Royal Horticultural Society
Sharing the best in Gardening

RHS **BRITAIN IN BLOOM**

RHS Britain in Bloom
UK Finals Judging Guidelines 2012

The RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals brings together the highest achievers from all of the 16 regions and nations participating in the campaign and, as a result, the expectations are high and the judging is rigorous. Put simply, the judges will be looking for the best and they will be seeing the best from the other regions/nations that are in your category.

Following the revision of the marking sheet in 2010, today's campaign concentrates of three core areas:

Horticultural Achievement
Environmental Responsibility
Community Participation

These three core principles underline every aspect of the marking and the marking sheet is broken down to include them all (see 5.3 for a copy of the UK Finals marking sheet). The next few pages provide explanatory notes to help you understand each section of the marking sheet.

A few general tips to remember:

- Your entire tour route is subject to judging; that means what the judges see on the way from one feature stop to another, as well as what they see at all the stops.
- The judges will expect that your campaign has considered your entire community and not just the high street or the village square and that you, at the very least, have plans to address "problem" areas (e.g. vacant premises/plots, eyesores etc.).
- The judges will also be looking for your campaign activities to benefit your community not just for today but for the longer term.
- Finally, Britain in Bloom is not just about spring and summer displays: it is a year-round programme of activity to improve, enhance and maintain the local environment and get the community actively engaged in keeping things at their best. The judges will want to see evidence of your year-round programme of work.

Section A – Horticultural Achievement (50%; max 100 points)

In this section the judges will be looking for your year-round achievements in horticulture (including conservation and natural areas) focusing on five key areas:

A1. Impact
A2. Horticultural practice
A3. Residential and community gardening
A4. Business areas and premises
A5. Green spaces

Each of these key areas will make up 10% of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 20 points.

The judges will take account of:

SECTION A: HORTICULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT – 100 points; 50%	
A1. IMPACT – 20 points; 10% *Impact will be evaluated across the entry, in each area and as a whole*	
Colours & Design	Is there a scheme or theme overall and/or in key locations? Are the colours/design suitable for the location?
Appropriate choice of plants	Are there too many/too few plants to enhance the area? Are the plants appropriate in terms of flowering period and habit? Is there sufficient variation, appropriate herbaceous plants? Are there appropriate varieties of both newly planted and recently (up to five years) planted areas (including mixes of trees, shrubs and herbaceous planting)? Planting could be for foliage effect, bark effect etc. or for a specific purpose (e.g. conservation/ biodiversity), or to provide flowering or other effects for a defined period.
Special features	Sometimes provided as a focal point, and may include structures or an impressive floral display.
Presentation	Are areas well presented and maintained?
Innovation	Are new and creative ideas evident in the design, colours, themes, plant selection etc.?
A2. HORTICULTURAL PRACTICE – 20 points; 10% *Horticultural practice will be assessed in all areas on the tour route*	
Cultivation and Maintenance	Watering, dead-heading and weeding is important. Appropriate feeding may be necessary. May include irrigation considerations and thinning, trimming or pruning, as appropriate.
Quality of plants	Good quality plants, obviously flourishing. No obvious signs of pests, diseases or deficiencies. Appropriate size for planting situation, appropriate soil type etc.
Sustainability	Sustainability is about ensuring ecological functions, processes, biodiversity and productivity can be maintained and only using resources at a rate at which they can be replenished naturally. You should therefore take into consideration the balance of permanent/ perennial planting vs. seasonal/bedding plants and the timing of displays.
New planting	How much new planting has been undertaken on an annual basis? Is there a longer-term plan for the whole area or district?

A3. RESIDENTIAL AND COMMUNITY GARDENING – 20 points; 10%	
Areas that may be included	Residential - front gardens/gardens in public view Communal areas - shared residential & communal spaces Allotments Grounds of public buildings - includes schools, town halls, libraries, community centres, churches car parks etc
What is assessed	*The areas described above will also be evaluated with consideration for the criteria outlined in sections A1 and A2.* Are these areas in keeping with the overall efforts of the campaign? Do they show support for the campaign's goals of improvement/enhancement? Has the campaign engaged other community groups in improving their own areas and/or included these areas in their own initiatives?
A4. BUSINESS AREAS AND PREMISES – 20 points; 10%	
Areas that may be included	Retail and shopping areas, leisure sites, transport terminals (e.g. bus stop, station), car parks, farms, rural businesses, pubs, post offices, tourist areas/attractions and other business premises (i.e. estate agents, law office) etc.
What is assessed	*The areas described above will also be evaluated with consideration for the criteria outlined in sections A1 and A2.* Are these areas actively involved in the initiatives of the local Bloom campaign? Are their efforts in keeping with the overall efforts of the campaign? Do they show support for the campaign's goals of improvement/enhancement? Support can include: sponsoring displays/planters, actively engaging in horticultural efforts on their own premises, funding Bloom initiatives, volunteering/participating in local Bloom activities etc.
A5. GREEN SPACES – 20 points; 10%	
Areas that may be included	Verges, parks and open public spaces including woodlands, arboretums, bulb & tree planting initiatives, copse, shelterbelts
What is assessed	*The areas described above will also be evaluated with consideration for the criteria outlined in sections A1 and A2.* Are these areas actively involved in the initiatives of the local Bloom campaign? Are their efforts in keeping with the overall efforts of the campaign? Do they show support for the campaign's goals of improvement/ enhancement?

Seasonal floral displays are an important element of the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign, but **must be proportionate** to areas of sustainable planting and permanent landscaping within the entry.

Section B – Environmental Responsibility (25%; max 50 points)

In this section the judges will be looking for your year-round achievements in five key areas, encompassing care for the built environment as well as care for the natural environment:

B1. Conservation and biodiversity
B2. Resource management
B3. Local heritage
B4. Local environmental quality
B5. Pride of place

Each of these key areas will make up 5 % of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 10 points.

While you will be marked on the specific criteria below, please bear in mind that judges will be considering environmental responsibility across all areas of your local campaign. For example, if you have an impressive seasonal floral display they will also want to know if you have achieved this effect with consideration for the environment: have you been able to grow your own plug plants; recycle the bedding; or reduce your water requirements?

In this section, judges will take account of:

SECTION B: ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY – 50 points; 25%	
B1. CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Areas of natural habitat, wildlife and conservation sites
What is assessed	Is the local "in Bloom" campaign involved in: Efforts to establish, preserve and maintain these areas? Activities to educate the community and encourage them to visit these areas? Partnerships with local conservation or wildlife protection groups? Activities or plans to re-introduce or restore these areas where they have disappeared or been damaged? Activities might include installing bird/ bat boxes/ bee hives; creating 'bug-hotels'/ log piles for overwintering invertebrates; re-introducing native species or controlling non-native/ invasive species; creating new habitats or renovating existing ones e.g. ponds, wildflower meadows, coppicing; planting to attract bees/ butterflies; appropriate tree planting; maintaining or introducing native hedgerows; conducting wildlife surveys/ monitoring species; coordinating educational campaigns/ walks/ trails with signage to inform people about local flora and fauna.
B2. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Recycling; minimising demand placed on natural resources; minimising or where possible eliminating any harmful impact on the environment.

What is assessed	What activities has the local "in Bloom" campaign been involved with or initiated in these areas? Has the group shown due consideration to resource management in their own activities? For example, has the local "in Bloom" campaign recycled its container compost? Does the cemetery have a compost heap and waste separation area etc? Does the group have active policies to reduce the demand placed on natural resources - e.g. source of water used for plants, use of peat, use of hardwood timber etc? Is the group minimising its use of pesticides and nitrate fertilisers to reduce harmful effects on the environment?
B3. LOCAL HERITAGE – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Management and development of local heritage and/or identity such as natural heritage, community landmarks/icons, other heritage sites etc.
What is assessed	What activities has the local Bloom campaign been involved with or initiated to ensure these areas are appropriately managed and developed? Has the campaign taken these areas into account in their own initiatives?
B4. LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Vacant premises and plots, litter, graffiti, fly-posting, dog fouling, water features/courses, litter picks etc.
What is assessed	Has the local "in Bloom" campaign considered these issues and actively included them in their initiatives? Are there efforts to deal with these problems? For example, has the local campaign worked to clean up polluted sites, or appropriately screened derelict properties or other eyesores?
B5. PRIDE OF PLACE – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Management of street furniture, signage, art in the landscape, fences, way-marking, interpretation, hard landscaping etc.
What is assessed	Have these areas been considered in the local Bloom campaign? Are the initiatives in these areas in keeping with the overall efforts of the campaign? Do they show support for campaign's goals of enhancement?

The judges will be looking for local Bloom groups to either initiate or actively engage with these environment-enhancing activities.

Section C – Community Participation (25%; max 50 points)

In this section the judges will be looking for your year-round achievements in five key areas:

C1. Development and continuity
C2. Communication and education
C3. Community involvement
C4. Year-round involvement
C5. Funding and support

Each of these key areas will make up 5 % of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 10 points.

Community participation is crucial to the success of your local campaign and you should try to involve the community in all your "in Bloom" activities. In addition to inviting support for planting activities, think about other ways you can involve local people. For example, could you engage the community in recycling by coordinating an information campaign; or could you run an activity to inform people about sites of local heritage?

While you will be marked on the specific criteria below, please bear in mind that judges will be considering community participation across all areas of your local campaign.

The judges will take account of:

SECTION C: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION – 50 points; 25%	
C1. DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUITY – 10 points; 5%	
Areas which may be included	Development and sustainability of the local "in Bloom" initiative and evidence of ongoing projects
What is assessed	Has the local campaign: Considered how to maintain and improve upon current achievements in the future? Are the campaign's initiatives sustainable? Have any plans been developed to ensure ongoing benefits to the community from the local campaign? Has the "in Bloom" campaign established a structure and support network to ensure its own existence and development in the future?
C2. COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION – 10 points; 5%	
Areas which may be included	Publicity materials; press coverage; signage/interpretation; displays; engaging with schools, young people and/or other community groups; community awareness and understanding; educational and awareness campaigns on key issues.
What is assessed	Judges will expect to see evidence of public awareness campaigns and educational programmes generated and/or actively supported by the local campaign. In this section they will particularly be looking for activities and initiatives to inform, educate and engage children and young people*. The Judges will also want to see if the local "in Bloom" campaign has engaged with their local media (newspapers/ magazines/ radio/ TV, as applicable).

C3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – 10 points; 5%	
What is assessed	Has the local "in Bloom" campaign made every effort to engage a wide range of people across all areas of the community? Community participation should be representative of your community. Has the campaign engaged with a variety of other local groups and organisations? Has the campaign encouraged any local It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) groups or supported the start up of new IYN groups? The judges will hope to see your campaign engaging with IYN groups. You may even choose to visit to an IYN project on your tour, if applicable. Has the campaign incorporated community reparation volunteers?
C4. YEAR-ROUND INVOLVEMENT – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Entries will be expected to show evidence of a year-round programme of activity through photographs, sample promotional materials, press clippings, calendar of events etc. Some examples of "out of season" activities might be: litter picks; leaf clearing; fundraising events; repairing/preparing of landscape areas and street furniture; educational activities, etc.
What is assessed	Judges will be evaluating whether the local "in Bloom" campaign has been active and has engaged the community throughout the year. The judges will evaluate this based primarily on the content of the 15-minute presentation; however, they will also take into account other supporting evidence (see above) which can be displayed or distributed on the day or included in the portfolio. (See section 6 for more advice about the presentation and portfolio).
C5. FUNDING AND SUPPORT – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Efforts made to secure support and the amount of support actually secured for the local "in Bloom" campaign. "Support" can mean not just funds but also the active engagement of the local government, commercial and corporate sectors, local businesses and the general public in the campaign (e.g. maintenance support from council services; shopkeepers cleaning up & greening up their storefronts; local businesses sending staff out to volunteer on a Bloom project etc.)
What is assessed	Has the local campaign made efforts to engage and secure support from local government, the commercial/corporate sector and local businesses? Have there been activities to raise support/ funds from the general public? Has sufficient support been secured to ensure the campaign is able to deliver its objectives? Is there a plan of action to secure sufficient continuing support for the development of ongoing projects?

As “in Bloom” is a community-driven campaign, it is expected that a diverse range of local people will be involved in your local campaign and that there will be broad-based public awareness and support. Increasing levels of participation may require the involvement of your local authority and other organisations – think creatively about the partnerships you can build.

*Please be aware that groups working with children and young people are responsible for ensuring that they are doing so in accordance with the law with regards to child protection and safety. For further information and guidance please contact your national volunteering body: Volunteer England; Volunteer Development Scotland; Wales Council for Voluntary Action; or the Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland.