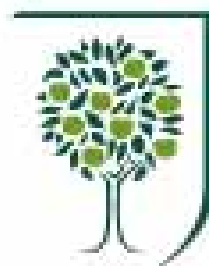
A photograph of a Black woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white tank top and blue jeans, holding a young boy in a striped shirt and a small potted plant. They are standing on a sidewalk in front of a white building with a black metal balcony. The text 'Visit our latest transformed community:' is overlaid in large white letters.

Visit our latest transformed community:

rhs.org.uk/communities

A one-stop shop for all things community gardening, including:

- A new, easy-to-use online map for people looking to volunteer with community gardening activities - listing all "In Bloom" and Neighbourhood groups, as well as RHS Campaign for School Gardening Schools
- Electronic copies of *Growing Communities* magazine
- Insurance forms for Affiliated Societies, "In Bloom" and it's 'Your Neighbourhood' groups
- Full judging guidelines for RHS Britain in Bloom finalists and also general tips for success from the judges
- Ideas and news about how to develop your entry
- Contact details for the 17 Region and Nation "In Bloom" coordinators



Royal
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