



**Pick of  
the bunch**  
Britain in Bloom results

**10 years of RHS  
school gardening**

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 @RHSBloom

 rhscommunitygardening

Cover image: volunteers work in the community orchard for the Britain in Bloom competition at Elswick village in Lancashire (RHS/Mark Waugh)

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The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK's leading gardening charity, dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting 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 [rhs.org.uk/communities](http://rhs.org.uk/communities)



# Welcome...

...to the autumn issue of *Grass Roots*, the magazine for all community gardening groups, including RHS Britain in Bloom, RHS It's Your Neighbourhood and RHS Affiliated Societies.

It's that time of year again – your chance to shout about everything you've sown, grown and nurtured this growing season! At the 2017 RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals awards in Llandudno, we honoured an all-star cast of individuals and groups that push us all to higher standards of community horticulture. We also celebrated 50 years of Wales in Bloom.

The end of the growing season was also a chance for regional 'Bloom' competitions to recognise the many hundreds of volunteers that keep the programme in flower year-round. From inspirational local leaders to schools and businesses, there's an army of people behind all our projects.

We are calling on all of you to help demonstrate the combined impact of your efforts. Please complete our biennial Impact Survey ([surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bibimpact17](http://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bibimpact17)), which allows you to share your achievements and helps us develop our community programmes. We also use the findings to raise the profile of your work. As always, do keep sharing your stories with us. Email [communities@rhs.org.uk](mailto:communities@rhs.org.uk), or find us on Twitter or Facebook.



Best wishes and happy gardening,  
*Emily*  
Emily Braham

## Your views – Room to grow

*Back in 2007, five refugees, all survivors of torture, would gather together around a fire at Culpeper Community Garden in North London to talk about their shared experiences and challenges. Ten years on, our Room to Heal community has grown into a thriving charity of 80 men and women from more than 30 different countries.*

*The therapeutic benefits of gardening are immense, especially for those with a traumatic past. Planting a seed or bulb and watching it grow symbolises resilience and hope, and immersion in nature brings peace and tranquillity. One of our members told us: 'Plants are living things and so am I. Often I forget that I have a life or I am living! It's amazing to see the plant grow and bear beautiful fruits.'*

*Many at Room to Heal previously worked on the land, so they share much knowledge and many recipes. Growing crops that have meaning 'back home' allows for remembering and honouring people's pasts while creating new roots here in the UK. Some of our recent harvests have included callaloo, sukuma wiki*



(collard greens) and, for the first time, a crop of peanuts.

**Martha Orbach**  
Gardening Coordinator, Room to Heal

Please send your letters to [communities@rhs.org.uk](mailto:communities@rhs.org.uk) or to *Grass Roots*, RHS Community Horticulture, RHS, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Letters may be edited for publication.

**Print correction:** We apologise for the following errors in *Grass Roots*, summer 2017: The co-leader of the Greening Grey Britain project in Llanidloes should have been listed as Kirsten McIver, Llanidloes has not yet been classified as a bee-friendly town.

# News



A mentor and staff member at University of Bristol Botanic Garden gives school students a garden tour.

## Green Plan It 2017 under way

Secondary school students around the UK have begun a 10-week challenge to design a school or community garden as part of the RHS Green Plan It scheme 2017.

Nearly 800 12–14 year-olds will get a glimpse of a career in horticulture as they compete in eight regional events, from London to Edinburgh. The student-led

challenge encourages young people to explore issues that matter to them, and links in to core curriculum subjects.

Each school team of six students has been paired with an industry mentor, such as a landscape architect, head gardener or plant scientist, who will work alongside them throughout the project.



## Growing young reporters

Young people in Surrey worked with the RHS Community Outreach team this summer to gain rare first-hand experience of horticulture reporting. The 14 participants from the National Citizenship Service (The Challenge) and Surrey County Council interviewed garden designers and experts at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

Their resulting stories aim to inspire more young people to get gardening, covering broader real-world issues such as food security and the environment, posing questions such as, 'what are the threats to sustainability?' and 'why should young people garden?'

The pilot project is part of a Heritage Lottery Fund development programme for RHS Garden Wisley. Read the young people's stories at the Campaign for School Gardening website ([schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk](http://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk)).

## Green space action plan

The Government has launched a new Parks Action Group to protect England's public parks and green spaces, and help them better meet community needs. It benefits from £500,000 of funding.

## Wildlife orchard grants

The People's Trust for Endangered Species has reopened its fund to protect and improve traditional orchards as habitats for wildlife. See [ptes.org](http://ptes.org)

## Free tools for groups

Retailer B&Q offers a community reuse service in all its stores, providing seconds or unsellable goods to community groups and schools free of charge. Contact your local store to find out more.

## Gardening for everyone

The Bailey Thomas Charitable Fund is offering grants for projects that support people with learning disabilities. If your group has an idea for an accessible or sensory garden, it could be eligible. There are small (up to £10,000) and large (over £10,000) grants available. [baileythomas.org.uk](http://baileythomas.org.uk)

## Ulster shines in Canada

Castlecaulfield in Ulster was recognised at the prestigious International Communities in Bloom 2017 awards in Canada. The group won both the International Challenge in the 'small' category and the Ball International Floral Displays Award.



## Take our Bloom survey

For your chance to win one of five £50 gardening vouchers, visit [surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bibimpact17](http://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/bibimpact17)

# Congratulations Bloom 2017 Finalists!

From Aberdeen in Scotland to St Helier in Jersey, 78 finalists vied for top honours in this year's RHS Britain in Bloom competition. At an awards ceremony on 27 October in Llandudno, North Wales, each finalist was awarded a Gold, Silver Gilt, Silver or Bronze medal. We reveal the results, category by category, with 'CW' denoting category winners.



TRANS LINK



RHS / JULIAN WEIGALL

	ENTRY NAME	REGION / NATION	AWARD
SMALL VILLAGE	Bray	Thames and Chilterns	Silver Gilt
	Kilconquhar	Scotland	Silver Gilt
	Stanghow	Northumbria	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
VILLAGE	Donaghmore	Ulster	Gold
	Filby	Anglia	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Pebworth	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
	St Aubin	Jersey	Gold
	Sark	Guernsey	Silver Gilt
LARGE VILLAGE	Cannington	South West	Silver Gilt
	Coupar Angus	Scotland	Gold
	Croston	North West	Silver Gilt
	Cullybackey	Ulster	Silver Gilt
	Dalston	Cumbria	Gold
	Hutton Cranswick	Yorkshire	Gold
	Market Bosworth	East Midlands	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Usk	Wales	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
SMALL TOWN	Bothwell	Scotland	Silver Gilt
	Ponteland	Northumbria	Silver Gilt
	Randalstown	Ulster	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Uppingham	East Midlands	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Wareham	South	Silver Gilt
TOWN	Barnoldswick	North West	Silver Gilt
	Forres	Scotland	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Halstead	Anglia	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Otley	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
	Pembrey & Burry Port	Wales	Silver Gilt
	St Saviour	Jersey	Silver Gilt
	Sherborne	South West	Silver Gilt
	Uttoxeter	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
LARGE TOWN	Altrincham	North West	Silver Gilt
	Ballymena	Ulster	Silver Gilt
	Belper	East Midlands	Gold
	Chesham	Thames & Chilterns	Silver Gilt
	Farnham	South East	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Kendal	Cumbria	Silver Gilt
	Truro	South West	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>

	ENTRY NAME	REGION / NATION	AWARD
SMALL CITY	Bury	North West	Silver Gilt
	Canterbury	South East	Gold
	Colchester	Anglia	Silver Gilt
	Derry City	Ulster	Gold
	Kirkcaldy	Scotland	Silver Gilt
	Newcastle-under-Lyme	Heart of England	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Oadby & Wigston	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
CITY	London Borough of Islington	London	Silver
	London Borough of Richmond	London	Silver
	London Borough of Tower Hamlets	London	<b>Silver Gilt &amp; CW</b>
LARGE CITY	Belfast	Ulster	Silver Gilt
	London Borough of Ealing	London	Silver
	London Borough of Hillingdon	London	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
COASTAL UP TO 12K	Hunstanton	Anglia	Silver Gilt
	Newcastle	Ulster	Silver Gilt
	North Berwick	Scotland	Gold
	Sidmouth	South West	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Silloth-on-Solway	Cumbria	Silver Gilt
	Whitby	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
COASTAL OVER 12K	Deal	South East	Silver Gilt
	Llandudno	Wales	Gold
	Newquay	South West	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	St Helier	Jersey	Gold



DEAL IN BLOOM

	ENTRY NAME	REGION / NATION	AWARD
URBAN COMMUNITY	Aldridge	Heart of England	Gold
	Clifton	South West	Silver Gilt
	Didsbury	North West	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Littleover	East Midlands	Silver
	Starbeck	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
	Uddingston	Scotland	Gold
	Walthamstow Village	London	Gold
BID*	Blackburn Town Centre	North West	Gold
	London Bridge	London	Gold
	Mansfield	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
	Norwich	Anglia	Gold
	Penrith	Cumbria	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
			<i>*Business Improvement District</i>
CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS	Aberdeen	Scotland	<b>Gold</b>
	Elswick	North West	<b>Gold &amp; CW</b>
	Harrogate	Yorkshire	Gold
	Hillsborough	Ulster	Gold
	Oldham	North West	Gold
	Portishead	South West	Gold
	St Peter Port	Guernsey	Gold

#### Left

A coastal herbaceous garden in Deal, Kent, which represented the South East.

#### Far left top

The Dirty Onion Bar and Restaurant in Belfast, part of Belfast's Large City entry.

#### Far left bottom

Beekeeping at Walthamstow in Bloom, an Urban Community in London.

## RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards 2017

These awards are presented to finalists who demonstrated genuine excellence in a particular area of judging.

RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM DISCRETIONARY AWARD WINNERS

Involving Children and Young People	Bothwell, Scotland
Growing Communities	Joint Winners – Oldham, North West and Walthamstow, London
Gardening in a Changing Climate	Bothwell Community Garden, Scotland
Wild About Gardens	Newcastle-under-Lyme, Heart of England
Parks and Green Spaces	Seaton Park, Aberdeen, Scotland
Overcoming Adversity	Bury, North West and Forres, Scotland

### Britain in Bloom with the RHS Community Champion Winners

Liz Auld, Dalston	Victoria O'Dwyer, London Bridge
Joan Gibson, Halstead	Joan Robinson, Penrith
Bob Jones, Canterbury	Pam Schomberg, Colchester
Helen Lerner, Walthamstow	Terry Scott, Aberdeen
Ian McLennan, Forres	Gina Simpson, Hutton Cranswick
Sandra McLennan, Forres	Kevin Taitt, Farnham
John Nelson, Belper	

### Brighter Bothwell

Bothwell in Scotland is the winner of not one but two discretionary awards this year. The community group was awarded best for 'Involving Children and Young People' and for 'Gardening in a Changing Climate' – based on the advice in the RHS report of the same name. The group was singled out for its use of renewable energy, water conservation and reuse of materials. The judges noted that the group's work with young people is 'an integral part of their campaign' rather than a 'ticked box'.



EDWARD MALLINSON

## It's Your Neighbourhood National Certificates of Distinction

Every year, a selection of the very best RHS It's Your Neighbourhood projects are recognised for their achievements, following excellence in their regional competition and nomination by the coordinators.

IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD WINNERS

Kirkoswald Allotment Orchard Group	Cumbria
Penrith Community Gardeners – Salvation Army Borders	Cumbria
Warfield Grow and Share at Jealott's Hill Community Landshare, Bracknell, Berkshire	Thames and Chilterns
The Open Univeristy, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire	Thames and Chilterns
Birdhurst Community Gardening Group	London
Stamshaw Adventure Playground, Portsmouth	South East
The Chaucery Memorial, Rustington	South East
St Mary's Churchyard Volunteer Team	Wales



JEALOTT'S HILL COMMUNITY LANDSHARE

RHS It's Your Neighbourhood group Jealott's Hill Community Landshare supports people with mental health and physical disabilities, through gardening.



HMP AND YOI PARC

HMP & YOI Parc, winner of the 2017 RHS Windlesham Trophy, has also been listed as one of the 12 most beautiful prisons in the world by MSN.



HMP AND YOI PARC

## Winning Windlesham

This summer, HMP and YOI Parc became the first ever Welsh winner of the Windlesham Trophy. One of the prison's gardeners shares the reasons he takes part.

I arrived at HMP & YOI Parc in October 2016, and managed to get a job working in the gardens fairly quickly. I was really pleased as I had worked within the horticultural department at HMP Dovegate, where I was previously.

I have an engineering background and have always enjoyed working outdoors, but I find this different occupation very therapeutic. It was a funny start to my time in the garden though – it was a few weeks before I picked up a wheelbarrow. My first task was to break up some pallets, which were to be reused as cupboard doors within the prison's garden shed. I was then asked to create a bug hotel, again out of recycled pallet wood.

After some time building different structures to be located around the grounds, I was finally tasked with some old-fashioned gardening work: weeding the herbaceous border. This gave me a real sense of achievement, as you could

really see a difference to the border once I'd finished. I've now worked on various projects and I've picked up quite a few new skills, which I wasn't really expecting – I learned about plant propagation and identification, and rose pruning. I also made some bird boxes and bug hotels.

I'm currently helping to design some flower borders for near the prison entrance.

I take great pride in my work and enjoyed the pressure of maintaining the gardens to a high standard during the Windlesham Trophy judging. I feel very lucky to be able to work in these gardens.

### A world-class garden

Every available green space at Parc Prison has been brought to life with plants. Wildlife is welcomed with wildflower meadows, a solar-powered pond and even a living roof, while vegetable and herb gardens supply fresh produce for the prison kitchens.

The extensive gardens, which could have up to 15 gardeners at work at any given time, has also been voted one of the 12 most beautiful prisons in the world by MSN, the multi-media network.

HMP and YOI Parc, a Category B men's private prison and Young Offenders Institution in Bridgend, is the first prison in Wales to win the annual, 30-year old competition.

The coveted RHS Windlesham Trophy rewards the best-kept prison garden in England and Wales. RHS Director of Education, Funding and Communities, Ruth Evans, presented the trophy, an engraved 'Green Goddess' redundant fire-engine bell, in September.

**Right**  
Friends of City Gardens' colourful Mediterranean garden, developed with Crossrail staff.

**Below**  
Corrugated-pipe gardens on the previously barren Moor Lane, created by University of Greenwich landscape design students.



## Something in the air

**We find out why one community gardening group turned its focus upside down this year as part of RHS Greening Grey Britain.**

Living in one of the most polluted areas in Britain, it was perhaps only a matter of time before London's army of community gardeners turned its attention from the ground to the air.

This year, Friends of City Gardens supported the Mayor of London's Low Emission Neighbourhood (LEN) campaign, encouraging all of its City in Bloom entrants to take on the Air Quality Challenge and to be Clean and Green in 17. These 'clean air gardens' could take any form, but were suggested to include plants that trap air pollutants, as well as those that attract pollinators and/or provide food and cover for birds.

Campaign coordinator, Sarah Hudson, and her team worked with students, businesses and residents to create new green pockets in the city, as well as to raise public awareness. 'We realised the difference we were making to overall air quality was likely to be small, but it was important to help people understand the issues around air pollution', she explains.

With funding from the City of London Corporation and the Mayor's Air Quality Fund (MAFQ), the team created a 'pop-up garden' designed by landscape design students from the University of Greenwich. This involved planting up some of the area's original horse troughs and creating a Mediterranean-inspired vertical garden on the Crossrail site boards, with the help of Crossrail staff. This was accompanied by signage about the campaign and tips on reducing exposure to harmful pollutants.

Several other clean air gardens were created by businesses, community groups and residents, and many others are now springing up alongside the River Thames. One such initiative is Better Bankside's Clean Air Mini Neighbourhood project – also supported by the Mayor's Air Quality Fund – which is working with more than 100 businesses to reduce the number of business vehicle journeys made in the area.

Visitors to the City are encouraged to walk a 'clean air route' to the Barbican, taking in Nigel Dunnett's Greening

Grey Britain garden, and looking out for footprints on the pavement that read: 'Follow me for cleaner air'. Meanwhile, volunteers, including Sarah, are working hard to reduce emissions by speaking to drivers who are parked with their engines idling.

There are plans under way to green a busy footbridge that connects the underground station to the Barbican garden, and to create a residents' edible garden on another footbridge.

It looks as though Clean and Green in 17 may be just the beginning.

For more information, or to get involved, see Friends of City Gardens [friendsofcitygardens.org.uk](http://friendsofcitygardens.org.uk)

Is your group planting for air quality? Share your story with us on social media or by email: [communities@rhs.org.uk](mailto:communities@rhs.org.uk)

## Planting for air quality

Urban planting is a fantastic way to improve air quality, but we shouldn't forget that plants bring a wide range of environmental benefits, say RHS Principal Scientist, Tijana Blanus, and RHS Principal Horticultural Advisor, Leigh Hunt.

Greening your local area is an effective defence against poor air quality, and is especially important in big towns and cities. Particulate pollution (airborne dust and dirt particles, largely from road transport and industry) can be removed from the air when it gets caught on the surface of leaves and stems. Some plants remove particulates better than others – large, dense perennials with an upright habit and rough or hairy leaves tend to be the best, while hedges (between 1.5m–2m high and at least 1m deep) provide good protection from road pollution.

Just as some species are particularly effective at trapping pollutants, others are attractive to bees, allow nesting spots for birds, help with flood alleviation, reduce noise or cool the air. So planting a mixture of species gives you a better chance of providing a wide range of environmental benefits.

In places where air quality is a particular issue, it's worth considering creating a barrier between your home or workplace and the source of the problem. Green walls and hedges are ideal. If you're looking for screening as well, mixed hedges are a good way to serve multiple functions. Hawthorn, for example, can help with flood protection and pollution capture (plus has value for pollinators), but it's not in leaf for six months of the year, so could be paired with an evergreen such as yew or western red cedar.

### Clean air performers

- ✿ Look for rough, hairy leaves and larger canopies, but also consider species that will provide pollen for insects, or flood protection.
- ✿ Species and cultivars of *Taxus* (yew, below left), *Cotoneaster*, *Ligustrum* (privet), *Carpinus* (hornbeam) and *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar) are perfect for hedges and shrubberies.
- ✿ *Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ear; below right) and *Salvia officinalis* (sage) are options for beds and green roofs.

*Tijana is researching the provision of cooling, flood protection and removal of particulate pollution by plants. Leigh is instrumental in helping translate this research into practical advice for home and professional gardeners.*



# RHS Advice



RHS / FLOVA SECRET

## Autumn gardening for wildlife

RHS Senior Horticultural Advisor and wildlife gardening expert Helen Bostock explains why trees and even the smallest space can offer something for wildlife.

### For the love of trees

Adding a tree to a green space, however small or large, can be as important as creating a pond or planting flowers. A tree's height and vertical growth means it acts like a high-rise block of flats for birds and invertebrates. And if it's kept watered and weed-free for the first season or two, it will be a haven for wildlife, and a beautiful garden feature, for many decades to come.

Unless you garden on a heavy (shrinkable) clay soil, tree roots are unlikely to pose a problem to property, but do think carefully when choosing the best position for a new specimen. It's a good idea to keep at least one metre between the tree trunk and the nearest hard surface, such as paving, as tree roots push upwards and can cause damage. Next, choose the largest variety of tree you can within the space available. The bigger the tree, the better it will support wildlife, as well as helping to capture pollution and provide cooling in urban areas. However, it's best to buy a

young tree – under 2m (6ft) if possible – as it's likely to establish more quickly, and be healthier, than a more established plant.

Many of our native trees, such as rowan (e.g. *Sorbus aucuparia* 'Sheerwater Seedling'), holly (such as *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argentea Marginata') and elder (*Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Gerda'), are both an attractive focal point and great for wildlife. But all trees bring their own benefit. If in doubt, pick one that bears flowers or fruit.

Late autumn and winter is the perfect time to plant trees. If you're gardening in heavy soil, try to avoid planting when it is waterlogged. To check, just dig out a hole and if it backfills with water, delay planting for a few weeks. Containerised trees can be kept out of the ground until conditions are right. If buying a bare-rooted tree and can't plant immediately, cover the rootball with damp sacking.

## Small spaces for wildlife

- ❖ If your community garden has a shed or storage space, place an old wooden crate or shoebox, part-filled with corrugated cardboard, high on a shelf inside for overwintering moths, butterflies and lacewings.
- ❖ Now the nights are drawing in, garden and security lighting help us find our way. But they can also disturb and distract wildlife. Encourage residents

and neighbours to fit upward facing floodlights with a hood to reduce light pollution, and swap bright garden lights with low intensity solar ones.

- ❖ Make up some winter wreaths using flat wire rings, a roll of florist wire and a bag of moss. Tie in sprigs of berrying evergreens, such as holly and skimmia, and wire-in crab apples. Hang on suitable posts or trees to attract the birds.



Winter wreaths with autumn berries and crab apples for local wildlife also make a great winter decoration.



RHS

## Jobs to do October–December

- ❖ Leave windfall apples and pears for late butterflies, birds and mammals to feast on.
- ❖ Assess whether your space has enough berry- and seed-bearing plants at this time of year, and plant more this autumn while soil conditions are favourable.
- ❖ Scoop out excessive leaves from small ponds but don't worry if a few get blown back in.
- ❖ Gather prunings from fruit trees and other woody plants into large piles, or weave into a 'dead hedge' as an informal boundary.
- ❖ Build wood piles for bonfires at the last minute to reduce the risk of hedgehogs making their homes inside.
- ❖ Continue to provide a clean supply of water for any wildlife that remains active in winter, especially during frosty spells.
- ❖ Plant nectar-rich bulbs in the autumn to attract early spring pollinators.
- ❖ Avoid cutting back your herbaceous borders. Seedheads can offer welcome winter structure, as well as food and shelter for wildlife.
- ❖ For more wildlife gardening tips, visit [wildaboutgardens.org.uk](http://wildaboutgardens.org.uk)

## MEET THE POLLINATORS



RHS / KATIE PRENTICE

### HOVERFLIES

Hoverflies are a common sight in gardens all around the UK throughout the summer months. We have around 270 resident species, and there are also some migratory species. They're highly beneficial to gardens, providing pollination, aphid control and a source of food for some larvae. Hoverflies are fast flyers, often moving in a rapid, stop-start darting pattern.

- ❖ Identify: Instead of having two pairs of wings like bees, hoverflies only have one pair. They are often brightly coloured with spots, bands or stripes of yellow or brown. Many species mimic the appearance of bees and wasps, but have no sting.

- ❖ Life cycle: hoverflies have egg, larva, pupa and adult stages. With enough food and amenable weather, some species can have multiple generations in a year. Their maggot-like larvae lack legs but sometimes have hooks or false 'prolegs'.

- ❖ Present: March to November; best observed in the morning and early afternoon.

- ❖ Food: adult hoverflies feed mainly on nectar and pollen – a rich source of protein essential for producing eggs – but they can also feed on honeydew produced by aphids. The larvae of hoverflies feed on a range of different substances, such as decaying matter, aphids and living plant stems or bulbs, depending on species. The UK's largest hoverfly, a hornet mimic, feeds in wasp nests.

- ❖ Encourage: plant a diversity of flowering plants and avoid using insecticides where possible.

# RHS Campaign for School Gardening



RHS / LUKE MACGREGOR

## School gardening grows up

In 2007, the RHS started working with schools to green our playgrounds and inspire the next generation of gardeners. Alana Tapsell, RHS Skills Development Manager, shares some key learnings ten years on.

### How has the RHS Campaign for School Gardening evolved?

In the early days of the campaign the focus was on helping primary schools set up a garden, along with a gardening club to tend to it. Over the years we've developed teaching resources that not only help schools with the practical aspects of gardening, but also with ways of integrating it into a range of subjects. Rocket Science, a partnership project with the UK Space Agency, which saw over 600,000 young people grow seeds that had been to space, alongside some that remained on Earth, led to a huge increase in schools, youth groups and children's centres that garden with us. Today, more than 34,000 schools and groups are members of the campaign.

### What would you like to see happen in the next 10 years?

We would love to see many more young people being given the opportunity to take

charge of creating and protecting green spaces in their communities. We would also like to see more schools using their outdoor space to teach, regardless of the subject, and to understand the benefits of doing so, which include boosting mental health, tackling issues surrounding climate change and promoting biodiversity.

### Why is gardening such a popular and successful tool for engaging children and young people?

The garden is an exciting place, particularly for those who don't have access to one at home. Used in the right way, they can be an invaluable low-cost resource to help young people develop confidence, teamwork skills, communication and leadership, as well as being somewhere to relax and escape. In a recent survey of our members, we found that 95 percent of respondents see pupils' mental wellbeing as a key motivator for taking part. Research has also shown

that a raised heart rate helps children to retain memories, knowledge and skills, so introducing physical activity into a teaching environment is a wonderful aid to learning.

### What is the best way to get children and young people interested in gardening?

Growing fruit and vegetables is a popular way to engage young people – it's hugely rewarding to hold and eat something home-grown, and it gives gardening a clear purpose. Many schools around the UK grow produce to sell to staff, parents, and even local cafés to raise money for the school garden. Other schools work with local community groups by planting up vibrant flower beds at a local nursing home, or creating peaceful, green public spaces. We also see many of our schools working to protect wildlife by creating homes for mini-beasts or planting pollinator-friendly flowers and herbs.



RHS / LUKE MACGREGOR



RHS / PAUL DEBOIS

**Far left and top**  
Pupils at Columbia Primary School take part in the Big Soup Share to celebrate 10 years of the RHS Campaign for School Gardening.

**Left**  
A gardener at Hammersmith Academy, named the RHS School Gardening Team of the Year 2017.

### What are the barriers to schools and children being able to take up gardening and how can we help to reduce these?

Time and money are the most commonly cited barriers, but gardens needn't be money pits. In fact, once set up, they can be low cost and sustainable. We've got a lot of resources now to help groups produce more with less, as well as useful guides for busy teachers. We also encourage schools to invite family or local Bloom groups to help out – you're sure to find someone keen to pass on their skills to the next generation.

### Reaching out

If your group doesn't already work with a local school, consider projects you could partner on, or perhaps you could offer advice and support for an existing or new school garden?



EMERVAJIDSON

### Autumn in the school garden

The weather might be turning, but there's still plenty to do, says 2016 RHS School Gardening Champion of the Year Sharon McMaster.

With the fun of the autumn harvest now over, and only a few leeks and cabbages still to pick, many gardeners are starting to shut up shop for winter in favour of a cosy living room. But having worked with children for some time, I've begun to realise that children are far less easily deterred. Suitably wrapped up, they'll happily garden on throughout the winter months without a care in the world.

We've had great success with overwintering vegetables, which will yield bountiful crops about a month before spring-planted cultivars, perfectly suited to the school holiday dates here in Northern Ireland. So autumn sees us planting garlic, onions and broad beans in our raised beds outdoors, as well as peas in the polytunnel. After trial and error with other less robust varieties, we plant 'Aquadulce Claudia' beans and 'Meteor' peas. We also plant up spring cabbage seedlings, radishes and Swiss chard in the polytunnel, and sow green manure to cover any unused outdoor raised beds.

Once the planting is taken care of in mid-November, we set to work on the tasks we've been putting off for a while. We pop on aprons and wash and dry all the used pots, sorting them by size, and clean the polytunnels with hot soapy water. On rainy days, we make colourful birdfeeders from reused materials, bake carrot muffins from our stored harvest, or send the warm aroma of spices around the school grounds from a bubbling pot of beetroot chutney. We also carry out essential maintenance on our bug hotel, adding plastic bottles stuffed with straw and twigs as a refuge for garden insects over the winter months.

I have come to view gardening very much as a year-round activity, and really look forward to the challenges and opportunities brought by the changing seasons. I've even begun to appreciate that short period after the endless weeding and watering of summer to catch up on those extra jobs. And then, of course, there's every gardener's favourite thing to do: plan for next year!



GARY MAANHINE / ST MARY'S SECRET GARDEN

## Growing resilience

RHS Outreach Advisor Jill Hogan was a mental health worker for 30 years, often using horticulture as a key tool to support people. She explains why the two complement each other so well.

Gardening is a source of relaxation, comfort and enjoyment for millions of people around the UK, and can be hugely beneficial to mental health. Time and time again I've seen how finding a connection with plants and the environment can help people on a natural route to wellbeing, improving their quality of life, sense of achievement community belonging.

Throughout my career I often worked with people recovering from very low points in their lives, many of whom found it hard to see a positive future. At these times, gardening can give people something to look forward to and helps to build resilience.

Being in the garden can be a great way to accept a new start in life. The walled garden project I developed in Stourbridge for Dudley Mind was set back when a wall collapsed on one side. We had to start again for that year, preparing new ground and replanting from scratch. The project survived and flourished after what at first had felt like a complete disaster. In my

own garden, I recently lost a treasured 40-year-old *Magnolia denudata* to honey fungus. While I mourn its demise, I realise the opportunity to do something different with the space, to create something new, is something to celebrate. Gardening gives you the valuable understanding that life goes on, and that even if it's not how you'd planned, you can still make it work. Horticulture also provides a safe space to take risks and to learn from your efforts. If a plant fails, you find out why and start again.

Many people find winter difficult, but in the garden it's an exciting time, full of planning and preparation for what's to come. After being in a garden for a while, people often begin to see the colder months differently. A gloomy winter's day offers the chance to learn about pruning, and recognise the promise in the swelling buds of an otherwise bare branch.

For me, horticulture is about providing opportunities for people to connect to their environment and to their community, both

obvious building blocks for wellbeing. I'd love to see more 'green prescriptions' – doctors recommending outdoor activities like gardening to help people improve and maintain their health.

### Five ways to wellbeing

The New Economics Foundation's 'Five ways to wellbeing' offers a perfect application to community gardening. Consider how you might apply these elements to your gardening project to improve your own and others' health: connect; be active; take notice; keep learning; give.

Read more on the Five Ways to Wellbeing and their application in the garden on the RHS website: [rhs.org.uk/communities](https://rhs.org.uk/communities)



ASHFORD HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

## Growing communities

Community growing has a long history, with many RHS Affiliated Societies clocking up nearly 150 years of community horticulture. We hear how just some of them have grown...

### Capel Horticultural Society – Surrey

The roots of Capel Horticultural Society go back to 1893, with its original aim to 'encourage the knowledge and practice of horticulture and the domestic arts' remaining unchanged. Activities have diversified though, with talks, outings, and planting days.

### Writtle Garden and Allotment Society – Essex

Taking advantage of the RHS Fruit and Herb Committee expert advisory visit this year, the society forged stronger links with fellow gardening groups. The RHS Q&A event attracted 100 guests – the largest audience yet – and offered a chance to connect with relevant local groups for future collaboration.

### Eldwick & Gilstead Horticultural Society – Yorkshire

The 100-year-old Eldwick & Gilstead Horticultural Society owes its existence to Yorkshire's early railway network. Enterprising homeowners grew fruit, vegetables and flowers to meet the needs of the tourist boom. Today, the society inspires the next generation with school competitions and a range of workshops.

### Roehampton Garden Society – West London

Also boasting a long history, Roehampton Gardening Society has been working with local gardeners for 144 years. Aiming to become an independent charity, its on-site store and café have become a community hub for members to exchange knowledge and skills.

### Torquay & District Horticultural Society – Devon

Originally the domain of wealthy male gardeners, the 125-year-old Torquay & District Horticultural Society has certainly moved with the times. These days its diverse membership is treated to lively public lectures on issues from small space gardening to ecology.

### Witney Horticultural Society – Oxfordshire

A pre-Second World War garden and allotment club, Witney Horticultural Society celebrated its 70th anniversary with a party, two shows and a celebration flowerbed. It has a 146-strong membership base, including one who has been involved since 1950!



MIKE HELLER



STAN VENITT



TORQUAY & DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Clockwise from left Ashford Horticultural Society; Eldwick & Gilstead Horticultural Society; three generations of the Ashwood family at Capel Horticultural Society; Torquay and District Horticultural Society.

### Ashford Horticultural Society – Surrey

With an annual plant sale and swap, an open garden event and autumn and summer shows, this Surrey-based society has boosted its community presence and increased its membership. It also supports Spelthorne in Bloom, taking responsibility for the large planters that greet visitors to the town.



TATTON GARDEN SOCIETY

### Prize-winning aubergines

This summer, we asked you to share photos of your pride-worthy vegetables. Congrats to Colin Hurrell from Tatton Garden Society, who won our competition for his Thompson and Morgan 'Bonica F1' aubergines. 'Most years, my aubergine crop is very disappointing, but this year was exceptional, with a very sunny May and June', said Colin.



## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU INJURE SOMEONE OR DAMAGE THEIR PROPERTY?

NFU Mutual, in partnership with the RHS, offers a range of insurance packages to suit the needs of Britain in Bloom with the RHS, Affiliated Societies, and Community groups. The annual scheme renewal date begins on 1 February 2018. Now is the time to plan for next year.

### EMPLOYERS & PUBLIC LIABILITY

From £75.00 (including IPT and administration costs)

### SHEDS, EQUIPMENT, CUPS AND TROPHIES

From £70.00 (including IPT and administration costs)

For Britain in Bloom and community groups, please find further details on [rhs.org.uk/communitiesinsurance](https://rhs.org.uk/communitiesinsurance) or call 0207 821 3122

For Affiliated Societies, please find further details on [rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocietiesinsurance](https://rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocietiesinsurance) or call 01483 226 554

Cover can be purchased at any time throughout the year, although the full premium will be charged.



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