

Growing Communities



Issue 07 • Autumn 2011 www.rhs.org.uk/communities

The RHS Community update

Britain in Bloom 2011

THE WINNERS

Mind the moths
Asian Pest Reaches the UK

Coping with the Cuts
"in Bloom" weathers the storm

Interview:
Rachel de Thame





Image: RHS Julian Weigall

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Cover: Children working on the beds at St Mary and St Giles Junior School Gardens – Stony Stratford in Bloom 2011

Image: RHS Julian Weigall

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Your magazine

Welcome to the autumn issue of *Growing Communities*, the magazine for all RHS "in Bloom" and It's Your Neighbourhood participants and RHS Affiliated Societies.

The judges have made their visits and we are delighted to reveal the long-awaited results of this year's RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals (pages 4-6). In these financially straitened times, we bring you ideas from groups around the country who are making their "in Bloom" campaigns work despite the downturn (pages 12 – 14). We also speak to garden designer and host of this year's Britain in Bloom

Awards Ceremony, Rachel de Thame, about her journey into horticulture (page 11).

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

2012 RHS Britain in Bloom launch

Following this year's successful tree-planting launch, next year we will be offering groups the chance to sow wildflowers as part of a nationwide "in Bloom" celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.



Image: RHS Julian Weigall

Above: Chepstow Drive Local Park – Milton Keynes in Bloom 2011

'Wild about Wildflowers' is open to all registered "in Bloom" and It's Your Neighbourhood groups, as well as RHS Affiliated Societies. Groups can apply for a free pack of UK wildflower seeds to cover an area 10m² for planting in April 2012.

To register your group for a free pack of wildflower seeds and to download the Wild about Wildflowers support pack, with all the information you need to help

sow your wildflowers, visit www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom Please note that you must be a registered "in Bloom" (national or regional) or It's Your Neighbourhood group, or an RHS Affiliated Society in order to take part.

To request a registration form and a copy of the wildflower support pack by post, please call 020 7821 3118.

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

St Andrews welcomes RHS Britain in Bloom

Above and below right: St Andrews Botanic Garden. Below left: Spring colours and civic pride

St Andrews in Scotland was proud to host the 2011 Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony on 25 September 2011 at the Fairmont Hotel.



A busy tourist destination and ancient university town, St Andrews has a proud horticultural heritage evidenced by one of the region's best kept secrets: St Andrews Botanic Garden.

The Gardens were founded in 1889 for teaching, research and experimental plant breeding purposes and have, since 1987, been managed under lease by Fife Council. The original aims are still very much adhered to, with the St Andrews Botanic Education Trust, The Friends of the Botanic Garden and other voluntary groups all contributing to the garden's educational programmes.

Martin Troughton, of RHS Britain in Bloom sponsor, Anglian Home Improvements, said, "St Andrews was the perfect location for the RHS Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony, as a town with such rich horticultural heritage. The event was a wonderful celebration of the hard work of this year's 76 finalists."

Councillor Brian Goodall, Chair of Fife Council's Housing and Communities said, "The community plays a large part in what

happens in St Andrews and this is in common with the rest of Fife in general, with many towns and villages throughout the region making innovative and attractive changes to their own environments. The most famous of these is Falkland, who last year won the Champion of Champions category in Britain in Bloom for an unprecedented second successive year."

Fife Council Parks and Community Events Officer and founder member of Falkland in Bloom, Keith Jackson, explained, "We are delighted that so many communities, including St Andrews, participate in Beautiful Fife, which has grown from only 30 entries in 2008 to 55 in 2011. The campaign mirrors the judging criteria and categories of Britain in Bloom in order that, should an entrant progress to Beautiful Scotland and beyond that to RHS Britain in Bloom, they do not have to familiarise themselves with differing assessment topics."

Twenty percent of Beautiful Fife participants currently take part in the national Beautiful Scotland campaign and many are also successful in the UK Finals. "Fife has a proud recent history of participation in the Britain in Bloom Finals, with local communities representing Scotland on seven occasions over the past four years," said Keith. "We hope to continue encouraging and developing our communities in order to continue this trend and the award ceremony itself has provided some of them with the opportunity to assist in the preparation of the

event. I would also like to thank our sponsors for this year's RHS Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony, Amberol and Amethyst Horticulture for their generous support."

St Andrews represented Scotland in the Coastal Town category of the UK Finals in 2009 and of course has a tremendous amount to offer the visitor. Further information can be obtained from www.standrews.co.uk, [facebook.com/visitstandrews](https://www.facebook.com/visitstandrews) or [Twitter.com/visitstandrews](https://twitter.com/visitstandrews).



Fife has a proud recent history of participating in the RHS Britain in Bloom Finals...

Keith Jackson,
Fife Council Parks and
Community Events Officer



RHS Britain in Bloom Awards 2011

Congratulations to all those who took part in this year's RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals. We bring you the results, arranged by category.



Above: The Wheel Garden, Luddenden in Bloom 2011. Volunteers left to right: Brenda McArdle, Joan Oaten, Barry McArdle. Below: Cricklade

Small Village		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Coldred	South & South East	Silver
Great Whittington	Northumbria	Silver Gilt
Loughgall	Ulster	Silver Gilt & Category Winner
Scotlandwell	Scotland	Silver Gilt

Village		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Berrynarbor	South West	Gold
Elswick	North West	Silver Gilt
Filby	Anglia	Gold
Luddenden	Yorkshire	Gold & Category Winner
Newcastleton	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Rosliston	East Midlands	Silver Gilt

Large Village		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Broughshane	Ulster	Gold & Category Winner
Cemaes Bay	Wales	Silver
Donington	East Midlands	Silver
Kirkby Stephen	Cumbria	Silver
Shadwell	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Upton upon Severn	Heart of England	Silver
Warkworth	Northumbria	Silver Gilt

Small Town		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Ahoghill	Ulster	Silver Gilt
Dunnington	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
St Martin	Guernsey	Gold & Category Winner
Stony Stratford	Thames & Chilterns	Silver
Tetbury	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
Wareham	South & South East	Silver Gilt

Town		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Forres	Scotland	Gold
Freckleton	North West	Silver Gilt
Halstead	Anglia	Gold
Holyhead	Wales	Silver Gilt
Ilkley	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Oakham	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
Rustington	South & South East	Gold & Category Winner
St Saviour	Jersey	Silver Gilt
Thornbury	South West	Gold

Large Town		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Coleraine	Ulster	Silver Gilt
Colne	North West	Silver Gilt
Glenrothes	Scotland	Gold & Category Winner
Huntingdon	Anglia	Gold
Whickham	Northumbria	Silver Gilt
Whitehaven	Cumbria	Silver Gilt





Above: School children visit Perth in Bloom nursery



Above: Bath

Small City		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bath	South West	Silver Gilt
Bedford	Anglia	Silver
Coatbridge	Scotland	Bronze
Darlington	Northumbria	Silver
Derry City	Ulster	Silver Gilt & Category Winner
Newcastle-under-Lyme	Heart of England	Silver
Oadby and Wigston	East Midlands	Silver Gilt

City		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bury	North West	Silver Gilt
Richmond Upon Thames	London	Silver Gilt
Stockton	Northumbria	Gold & Category Winner
Wrexham	Wales	Silver Gilt
York	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt

Large City		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bristol	South West	Gold & Category Winner
Edinburgh	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Milton Keynes	Thames & Chilterns	Silver

Coastal up to 12k		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Grange-over-Sands	Cumbria	Silver
Grouville	Jersey	Silver Gilt
Hunstanton	Anglia	Silver
Rothesay	Scotland	Silver
Saltburn by the Sea	Northumbria	Silver
Tenby	Wales	Silver Gilt
Whitby	Yorkshire	Gold & Category Winner

Coastal over 12k		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bangor	Ulster	Silver Gilt
Cleethorpes	East Midlands	Gold & Category Winner
Plymouth	South West	Silver Gilt
Southport	North West	Silver

Urban Community		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Chirk (Wrexham)	Wales	Silver Gilt
Didsbury (Manchester)	North West	Silver
Moor (Huntingdon)	Anglia	Silver
Moseley (Birmingham)	Heart of England	Silver
Uddingston (Glasgow)	Scotland	Silver Gilt & Category Winner
Walthamstow Village (London)	London	Silver
Woodsford (Leeds)	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt

Champion of Champions		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Comrie	Scotland	Gold
Cricklade	South West	Gold & Category Winner
Garstang	North West	Gold
Perth	Scotland	Gold
Pitlochry	Scotland	Gold

RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards 2011

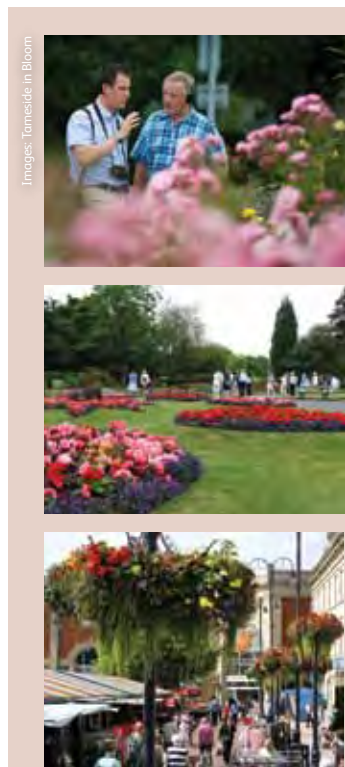
These special awards are presented by the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Judging Panel to finalists that demonstrate genuine excellence in a particular area of the judging criteria. As discretionary awards they are only presented when there is a deserving recipient, so not all of the awards are presented every year.

Discretionary Awards
RHS Britain in Bloom Floral Award
Bury, North West
RHS Britain in Bloom Sustainable Landscaping Award
University of Edinburgh – Pollock Campus, Edinburgh, Scotland
RHS Britain in Bloom Commercial Award
Graythwaite Manor Hotel, Grange over Sands, Cumbria
RHS Britain in Bloom Young People’s Award
Wee FIBbees, Forres, Scotland
RHS Britain in Bloom School Award
Spring Common School, Moor (Huntingdon), Anglia
RHS Britain in Bloom Conservation and Wildlife Award
Avon Gorge & Downs, Bristol, South West
RHS Britain in Bloom Environmental Quality Award
Derry City, Ulster
RHS Britain in Bloom Tourism Award
Tenby, Wales
RHS Britain in Bloom Public Park Award (Given in memory of David Welch)
Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland
RHS Britain in Bloom Anglian Home Improvements Community Award
Chirk (Wrexham), Wales



Above: Wee FIBbees, Forres, Scotland

RHS Britain in Bloom Community Champion Award
Alan Fletcher, Cleethorpes
David Orr, Whickham
Dorothy Lord, Colne
Jan Miller, Moseley (Birmingham)
John Keenlyside, Forres
Liz Wilson, Uddingston (Glasgow)
Monica Whyte, Bristol
Sandy Wilson, Broughshane
Vera Varley, Ilkley
RHS Britain in Bloom Outstanding Contribution Award
Jim Knight, Wales in Bloom and RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals judge



Entente Florale Europe 2011 Tameside celebrates European award

At the Entente Florale Europe annual awards ceremony, held this year in Rogaska Slatina, Slovenia, Tameside achieved a highly credible Silver Award. They also scooped the Dr Lucija Cikes Award, given to the entrant that best demonstrated a project based on horticulture and allied disciplines helping people with disabilities integrate into the community.

This year 11 countries took part in Entente Florale Europe, and with a base total of over 21,000 entrants in their

national competitions, the top 18 battled for honours, with Tameside representing the United Kingdom. Criteria for the competition include horticulture, town and landscape planning and management, community involvement and pride of place, environmental activity and tourism. An important element is the successful blend of public, private and voluntary organisations, and the ability to demonstrate that the whole community is committed to the environmental ideals of the competition.

Clive Addison, the UK lead Jury member, and Chair of the International Jury of Entente Florale Europe said, “I am delighted with this achievement. Everybody worked very hard to make the judging day a special event, and to display Tameside at its very best. I am particularly pleased that Tameside won the Lucija Cikes Award for the excellent Hyde Park café project. This was a great result. Everybody should be congratulated for playing their part.”

Top: Judges Clive Addison (right) and Janos Prutkay visit Dukinfield Crematorium. Middle: Stamford Park, Stalybridge. Bottom: Ashton Town Centre

Funding available for tree planting in England



Above: Cricklade Bloomers planting new trees at the town's eastern entrance

Defra's Big Tree Plant will run until 2015, with £4.2m funding available to support community groups to plant trees in towns,

cities and residential areas throughout England. There are two application rounds each year with the next closing application deadline in spring 2012.

Cricklade Bloomers have received £5,518 to plant 1100 trees in a landscaping project which will include both extensive tree planting and the creation of small meadows. The scheme will help to muffle the ever present traffic noise from the busy through roads, and protect nearby homes by acting as a wind break.

www.direct.gov.uk/thebigtreeplant

New bursary for communities

A new bursary for communities and individual gardeners has been established in memory of gardening writer Elspeth Thompson, who died in 2010.

An annual fund is available to provide financial assistance to amateur gardeners, either individuals or community groups, to enable them to create a garden or horticultural project for the benefit of the community. Applications will be considered for grants of up to £5,000.

Applications are considered annually in February, and the closing date is 30 November.

www.rhs.org.uk/courses/bursaries

Funding communities across the UK

The People's Postcode Trust aims to make the UK a better place for both people and the planet, financially supporting projects linked to: Poverty Prevention; Advancement of Health (not research); Community Development; Public Sports; Human Rights; and Environmental Protection.

The People's Postcode Lottery distributes funds to small organisations, community groups and registered charities in England Scotland and Wales. Funding is available for 3-month projects ranging from £500 up to £10,000 in Scotland and England, and up to £5,000 in Wales.

The next funding round will open on 10 October, with a deadline of 11 November.

www.postcodetrust.org.uk

Muck In4Life

The RHS has partnered with Defra's Muck In4Life campaign to help raise the profile of opportunities to volunteer with "in Bloom" and It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) groups and Campaign for School Gardening Schools.

Muck In4Life is aimed at encouraging more people to get involved in conservation and environmental projects, to show that being active outdoors, whether in urban green spaces or the natural environment, has physical and mental health benefits.

The campaign's website contains a link to the new online map for communities featuring "in Bloom" and IYN groups and Campaign for School Gardening Schools

muckin4life.direct.gov.uk

RHS National Gardening Week, 2012

The RHS is organising the first ever National Gardening Week for 16 to 22 April 2012, to get the nation growing. The RHS is calling on nurseries, plant centres, gardeners, clubs, charities, schools and media to celebrate the week by opening gardens, holding events and providing advice. RHS Affiliated Societies, "in Bloom" and IYN groups are invited to celebrate by taking part in the 'Wild about Wildflowers' campaign, which will also launch the 2012 RHS Britain in Bloom campaign. Please see page 2 for details.

www.rhs.org.uk/nationalgardeningweek

Dig Together Day 2011

Dig Together Day, celebrated its third anniversary in September with more than 70 Affiliated Societies and "in Bloom" groups laying on special events for the public.

The campaign sees RHS-affiliated clubs and societies hosting events and workshops designed to inspire people into gardening and to raise the profile of their club in the local community.

This year's campaign saw varied events, including green manure workshops, vegetable growing advice on allotments, village bulb planting, apple pressing, garden tours, annual shows and plant sales.

www.rhs.org.uk/digtogetherday

It's Your Neighbourhood grows

The IYN scheme continued to grow in 2011, with significant numbers of new groups in Northumbria (280% increase), London (107%), Yorkshire (62%), Anglia (62%), South West (59%), Thames & Chilterns (50%) and Scotland (40%). To find out more about this popular scheme, visit www.rhs.org.uk/itsyourneighbourhood

New Woodland Trust report

A new report from the Woodland Trust, Trees or Turf, looks at the costs of maintaining amenity grassland as compared to new native woodland. The report concludes that carefully planned and sited new woodland can save money for local authorities and others who cut large areas of amenity grass, whilst also providing a wide range of other benefits to people and wildlife. To read the full report, please visit:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/treesavemoney

Affiliated Societies – new information pack

The new September 2011 – January 2013 pack is crammed full of information about the benefits and offers available to RHS Affiliated Societies. An electronic copy has been emailed to all societies and clubs for which we hold an email address. If you would like to request copy sent on a CD in the post, please email communities@rhs.org.uk or call 020 7821 3069.

To make sure you get the most out of your membership, request a pack today.

RHS Science & Advice

News, tips and advice from RHS Scientists and Advisors. To suggest a topic for this section of the magazine, please contact sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118

Box tree moth spreads through UK gardens



Image: RHS/Andrew Hildreth

Above: Caterpillar of the box tree moth. Below: Box tree caterpillar adult

The box tree moth, *Cydalima perspectalis*, is an Asian insect that has been spreading in Europe in recent years.

Adult moths were first recorded in Britain in 2008 in Surrey and East Sussex. In 2009 and 2010, adult moths were recorded in Kent, Hertfordshire and Avon. The first records of this pest on box in gardens were made in May this year when infestations were reported to Wisley from Stoke Green, Buckinghamshire, and Gilston Park, Hertfordshire. The yellow-green and black caterpillars live within silk webbing, are up to 4cm long, and can cause serious defoliation. This new pest has three

generations a year and is likely to become widespread. It may lead to a decline in the planting of box, a plant already beset by serious disease problems, such as box blight and *Phytophthora*. The pest is also a threat to box where it grows as a native plant, such as Box Hill in Surrey.

Any enquiries about caterpillars feeding on box should be referred to the Entomologists at Wisley as we wish to record the distribution and spread of this pest: entomology_horticulture@rhs.org.uk



Image: RHS/Carol Sheppard

Ornamental grasses in the autumn



Above: Grasses and perennials in the Seven Acres Grass Borders at RHS Wisley

As flowering falls away grasses take on special importance in the garden. They bring light, airy elegance and their subtle colours can be dramatic in the soft autumn light. Strong growing *Miscanthus sinensis* cultivars create effective contrasts at the back of a mixed border, but this is to waste their full potential beauty that is best appreciated if they can be seen 'head to foot'.

Tall grasses are favoured by our RHS Garden Rosemoor team: *Stipa gigantea*, *Chionochloa conspicua*, with the variegated, elegant *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' at the edges of borders and paths. Here they catch the slightest breeze, the most sunshine and attract most interest – visitors find them irresistible to touch.

Broad swaths of *Hakonechloa macra*, growing 50cm high are a sight to see in autumn outside the RHS Wisley glasshouse, exciting great interest from visitors, and the garden team experiment with inserting bulbs such as tall alliums for spring and summer interest.

Grasses work well with autumn flowers; the tall, upright *Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal' and *P. virgatum* 'Prairie Sky' are a pleasing

tone among cooler colours, whilst *P. virgatum* 'Warrior' and *P. virgatum* 'Hanse Herms' are suffused with rich red and burgundy in autumn, adding to the effect of a late, hot colour border.

Gardeners are often perplexed by trimming grasses, but happily it is very simple; deciduous grasses are cut to ground level in late winter or spring, when last year's stems become scruffy, and before new growth is so advanced it interferes with cutting. For evergreen grasses merely gently rake through the leaves once flowering is over using a springtime rake or even a gloved hand.

Where clumps get large they can be divided in spring and replanted to maintain their vigour, or indeed to generate more plants.

Most grasses thrive in well-drained soils, but those that enjoy moisture-retentive conditions will benefit from the addition of organic matter before replanting.

To search for RHS advice covering more than 700 common gardening topics, visit www.rhs.org.uk/advicesearch

Impatiens Downy Mildew



Above: Downy mildew on Impatiens

Busy Lizzies are cheap, easy-to-grow, adaptable to a wide range of growing environments and above all tolerant of quite a lot of shade.

No wonder then that gardeners have been dismayed by the devastation wrought by impatiens downy mildew this summer.

Downy mildews are fungal pathogens that only affect a very limited host range, in this case busy Lizzies only. They need moist conditions to thrive. Unfortunately these are just the conditions found in the greenhouses used to raise young plants for sale to garden centres. Since the first discovery of this disease in Britain in 2003 strict hygiene and careful fungicide treatment has kept the disease in check. However it seems that the disease was inadvertently imported again on infected cuttings from abroad and that the new strain is resistant to commercial fungicides (no fungicides are offered to home gardeners). This led to a breakdown in control as plants can be infected for a long period before the disease shows itself, and infected plants were sent out to garden centres and other outlets. Widespread losses of busy Lizzies followed in people's gardens.

As the infected plants can leave resting spores in the soil it is essential to be rid of all infected plant material, ideally by burning or burial. Potting media from infected hanging baskets and other containers should be discarded too.

The spores can survive at least one year, so it is best to avoid these plants for a year or two. In the meantime begonias and fuchsias offer an alternative for summer colour in light shade.

Growing together with Northumbria in Bloom



Above: Deryck Forrest of Billingham Environment Link Project working with Joseph Stockport and Ben Metcalf. Below: Dunn Street Primary School pupil Molly Williamson weeds the veg patch at the after school gardening club

For 25 years Northumbria in Bloom offered a Special Award in the schools section of their annual competition.

Two years ago they recognized that gardening in school has benefits beyond that of simply improving the school environment. This recognition led to the development of the 'Growing Together' scheme, introduced in 2010. Scheme leader, David Goodchild says, "We spoke to teachers who told us about Every Child Matters*, a statement of the rights of children to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being. They also told us that gardening can contribute to all aspects of this aspiration. We decided that as well as marking schools for horticultural quality we would give equal weight to the educational value of the gardening activities".

In judging educational value, Northumbria in Bloom look at the involvement of pupils in design, growing and maintenance; how gardening contributes to their understanding of plants; at the use of gardening to enhance curriculum delivery; and the contribution to pupils' development and the outcomes of Every Child Matters.

The new scheme has proved to be enormously popular, with 52 schools from across the region taking part in the 2011

competition. Of these, 22 were awarded gold medals and four were awarded special trophies to recognise their outstanding achievements (www.northumbriainbloom.co.uk).

Eileen Burn, Chairman of Northumbria in Bloom, says, "The success of the Growing Together scheme is a tribute to the wonderful work schools and teachers are doing to use horticulture to help today's children to love flowers and home-grown food and to appreciate their environment to the full. The Growing Together judges feel enormously privileged to be allowed to meet such enthusiastic and knowledgeable children."

The holistic view of Growing Together mirrors that of the RHS Campaign for School Gardening (CfSG) whose commissioned research has shown that gardening helps children lead happier, healthier lives and allows them to acquire the essential skills they need to fulfill their potential in a rapidly-changing world (rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/teachershome/news/researchonschoolgardening). Growing Together and CfSG are now exploring ways in which they can mutually support and assist each other in their aims to bring the benefits of gardening to children.



Seasonal tips from the Campaign for School Gardening

- Plant up large pots with Crocus or Daffodil bulbs, with Tulips underneath these, to give much welcomed early flowers.
- Autumn is a great time to plant Broad Beans for an early crop next year. Sow a cold-tolerant cultivar such as 'Aquadulce Claudia'.
- The CfSG provides a framework through which "in Bloom" and IYN groups and RHS Affiliated Societies can help to support their local school. To find out more visit www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening

*NB under the current government the terminology "Every Child Matters" is no longer used, but the aspirations remain.


 A photograph of Rachel de Thame, a woman with long dark hair, wearing an orange t-shirt, sitting in a garden. She is holding a green tray filled with several small potted plants. The background is a blurred garden scene with wooden trellises and greenery.

Rachel de Thame

Image: Adrian Shearatt

Award-winning garden designer and author, Rachel de Thame, talks to *Growing Communities* about her journey into gardening. Rachel joined this year's RHS Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony in St Andrews on 25 September as special guest presenter.

You've had a varied career – ballet dancing, art history and modelling – what inspired your move into horticulture?

It's true that I've had an episodic professional life, but my love of plants and gardening has been a constant thread since childhood, when I was inspired by my father's passion for his garden.

You have four children of your own, have you got any tips for getting children engaged in gardening?

I think it's important not to make them feel that it's a chore. If you find fun things to do together and let them see that you enjoy working in the garden, they're bound to get the bug sooner or later.

What's the most exciting design project you've been involved in and why?

Designing a show garden for the Chelsea Flower Show was an incredible experience;

it's nerve-wracking, all-consuming but ultimately rewarding and there's an inspiring camaraderie between exhibitors. But I think few projects compare to designing and working in your own garden. The only constraints are those you set yourself and it's liberating to create a place with real passion, filled with the plants you love and want to share with your family and close friends.

In your book, *Small Town Gardens*, you offer advice on designing gardens in compact urban spaces. What are the primary considerations when working small?

It's important to spend time really looking at the space in order to work out how you can maximize its potential. Large gardens can afford to have some areas lying fallow while others take centre stage. In a small plot, every inch has to earn its keep year-round. Don't be afraid to divide even the most bijoux space with screens and hedging. This

creates intriguing corners to be discovered. Use the vertical plane to increase planting opportunities with climbers, wall shrubs and green walls and add arches or columns for extra height. Above all, avoid collecting lots of dinky containers and ornaments. In a small space, think big and use large statement pieces – but always sparingly.

What are your thoughts regarding community gardening projects?

We are a nation of gardeners, renowned for the beauty and originality of our gardens from stately home to terraced back yard. I truly believe in the power of this shared enthusiasm for horticulture. Gardening can be the glue that bonds members of the community together and brings out the best in all of us.

“in Bloom” weathers the storm



Above: ARCH Community Group launch, 2010

As public sector cuts start to bite, many “in Bloom” groups are seeing traditional funding streams dry up. Council-led campaigns are being hit by staff losses, with inevitable knock on effects for local green spaces. Yet in the face of this bleak landscape of greyness and cuts, groups are finding innovative ways to keep the colour in their communities.

With community support, incredible things are happening. Stevenage was forced to drop out of “in Bloom” in 2008 when the council was unable to continue its coordinating role. Today the local competition is back up and running thanks to the efforts of one local business and a group of community volunteers (see full story on page 13).

Community action sits at the heart of RHS Britain in Bloom: the majority of “in Bloom” groups are either volunteer-led, or run by volunteers in partnership with council staff. Community involvement is “vital” according to Roger Burnett, Chair of the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Judging Panel. He is certain that groups can produce inspiring campaigns, despite the cut backs: “For many years Britain in Bloom was associated with impressive floral displays and lots of people mistakenly still think that’s all that counts, but today the campaign is about so much more,” he says.

“If you can show us projects where the community is working together, inspiring themselves and others to make a difference, or where there are measures in place to protect the environment, that is an enormous

part of what we’re looking for. No council could, or even should, be trying to do a Bloom campaign on its own. If this sounds like you it’s time to change the way you’re looking at things; start supporting community groups and harness the enthusiasm of local people.”

On the horticultural side his message is clear: “It must be good, but it doesn’t need to be expensive. We don’t need to see big displays on every corner; we understand the current financial situation. Sustainable planting can be cost effective, with a little injection of colour each year if required. We want to see people doing what they can do well, rather than trying to overstretch themselves and falling short. Show us how your community has responded to the cuts and worked together to sustain your green spaces.”

RHS Community Horticulture Manager, Stephanie Eynon, urges groups to consider the It’s Your Neighbourhood Scheme when looking for cost-effective ways to boost their local campaign.

“It’s part of ‘in Bloom’ but aimed specifically at smaller projects, for example

residents working together in a street or estate, or a volunteer-run community garden. We know that the scheme motivates people to care for their surroundings, so it’s a great way to build community action at a local level, which all feeds into your larger ‘in Bloom’ campaign,” she says.

Further information:

RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood is free for groups to enter:

www.rhs.org.uk/itsyourneighbourhood

A list of funding bodies can be found within your RHS Britain in Bloom or RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood support pack. If you have not received a support pack in 2011, please contact communities@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3069 to request a copy, quoting your group name. Please note that support packs are only available to registered groups.



Local business steps in to save Stevenage in Bloom

Above: Stevenage in Bloom volunteer judges Joan Brown and Marilyn Sommerville on judging day

Steve Howells and his wife Caroline took on the coordinating role at Stevenage in Bloom after the council withdrew its support in 2008. Now they're extending the initiative in a move that's benefitting local communities and their business.

When financial cuts led to Stevenage Borough Council pulling out of Stevenage in Bloom in 2008, many in the local community were disappointed. The town had been involved in the "in Bloom" campaign for almost 50 years and people valued the positive impact it made. "It had done so much for the area, it was sad that the community would be missing out," explains local resident Alice Biucchi.

Instead of accepting the loss of a valuable local initiative, Steve Howells, one of the campaign's volunteer judges, decided to act: "There was a huge amount of support for the Bloom across Stevenage, as well as a strong network of volunteer judges. Nobody wanted to see it end so we had to try to do something," he says.

With the approval of all those volunteers involved in Stevenage in Bloom, Steve and Caroline's gardening business, ARCH, took on the coordinating role in 2009.

According to Steve, the main challenge was getting to grips with how things would work without the council: "The council weren't able to help; they had no money available and several of the key coordinators of Stevenage in Bloom had left their jobs. We took the decision that we needed to take one step back to take

two steps forward: we dropped out of Anglia in Bloom and concentrated on building up the campaign again from its roots.

"By keeping the competition alive it means that areas of the town that already have small oases of green will continue to stay green and actively encourage new residents to join in. We are building the foundations for a new Stevenage in Bloom and hope to re-enter Anglia in Bloom next year," he says.

In 2009, there were 174 entries into the town's six categories - a 29% increase on 2008 - and 2010 saw the competition extended to neighbouring towns Letchworth and Hitchin. Establishing a charitable arm in 2010 enabled the group to fundraise more effectively, with a grant from Barclays secured to directly support groups.

The recent accolade of a Green Apple Environment Award for Stevenage in Bloom is further cause for celebration. The awards recognise Britain's greenest companies, councils and communities, and ARCH competed against more than 500 other nominations to win their prize. Their winning entry may now represent the UK in the European Business Awards for the Environment.

Has the move into "in Bloom" been beneficial for business? "It hasn't been a

huge income generator, but it's fantastic publicity. Of course we have to make a profit to be viable as a business, but profit alone is not the main objective here," says Steve.

Peter Bandy, Strategic Director (Environment) at Stevenage Borough Council, says, "The council has had to make difficult decisions about funding following severe cuts to our government grant and reduced income as a result of the difficult financial climate.

"However, we're very pleased to see local residents working together to keep Stevenage in Bloom going. It's a great example of community cohesion and a positive campaign for the town."

In Brief

Previous council funding: £15,000 p/a

Current costs:

Local paper sponsorship: Approximately £500p/a (donated by ARCH)

Awards ceremony and advertising: £7,000 p/a (raised by the local paper)

Administration: Approximately £300p/a (paper; printing etc)

Time: Approximately 15 hours per week

www.arch.uk.com



Securing sponsors in Bury St Edmunds

Above: Mikes Ames, Chair of Bury in Bloom, and Juila Rackowe visit Church Walks community garden in Bury St Edmunds

With drive and determination, financial fortunes are changed for Suffolk town's "in Bloom" group.

For the past three years the Bury in Bloom campaign has been running at a loss. "Because of the economic downturn sponsorship was tough and we were just about bringing in enough to cover our costs," explains Bury in Bloom Campaign Manager, Julia Rackowe.

"The campaign has been running for 25 years and we've been very successful. We picked up a Silver Gilt at last year's RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals, which was delightful. But we were struggling to sustain things at this level and took the decision to take a year out of the regional campaign [Anglia in Bloom] to focus on our 25th Anniversary and to invest more time in fundraising."

The decision worked: this year the group has been able to secure a sponsorship deal with the national company, Silver Spoon, which will support the campaign to the tune of £25,000 over three years.

The contract has seen Silver Spoon's logo embedded into Bury in Bloom's, with the company given headline status throughout all campaign materials. Silver Spoon's branding will also appear in situ at various sites around the town that they have chosen to 'adopt'. As part of the agreement, Bury in Bloom will be developing these sites to the

company's specification, planting trees and shrubs.

Julia is employed on a part-time basis by Bury in Bloom, an arrangement she credits as essential in enabling her to fundraise effectively. Her professional background in PR, publishing and fundraising, also helps.

"We have a number of other fundraising initiatives in Bury, including long-standing agreements with eight local businesses. They provide us with a set fee of between £900 and £2,200 each year and we ensure that the area they are sponsoring is well planted and maintained and that their branding is clearly visible on a Bury in Bloom sign.

"Several businesses have been involved with particular sites for many years. One roundabout is known locally as 'Hazell's roundabout' after the agent that sponsors it, which they're obviously extremely pleased about!" explains Julia.

Much of the work is done by St Edmundsbury Borough Council, with Bury in Bloom funding the planting and maintenance that goes beyond the council's basic Service Level Agreement. In this way the group is able to help the council make improvements that it would otherwise be unable to afford.

Julia's top fundraising tips

- If you can, employ a professional, even if it's just on a part-time basis. The income that they will be able to generate will make this worthwhile.
- A Bloom group's biggest fundraising asset is signage. Make sure that you have a good relationship with your local council and that they will allow you to position signage on roundabouts/public flower beds. Bloom groups can help councils to enhance areas by bringing in external funding, but they can only do this if they have the ability to acknowledge their sponsor's support.
- Keep in touch with your sponsors; make sure they get invited to all your key events and publicly thanked for their support at every opportunity.
- Enlist support from across your group. Our Treasurer's business background was invaluable in helping me to negotiate the Silver Spoon deal.
- Be clear about what you can offer before you approach a sponsor. What are you all about and what branding opportunities could you offer to a potential supporter.

www.buryinbloom.org.uk

Fundraising fever takes over in Ripponden



Above: Ripponden in Bloom volunteers spruce up the railing planters

Creative Yorkshire “in Bloom” group raises over £700 with village talent show.

Ripponden’s ‘In Bloom Tonight’ variety performance featured star turns from local dance schools, Ripponden musicians, the WI, hand-bell ringers, karaoke singers and the school choir.

At the local committee’s persuasion, all performers donated their time for free and, with the village hall full to capacity, the group was able to raise an impressive £700, which covered the cost of half of this year’s plants.

Chair of Ripponden in Bloom, Jayne Smith, was delighted by the response from the local community: “We have done so much to improve the image of the area and we work with all the community groups and schools, so they know we are volunteers. They are therefore all keen to help us. They get to showcase their talents and we got them to give us information so that they could sell their services in the programme free of charge to hopefully enhance their business, club or school as well. We also sold advertising space so that we could cover the cost of printing the programmes,” she says.

The group’s only costs were in hiring two bar staff and a professional Elvis impersonator, who was a “great draw” for the evening. The committee increased their takings on the night by running a raffle and selling programmes and Union Jack flags for the last night of the proms sing-along.

“The next show takes place on 25 November and we started planning in mid-August,” says Jayne. “It promises to be another great evening for Ripponden!”

www.rippondeninbloom.co.uk

Society builds website in bid to boost membership



Above: Mold Gardening Club visits RHS Garden Harlow Carr

Mold Gardening Club (MGC) was established in the Flintshire market town of Mold, North East Wales, in 1976. With almost 100 members, the group is “part gardening-club, part social-club” according to Secretary Anne Brenchley.

“It’s a great group, many of whom enjoy the club as a means to meet like-minded individuals. But our membership has remained pretty static over the past decade and we’d like to do something to attract a few new faces.”

With a wider membership base and extra support on the committee, MGC hopes to be able to take on more community projects in the future. “Currently it’s a struggle to find enough time to do any more than our two annual shows plus the trips and talks programme,” says Anne.

To attract newcomers, the group is in the process of building a new website, using BT’s free website building tool for not-for-profit organisations, BT Community Web Kit (www.btck.co.uk). Mold also joined this year’s Dig Together Day campaign, with a public talk on 19 September: ‘Chicken Street – a passion for plants and poultry’, by Jill and Andy Cawthray from Oswestry in neighbouring Shropshire.

“Taking part in Dig Together Day enabled us to promote ourselves to RHS members in the area who didn’t know we were here. It was easy to do as it was something we already had arranged and it helped us to reach out to a few more people,” says Anne.

The group’s next move will be to re-instate a six-monthly club newsletter to raise awareness of membership recruitment activities. There are also plans afoot to make the group’s annual plant sale more integrated into the local community and possibly hold it on one of the town’s outdoor market days. “We’ll evaluate in a year and hope that we’ve seen some good results,” says Anne.

Itching to take over a plot of municipal land?

You will need insurance.

The RHS, in partnership with NFU Mutual, offers a range of affordable insurance packages to suit the needs of all “in Bloom” and It’s Your Neighbourhood groups, as well as RHS Affiliated Societies. Packages include Public Liability insurance of up to £10million for just £110 (for 17-months).

With the scheme renewal date starting on 1st September (and running for a one-off 17-month period until 31st January 2013), now is the time to take out a policy to ensure you get absolute value for money – pro-rata rates are not available.

“Our group decided to improve a neglected patch of land near the main parade of shops. Initially the council was reluctant to let us work on municipal land, but our commitment to take on public liability insurance and a lease won them around. The RHS/ NFU was the best quote by a long way, others I tried were a lot more expensive. We also had to make up a constitution that was approved by Glasgow City Council before we were allowed set foot on the land.” Barrie Linning, Garrowhill Garden Estate Community Group, Glasgow.

A spokesperson from the council said, “When the management of land is transferred to a community group, it is essential that the group is protected against any third party insurance claims which might arise from their work on that land. For this reason, the Council insists that any group involved in any form of agreement to maintain or manage Council land has appropriate insurance.”



Garrowhill volunteers in the new junction garden

To find out more about a package to suit your needs, call 020 7821 3651 or email lucyreid@rhs.org.uk

Information is also available online at: rhs.org.uk/communities