



Royal
Horticultural
Society

Sharing the best in Gardening

Grass Roots

The RHS Community Update

Issue 28 • Winter 2016/2017

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Greening Grey Britain for wildlife

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London's most
urban woodland

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Cover image: Six-spot Burnet Moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*) on *Centaurea scabiosa*.
(RHS / Jason Ingram)

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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



Welcome...

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

And a Happy New Year! It's cold outside but we're looking ahead to spring and plans for the Bloom launch in April. We'll be continuing our campaign to turn unloved, grey corners into vibrant green spaces, and this year we're focusing on gardening for biodiversity.

Any group can get involved by creating a wildlife-friendly green space in their community. And the RHS team is looking for more projects to support in 2017 (see pages 4-5 for details). Whatever you decide to do, we have lots of fantastic prizes to give away for the best greening

projects and we'll be sharing your stories in *Grass Roots* throughout the year.

For those of you planning a fundraising campaign, we bring you insights from the RHS fundraising team (pages 12-14), with tips on how to structure your applications.

And finally, don't forget to share your community gardening stories with us. We'd love to hear what you're up to and we're always looking for news and pictures to share in *Grass Roots*.

Best wishes, and happy gardening,
RHS Communities

Your Letters Greening front gardens in Birmingham

Our group established Bloom in Birchfield five years ago to involve the wider community in gardening. Initially there was little confidence that we could have any effect on this neglected, inner-city, diverse community with many health problems.

We began by working with socially isolated and vulnerable adults at our community allotment site. To encourage local residents not to use their front gardens as dumping grounds and to leave planted areas around the edge of their paving we launched a front gardens competition.

Gradually we have had an impact as word got around about the awards. After starting with two gardens, this year 25 were awarded a rosette and 40 were given a laminated plaque. Often residents want to get involved when they see what their neighbours have done. Because we're all local volunteers we're out and about on foot and can stop and talk, which is crucial. We also send out regular newsletters to 1,500 households. We want the area to be somewhere that people want to come and live; not somewhere they live because they have no choice.

This year we were awarded a special merit award as well as a 'Level 4, Thriving' from RHS It's Your Neighbourhood.

Barbara Petris
Birchfield Residents Action Group (BRAG)



Has your group brought members of the community together through gardening? Why not share your story? Please send your letters to communities@rhs.org.uk or RHS Community Horticulture, RHS, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Letters on all community gardening topics are welcomed, but may be edited for publication.



Award-winning wildlife planting

More than 50 people entered last October's Wild About Gardens Week photo competition by sharing pictures of their 'bat-friendly' planting displays. 'Bat-friendly' plants attract a diversity of insects, providing a great source of food for our winged mammals.

Three categories were awarded: schools, group and individual. The schools prize was picked up by Southill Lower School Garden Club in Bedfordshire, which received a selection of goodies to help the students attract more wildlife in their school garden. The group category was won by Leasowes Walled Garden (above), which received an advisory visit from a bat expert, a bat box and vouchers from Forest Holidays. The

individual category went to Paul Burton from Wiltshire in the Ribble Valley, who wins a cabin break with Forest Holidays as well as a bat detector. "We're delighted," Paul said. "We have bats which come out of a church next door so hopefully they appreciate the abundance of insects that come from around the pond."

Next year, Wild About Gardens Week will take place from 23–29 October and will focus on the steps we can take to attract bees into the garden. We'll share more details about how groups can get involved in the next issue of *Grass Roots* and on the website: wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk

Crocus photo competitions

More than seven million crocus bulbs were planted as part of last year's partnership between RHS community groups and UK-wide Rotary Clubs: a spectacular display to look forward to in a couple of months' time.

Participating groups can enter two photo competitions being run as part of the partnership, each with a prize pot of £700 worth of vouchers. Enter pictures of your community planting event or your crocus display in flower for the chance to win one of the two prizes (closing date 30th April 2017). To find out more and to enter, visit: rotarygbi.org/purple4polio-competition



RHS / Tim Sandall

Crocus tommasinianus

Investigating the value of gardens – your help needed!

The RHS and the University of Sheffield are investigating how gardening activity and access to domestic gardens influences the health and well-being of residents in the UK. We are asking community groups and affiliated societies to spend 15 minutes completing a short questionnaire to help us understand these impacts.

The survey includes questions about your gardening activity, your own garden, your

community, and your perceived stress and well-being.

Please share the survey as widely as possible – the greater number of responses we receive, the more valuable our results will be and the more impact we could have. We will share our findings over the next few years. Please complete the questionnaire online at: about.me/frontgardens



RHS Britain in Bloom launch

Greening Grey Britain for wildlife

To kick-start Bloom activities this year we are inviting groups to get Greening Grey Britain for wildlife by greening a 'grey' area in your community. You can take part in any way that works locally and we've included lots of ideas for things you might try in this issue.

What's the idea?

We all have a few bleak, grey spaces in our neighbourhoods: alleyways full of litter, empty concrete corners or expanses of tarmac with no features to lift the eye. Sometimes these spaces aren't paved: sparsely planted flowerbeds or large, closely-clipped lawns can also be relatively empty of life, offering little in terms of nectar or pollen to draw in the wildlife.

This year we are asking groups to tackle some of these grey corners and give them a new lease of life. Whether you fill a few planters with pollinator-friendly plants, add wildflowers to a lawn or enhance the planting in an existing garden - whatever

action you can take will make a difference. And in combination, the actions of thousands of groups across the UK will form a patchwork of new green spaces benefiting people and wildlife.

How can we get involved?

First choose a spot you'd like to improve and work together to plan how you can make it better. There are lots of wildlife gardening resources on the RHS website and in this issue. Of course you'll need to ensure you have the landowner's

permission to carry out the activities you propose. And we hope that groups will work in partnership to create as many new greening projects as possible.

To publicise your project as part of the nationwide launch of Bloom, send out the Bloom press release (see below) during National Gardening Week (10–16 April 2017). The RHS will be doing a lot of publicity for Bloom at this time and the more noise we can make about our activities the better.

Resources: Download the template press release and poster from the online hub for groups: rhs.org.uk/bloomiyn. Simply overwrite these with your group's details and send to your local newspapers or put up posters to help spread the word about what you're doing.

Share your 'before and after' pictures: for the chance to win fantastic prizes. We'll select a winner every month throughout the summer for the best 'grey to green' transformation. Details for how to enter will be published in April's magazine.



Free seeds!

Your April issue of *Grass Roots* will contain a free packet of seeds to help kick-start your group's activities. The Greening Grey Britain seed mix is guaranteed to pull in the pollinators:

- ✿ Charlock (*Sinapis arvensis*)
- ✿ Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)
- ✿ Corn chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*)
- ✿ Corn marigold (*Glebionis Segetum*)
- ✿ Field forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*)
- ✿ Field poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)
- ✿ White campion (*Silene latifolia*)



Apply for RHS support

Let's inspire the next generation to turn grey to green

Do you have a grey spot in your community that you would like to transform into a great spot for people and wildlife? Are you working in partnership with a school or youth group to make the change? If you have the permissions in place, the ideas and enthusiasm then we'd like to hear from you.

This year the RHS will help a number of groups working in partnership with young people to develop wildlife-friendly neighbourhood spaces. Sites should be outside the school grounds, accessible to the public and groups applying must have the capacity to maintain the plantings. The RHS will provide up to £500 per project towards plant and material costs, as well as hands-on support from our community outreach team.

The team has lots of experience coordinating gardening activities with young people and can help you to finalise your project plans as well as assisting with development and planting.

How to apply

To apply, please tell us how you'd like to use horticulture to transform a grey spot into a great spot for people and wildlife. You will need to include a statement from the school or youth group you propose to work with, outlining how they will be involved. Those groups selected will work in partnership with the RHS to finalise their plans.

Complete the online form before 17 February 2017:
surveyMonkey.co.uk/r/2017GGB

To apply for this opportunity you must be a Bloom or It's Your Neighbourhood group or an RHS Affiliated Society.



Boosting biodiversity

We've read the headlines and it makes for pretty depressing reading. Almost two thirds of UK animal and plant species have declined in the past 50 years*.

However, as gardeners the actions we take can make an enormous difference. Let's work together to protect and enhance our communal green spaces; choose plants which offer the most value to pollinators; plant trees where we can and engage our communities and our children in the wonders of the natural world and its many benefits.

Join us to get Greening Grey Britain and make your promise to plant today at rhs.org.uk/ggb

*State of Nature report, 2016



RHS / SIPAstudio

Your proposed project must be deliverable between April and October 2017 and you must have permission in place from the landowner.

We will contact only the successful groups in March 2017. However all groups can access online support and templates from the RHS hub: rhs.org.uk/bloomiyn

Green spaces for wildlife: four ideas

1. Create mini-gardens in paving

It's easy to add greenery to oversized areas of paving, as long as you have permission from whoever owns the land! Create a small paver garden by lifting a slab and infilling with tough and attractive pollinator-friendly plants, such as thyme.

● Watch the 'create a mini-paver garden' video online: rhs.org.uk/greeninggreybritain



RHS / Tim Sandall

2. Free your lawn

Where a lawn isn't needed for leisure activities, why not let it become the meadow it wants to be! Not only will wildlife thank you for it, it will ultimately be cheaper and easier to maintain. Wildflower meadows can take years to establish, as the soil must lose much of its fertility before a range of wild flowers can compete with the grass. If your group doesn't have the option of removing the fertile top soil, you can still start the process by introducing plug plants and yellow rattle seed, which will help to weaken grass. Paths can be mown through long grass to maintain access and create seating spaces where needed.

● See page 8 for tips about creating wildflower meadows or visit: rhs.org.uk/advice



RHS / Jason Ingram

3. Get grey corners buzzing

Whether it's new planters on a station platform, hanging baskets along a drab alleyway or containers to enliven grey shop fronts, you can pull in the pollinators with a few well-chosen plants.

● Download the RHS Perfect for Pollinators plant lists and select annuals, perennials and shrubs for year-round displays: rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators



City of London in Bloom

4. Create vertical gardens

Planting climbers against walls will provide food sources for insects and birds as well as nesting habitat. Climbers growing against buildings can have the added benefit of acting as insulation and so help to reduce heating bills. Check with older buildings as some climbing plants may damage loose mortar.

● Ivy is a high value plant for wildlife, offering plenty of nectar, pollen and berries in shoulder periods when little else is available; however it's not usually recommended for small spaces as it can quickly become invasive. For more suggestions visit: rhs.org.uk/advice



RHS / Tim Sandall

For more information, activity ideas and the guiding principles of Greening Grey Britain, please visit: rhs.org.uk/communityggb



Fighting nature-deficit disorder in the city

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park is London's most urban woodland – a mere three miles from the City of London. A Local Nature Reserve since 2001, last year it won the RHS Britain in Bloom Wildlife & Conservation Award. Sophie Dawson meets park manager Ken Greenway to find out more.

Five minutes' walk from London's busy Mile End Road, the 31-acre Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park is a portal to another world. Huge tree canopies replace tower blocks, rustling leaves dull the sound of traffic and ivy curls around jumbled monuments. Leaf mulch softens underfoot as dog walkers and joggers crisscross paths through the gravestones and amongst the trees, you can just about make out the sound of a visiting school group.

Deconsecrated in 1966, this well-used green space is managed by the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (FoTHCP) on behalf of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Supporting a sense of place

Opened in 1841, the cemetery was the last of the 'Magnificent Seven', created to address the serious shortfall of space in London's inner-city churchyards. Initially the grounds would have been maintained

with ornamental plantings; however to save money areas were often abandoned once full and therefore quickly became overgrown. Thus the legacy of this city wilderness.

In contrast to the majority of London's Victorian cemeteries, Tower Hamlets was distinctly working class and many of the 380,000 buried there went into unmarked, public graves. With little income from the sale of private monuments, the company owning the site struggled to remain profitable and by 1966 the grounds were closed and the land sold to the Greater London Council (GLC).

The GLC set out to convert the cemetery into a public park, removing many of the monuments and trees. FoTHCP was born out of the ensuing struggle to protect the site's heritage and biodiversity. Local protests stopped the initial destruction and the group came together to input into plans for a new 'cemetery park'. By 2004



Kenneth Greenway

Bulbs such as these daffodils bring welcome colour throughout spring. Sycamores are thinned, and ivy and brambles removed to allow more light to reach the woodland floor.



Kenneth Greenway

Hundreds of tonnes of chalk and limestone dust was brought in to support a range of native wildflowers, re-creating the South Downs on an old scrapyard site at the edge of the park

anemones, *Chionodoxa*, bluebells and wild garlic. “You can’t overestimate what bulbs do for people’s sense of place, as well as for wildlife,” says Ken.

The park also contains five ponds, full of frogs and newts, as well as wildflower meadows in sunny spots. Several hives of ‘Zom-Bees’ make ‘Dead Good Honey’ which is sold locally. Felled trees are used on-site to create loggeries and dead hedges, and excess greenery is turned into green waste, given free to those who want it.

Supporting people

Creating a safe space is crucial for people to feel comfortable using the park so FoTHCP’s three staff work on-site and have a daily presence. They also communicate with park users via information panels. “We put up signs to show people what’s going on, to show them there’s a charity here, there are people around,” says Ken.

The group works with 3,000 volunteers a year from wide-ranging organisations. One is Grounded Ecotherapy, a team of adults recovering from alcohol or substance misuse and homelessness. Several volunteers have gone on to find employment after their experiences at the park.

This year Ken and his team will work with patients referred by local health services as part of a green care trial to test the effectiveness of different therapeutic activities, one being gardening. “We’re fighting nature-deficit disorder and contributing to green care,” says Ken. “We have an outward-looking approach, we’ll work with any partner who wants to work with us.”

FoTHCP runs over 170 public events



Kenneth Greenway

A holly blue butterfly on goldenrod. Butterfly surveys in the park since 1999 have identified 32 out of the UK’s total 59 species of butterfly

a year, 130 of which are free to attend, including wildlife walks and conservation courses such as hedge-laying and coppicing. And each year 7,500 children get to spend time in the woods as part of an on-site environmental education service delivered by Setpoint London East.

Ken describes himself as being “one of the last generation of kids that played outdoors” and is concerned about the decreasing time children spend in nature. “We need more defenders for wildlife,” he says. “If people aren’t engaged, they won’t protect it. Places like this are crucial.”

FoTHCP is a registered charity. The group is supported by The London Borough of Tower Hamlets and a wide range of grants, corporate fundraising activities and park events. fothcp.org

FoTHCP had taken on full management responsibilities from the council. “As far as I know we’re the only ‘friends’ group that’s actually running a public park,” says Ken Greenway, the park manager.

And nature is their driver. “It’s wildlife that garners the most support here,” he explains. “There aren’t many people who still have a connection to the deceased, but they do have an emotional connection to the monuments and the trees. This place has remained unchanged in a part of London where everything else changes very quickly, so people value that.”

Supporting wildlife

In order to increase biodiversity FoTHCP has thinned out many of the dominant species. Hogweed, bramble, ivy and nettles have been removed to make way for woodland plants and bulbs. A spring trail brings flashes of colour to path edges from January to May: snowdrops, daffodils, wood



The park’s ponds are used for environmental education sessions with local schools.

Kenneth Greenway



for wildlife: sunny garden

Join the campaign to turn grey spaces into beautiful green places for people and wildlife. We will share ideas throughout the year to inspire your group's Greening Grey Britain activities.

Nectar and pollen thr

Plant planner: Pick from these sun-lovers to provide year-round food for pollinators.

	WINTER FLOWERING (DEC – FEB)	SPRING FLOWERING (MAR – MAY)
CLIMBERS / WALL SHRUBS	 <i>Clematis cirrhosa</i>	 <i>Lonicera x purpusii</i> 'Winter Beauty' AGM
PERENNIALS	 <i>Helleborus species</i>	 <i>Primula vulgaris</i>
SHRUB	 <i>Mahonia x media</i> 'Lionel Fortescue'	 <i>Cornus mas</i>
BULB / ANNUALS	 <i>Crocus tommasinianus</i>	 <i>Muscari armeniacum</i>

Create a wildflower meadow

Method 1: in grass

Inserting wildflower plug plants is an excellent way to get into wild flower growing especially for those who want to start out small.

- **Ground preparation:** weakening the grass in the year before planting is usually essential to avoid the plug plants being overwhelmed. To do this mow the grass as short and as often as feasible, at least weekly, and remove the cuttings. Cease feeding and avoid using lawn weedkillers. Often some wild flowers will crop up on their own.

- **Adding plugs:** in the spring or autumn of the second year, insert plug plants in groups of three to five, choosing species that suit

the conditions – sun or shade, damp or free draining soil.

- **Cutting:** careful management is required to get the plugs off to a good start. Keep the grass weak by mowing before wild flowers emerge in spring and,

after they finish flowering, mow several more times until grass growth stops in early winter. Remove the clippings after each mowing. Once the plugs are established you can use the regime recommended in method 2.

Method 2: sow a meadow

For the best wildflower meadows it is well worth the cost, effort and disruption of clearing and sowing.

- **Ground preparation:** skim off the turf. If perennial weeds are present, leave soil bare for a summer to allow weeds to be removed by cultivation. Cornfield annuals can just be sown on the ground, prepared as you would for vegetables.



RHS / Tim Sandall

Throughout the year

For more options visit the RHS Perfect for Pollinators lists online: rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators

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SUMMER FLOWERING (JUN – AUG)



Lonicera periclymenum



Echinacea purpurea



Hebe 'Sapphire'



Calendula officinalis

AUTUMN FLOWERING (SEP – NOV)



Hedera helix



Salvia coccinea



Clematis heracleifolia



Cosmos bipinnatus

Next time:
shady garden



RHS / Julian Westgill

Homes for wildlife

All garden wildlife needs a place to set up home. Log piles at the back of beds, compost heaps and long grass offer lots of opportunities for insects to move in, which will in turn attract other wildlife

Adding a water source is an invaluable step and will attract all manner of aquatic life, including frogs (who will help to keep slug populations down!). If a pond isn't possible, try sinking pots into the ground and filling them with water.

For advice about creating habitat visit: wildaboutgardens.org.uk

MEET THE POLLINATORS



BUMBLEBEE

✿ Name: *Bombus* species. There are 25 bumblebee species in Britain; eight are widespread, including the buff-tailed bumblebee, tree bumblebee and red-tailed bumblebee.

✿ Lifespan: queen bumblebees can live for over a year; worker bumblebees for 2 – 3 months.

✿ Food: nectar and pollen. Grubs in the nest are fed by worker bees.

Bumblebees store small quantities of nectar in pot-like structures, unlike honeybees they don't have long-term food stores. In fact, a bumblebee with a full stomach is only ever about 40 minutes from starvation*.

✿ Life-cycle: after mating, queen bumblebees burrow into the ground to overwinter. In early spring the queens forage for nectar and pollen and start a new nest. Nests are active during spring and summer. Males and new queens are produced by mid-summer; males die soon after mating. Worker bees and the old queen also die before winter; only new queens overwinter.

✿ Ideal nest site: this varies depending on species but includes underground cavities, thick grass and bird boxes.

✿ Family size: at its height a nest could contain up to 400 workers.

✿ Who knew: bumblebee queens are one of the earliest pollinators to emerge in spring; they vibrate and warm up their flight muscles enabling them to fly in cool weather.

✿ How to help: gardens are a fantastic habitat for bumblebees and can support greater numbers than some farmland. A wide variety of flowering plants, especially winter and early spring flowers, provides forage. Grassy areas at the base of hedges can be a favoured nest site.

*Source: BBCT

RHS / Tim Sandell



● Sow your meadow: scatter seeds in late spring or early autumn, when the soil is not wet, at the density recommended on the seed packet. To make even dispersal

easier, mix seeds with sawdust or sand. Afterwards, bury the seed by light raking, firming with your feet and water if rain is not forecast.

● Cutting: after sowing, meadows take at least a year to establish and frequent mowing in this time (to 40-60mm) and discarding mowings will inhibit weeds and grasses. Subsequently, meadows only need annual mowing once seeds have been set. After cutting, leave the mowings to dry out and shed their seeds and debris before adding them to the compost bin.

For more detailed advice about establishing wildflower meadows visit rhs.org.uk/advice

How to... Plant a tree

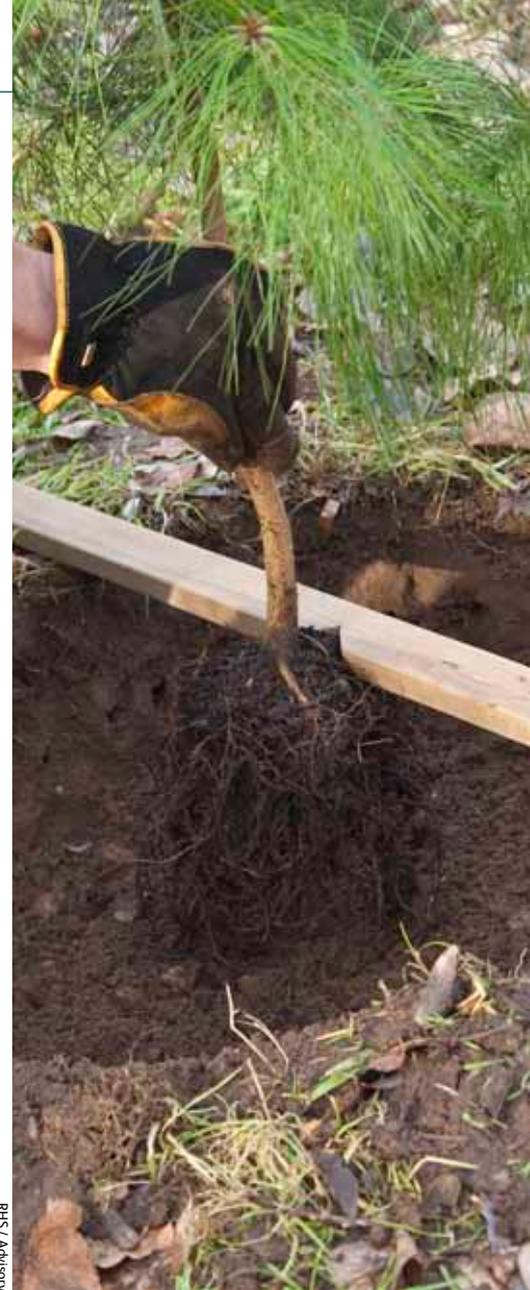
Unfortunately, trees can fail after planting. The usual reasons are planting too deeply and a lack of water in the first two years. To ensure success when planting trees, providing good aftercare is as important as good planting practice. The first two to three years after planting are critical for a tree's establishment.

Most garden centre trees planted are **standards**: 1.8-2.5m (6-8ft) tall with trunks 10-18cm (4-7in) in circumference (girth). Having large aerial growth and disproportionately small root systems, they require more aftercare (staking and watering) than smaller, bare-root shrubs and hedging plants. The bigger a tree is when it is planted, the more aftercare it needs. Particular care should be taken with semi-mature trees (3-4m / 10-15ft). If you are patient, a short (45-60cm, 18-24ins) bare-root **whip** will be less vulnerable in its early years and will often, at least partially, catch up with larger garden-centre trees.



RHS / Advisory

1 Remove trees from container or wrapping. Dig a square hole just deep enough to roughly accommodate the roots (depth is accurately controlled at planting using a levelling plank – see right) and three times the width of the rootball. Tease out roots if they are congested.



RHS / Advisory

2 Place the tree in the hole and using a plank to aid depth (help might be needed), refill the hole with soil. The plank laid from side to side across the hole provides a guide to where the final soil level should be, so the roots are just below the level of the plank and thus, just below the soil surface.

RHS Advisors' Corner

We are a voluntary group who have worked for the past three years at improving the natural environment at the railway station. We have secured funding to place 14 x 6ft raised beds on a disused platform at the station. One of our concerns is watering. Although we intend to use sustainable planting, the location is well away from any source of water. Please could you advise on appropriate plants?

Friends of Prestatyn Railway Station,
RHS It's Your Neighbourhood group

RHS Chief Horticulturist Guy Barter says:

Plants have evolved to grow in about 25cm (10ins) of soil and your raised beds should be at least this deep. Be sure to use top soil rather than potting media, as potting media is excellent for pots but makes substandard 'soil'. Ideally choose deeper beds and fill below soil level with coarse sand (from the builders merchant), which can

hold a useful amount of water and is easily penetrated by tap roots.

In your well-watered region, drought should not be too much of a problem. Railway platforms tend to be sunny so the usual drought resistant sun-loving Mediterranean plants (Afghan sage, brooms, *Cistus*, Jerusalem sage, lavender, rosemary, common sage) and sturdy grasses (*Molinia caerulea* subsp. *caerulea* 'Variegata')



Lavandula
'Gros Bleu'

RHS / Tim Snellett

Jobs to do

January

- ✿ Prune apple and pear trees
- ✿ Plan your vegetable crop rotations for the coming season
- ✿ Keep putting out food and water for hungry birds
- ✿ Start cutting back grasses and other perennials left for winter interest
- ✿ Plant roses, but avoid areas where roses were previously grown as this can lead to problems with replant diseases
- ✿ Rake fallen leaves out of ponds.

February

- ✿ Prepare vegetable seed beds, and sow some vegetables under cover
- ✿ Net fruit and vegetable crops to keep the birds off
- ✿ Prune winter-flowering shrubs that have finished flowering
- ✿ Prune hardy evergreen hedges and renovate overgrown deciduous hedges
- ✿ Clear up weedy beds before mulching. Lighter soils can be mulched now, but heavier soils are best left until March, when the soil is warmer.

March

- ✿ Protect new spring shoots from slugs
- ✿ Lift and divide overgrown clumps of perennials
- ✿ Plant lily bulbs in pots and in borders for summer flowers
- ✿ Prune bush and climbing roses
- ✿ Plant shallots, onion sets and early potatoes
- ✿ Check whether containers need watering. Even at this time of year, they can dry out
- ✿ Towards April, start cutting back *Cornus* (dogwood) and *Salix* (willow) grown for colourful winter stems.



RHS / Advisory



RHS / Advisory

3 Refill the hole, making sure the soil is firmed well but not rammed solid. Ensure no pockets of air remain. Check that the point where the roots start to grow out of the stem remains just below soil level and no deeper, nor should it be exposed to the air. It is not thought to be good practice to add fertiliser or organic matter at planting, nor is it necessary to manure or dig the general area. Stakes are best put in before planting to avoid damaging the rootball; however when angled stakes are used, as here, they can be inserted at the end as they will not go through the rootball. Angled stakes are usually the best option.

4 It is important to leave a weed-free area, ideally mulched, at least twice the diameter of the rootball. Weed competition is a common cause of failure of newly planted trees. Watering is required in dry periods for at least the first two years of the tree's life. Water from the top and ensure (by checking with your trowel three hours later if necessary) that the water soaks to the entire depth of the rootball. Buried porous hoses are not an effective means of watering. Watering may be required every 5-15 days, or whenever the soil becomes dry. Remember that summer rain is usually insufficient to keep recently planted trees adequately hydrated.



Phlox fruticosa
RHS / Graham Titchmarsh

and *Anemathele lessoniana* for example) will, after the first year at least, seldom need a drink. Indeed the raised beds ensure they have the free draining conditions in which they thrive.

As disused railway platforms are usually viewed at a distance from across the tracks it is probably best to use taller shrubs and grasses in bold masses. An advantage of lack of human disturbance on a seldom visited platform is that wildlife will thrive

with insects relishing the abundant flowers and even timid birds will feed on the insects.

All of these plants are low maintenance requiring minimal feeding or pruning. Mulching with bark or wood chips would be highly beneficial. Weeds are extremely thirsty and will soon dry up soil moisture reserves; rigorous weed control is advisable.

Even in your rainy region there will be

prolonged warm dry spells from time to time in summer. A good soak every seven days is usually sufficient to provide for a raised bed of drought-resistant plants. Investing in a 'water barrow' is a sound investment – there are ones on offer that fit onto a standard wheelbarrow.

Does your group have a question for the team? Email it to us at communities@rhs.org.uk and it could be featured in the magazine



Tips for funding your green space transformation

RHS Funding and Development Managers **Jo Sage** and **Celia Hammond** share their insights into researching and preparing successful funding bids.

The winter months are a great time to get together and consider how your group will fund the activities you would like to develop over the forthcoming year. You might need new tools or plants to brighten up your street, some training for your volunteers, or even have ambitious plans to completely redesign a site.

Whether you are approaching lottery funders or local private trusts and foundations, the basic rules remain the same. Showing why your project is needed, who it will benefit and how you will measure the changes you are planning will form the core of your funding application.

Types of funding available:

Broadly, funding is available to community groups through:

- Trusts and foundations set up by companies or individuals who have particular interests relevant to horticulture e.g. environmental improvements or supporting health and well-being in older people. Local

development foundations act as gatekeepers for a number of local philanthropists.

- Local councils, housing associations or agencies who want to fund projects that help local communities or particular areas, for example to reduce crime, make built-up areas greener or provide meaningful social opportunities for residents.
- Lottery funding programmes, which are often about building skills, developing volunteering opportunities and community relations.
- Local companies and businesses – many will give funding to projects in their area, sponsor a project or donate materials (for example DIY retailers such as B&Q who have a waste donation scheme).
- Crowd-funding, where online platforms are used to attract funds directly from members of the public. By creating a compelling case for your project and asking lots of people for small amounts of money, fundraising targets can often be hit.



RHS / Chris Bull

LEFT: Fun days or community celebration events can be a great time to share fundraising plans and gather opinions from local people

Application processes vary and can range from a very simple letter requesting funding, to more complex forms requiring a budget breakdown. All funders these days are keen on projects showing good value for money; engagement of the whole community where possible; good support from volunteers and clear objectives which show what will change for the better as a result of the work you are planning.

Bear in mind that fundraising is competitive and so putting together a successful funding bid will require time and shared expertise. You might consider approaching a local community organisation that provides basic fundraising training for help.

BELOW: Look within your group for existing skills and expertise to support your proposal

BOTTOM LEFT: Do you have problem areas that could be improved by the community?

BOTTOM RIGHT: Running a stand at a local event can be a good way to consult people about their views

Fundraising in six steps

1 Concept

What would you like to do? Who will benefit from your project and how?

Understanding this is central to knowing which funders to approach. It is a good idea to get key members of your community together for a 'brainstorming session' to find out what ideas they have or what problems they would like to solve – lots of creative ideas can emerge from this type of meeting. You could then set up a fundraising group where you share knowledge and expertise. For example, someone might work with a local youth group or be a young person themselves, you might have somebody who is a writer who could complete the application form, or another person might work for a landscape or construction company and have access to technical knowledge or materials. You might get some of what you need for free!

2 Research phase

Once you have a good idea of what your fundraising project is and roughly what it will cost, your first stop should be your local authority website: most councils will signpost local funding opportunities through community newsletters and they may even have a dedicated officer to help community groups with their applications. The Big Lottery website is an invaluable source of information, guiding you through the steps you need to take when applying for funding, with online resources for community groups.

3 Evidencing need

Consult the community in which you are planning to work to gather feedback about your idea and what change is needed locally. Think about how different groups could get involved, for example young people might be keen to do gardening but lack horticultural knowledge, whereas older people may have lived in the area for years and have good connections and lots of skills to share with others.

Read through your local Community Plan (available through your council's website) to understand where your local

authority is focusing its resources – the better you can match your application to this plan, the greater your chance of success.

4 Consider partners

It is always a good idea to work with others if you can – some funders actually require you to work in partnership, to share skills and resources to help improve the area.

5 Planning

Build in project evaluation from the start – think about how you will measure the changes your project will create. This doesn't need to be complicated.

For example, take photos before, during and after a green-space makeover to show the changes you have created; a simple tick-box questionnaire could show how people feel about their neighbourhood (unsafe, un-cared for, lack of green spaces, no community spirit) before your project, and then showing the changes that have taken place during and after (when hopefully it feels safer and more cared-for, greener and more pleasant, with improved community spirit).

Your budget: check that you know what difference you are hoping to make through your project, that the activities you are planning will achieve your aims. Then put together a sensible budget for everything you think you will need. It's a good idea to get three quotes for all equipment you will purchase (e.g. tools). Guidance on budget planning is often available from funders (e.g. lottery)

6 Evolution / publicity

Funders will often want you to report back honestly on the success of your project and any lessons you have learnt – you can use this information to create your next funding application! Many funders want you to share your successes with others to increase the impact of the project, so think about what you will communicate, how and to whom.



RHS / Julian Weigall



RHS / Sean Wilton

Plan your project

Three example projects and a few potential funding sources

There are lots of single elderly residents in your street but there's no social space for people to meet. There's a vacant plot of land nearby where you wish to create a garden for the whole community to enjoy.

- Funds you might consider:
- Awards for All – Lottery grants (up to £10,000) for projects with clear objectives involving your community
 - Community Safety Funding – various grants available from your local police crime commissioner or council to make local spaces look and feel safer.

The youth group is looking for activities and you'd like to set up a cross-generational gardening challenge with volunteers.

- Funds you might consider:
- Spaces for Change (England) – funding of up to £5,000 for 16-24 year olds to run social ventures with a crowd-funding element – deadline 5 February 2017

- Coop Community Fund – small grants for local projects near to Coop stores.

You'd like to set up a regular gardening club to help develop gardening skills amongst local young people out of work.

- Funds you might consider:
- CLA Charitable Trust – funds youth education/recreational activities in rural areas
 - The Tudor Trust – funds projects supporting people who are disadvantaged and want to make positive changes in their communities.



RHS / Tim Sandall

Community consultation ideas

- Tea & coffee morning
- Drop a survey through people's doors
- Run a stand at a fair or social event
- Visit your local community centre during a parent and toddler group or older persons coffee morning

LEFT: Partnership proposals will appeal to funders – think creatively about how you can maximise the impact of your work. For example, if you're restoring an orchard, there could be a possible link with a community apple juice enterprise

BELOW: Community consultations can be creative – you could share your views over a bowl of soup



RHS / Neil Hepworth

The language of funding

Outcomes: these are the overall changes you are aiming to create, e.g. breathing new life into a neglected wasteland; developing skills within a community group to help them manage their local allotment or, reducing social isolation amongst older people.

Outputs: these are the key deliverable elements: the events or activities you are planning and/or the number of people that will benefit.

Milestones: the key points in your project timetable which you can measure progress against.

Impact measurement: this is how you will measure the positive changes you are aiming to make through your project.

Monitoring and evaluation: the methods by which you will track progress and the overall impact of your project (for example, through a quarterly questionnaire, or by taking regular photos throughout).

Sustainability: how you will ensure the positive changes created are maintained into the future (for example, by setting up a local group to help with ongoing maintenance, or by training people to pass on their knowledge to others). The term can also apply to the use of materials such as sustainable timber.

Partnership working: most funders will want you to work with other organisations to maximise the impact of your project (for example, to link with other gardening groups in an area to share information and resources and jointly publicise activities).

Useful links:
For a list of key grant schemes, visit the online hub for groups and download the funding advice sheet:
rhs.org.uk/bloomiyn



The RHS team on an allotment visit in 2016



Andy Burnham from the Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee examines a leaf

Grow Your Own experts tour the Heart of England. Will they visit your group?

This summer, the expert RHS team will tour Birmingham, Shropshire, Staffordshire and the West Midlands and they are looking for community groups to share their skills with.

Members of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb committee and RHS staff are available to visit your organisation to answer your questions on crop production. Advice may cover subjects such as ground preparation, cultural techniques, varietal selection and pest and disease control.

The team can visit allotment sites or community growing projects to walk around and answer questions or take part in an 'Ask the Experts' question and answer sessions organised by your group.

This initiative is open to all RHS Affiliated Societies, allotment associations, council-run community gardens and allotments and Bloom groups in Birmingham, Shropshire, Staffordshire and the West Midlands.

In June 2016, the team visited Greenmore Community Allotment Association in Nuneaton. Group Secretary, Alasdair Speirs, said, "What impressed us most was not only their knowledge, but their ability to communicate effectively in a way that was friendly and inclusive, inviting all present to

participate and engage in the discussion. I had prepared some questions to ask, should people feel too nervous to speak up, but none of them were needed. From the get go the panel's easy manner, humour and infectious enthusiasm made everyone comfortable."

If you are interested in hosting the team, for which there is no charge to your organisation, please email jessicaroberts@rhs.org.uk for an application form (deadline 28 February 2017). Tour dates will be 23 – 24 June and 28 – 29 July 2017.

Affiliated Societies update

Updated speakers and judges registers

The RHS compiles lists of horticultural speakers and judges around the UK who are available for hire by clubs and societies. The lists have recently been updated and can be found on the RHS website. Groups can search by speaker/judge name, the region they operate in or their topic list: [rhs.org.uk/speakersjudges](https://www.rhs.org.uk/speakersjudges)

Sign up for e-updates

Keep abreast of news and opportunities relating to your group's membership by signing up for the new RHS Affiliated Societies e-newsletter. Sent out three times a year, the e-newsletter contains reminders of scheme benefits, new opportunities for registered groups and relevant garden events. Sign up today by emailing your Affiliated Society name and number to affiliated@rhs.org.uk

Garden Events

Hundreds of events take place around the UK each year at the RHS Partner Gardens, many of which may be of interest to gardening clubs and horticultural societies. The new affiliated societies' e-newsletter will include seasonal highlights of these, or to view the full list online visit: [rhs.org.uk/gardens](https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens)

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RHS Malvern Spring Festival	11 – 14 May
RHS Chelsea Flower Show	23 – 27 May
RHS Chatsworth Flower Show	7 – 11 June
RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show	4 – 9 July
RHS Flower Show Tatton Park	19 – 23 July
Malvern Autumn	23 – 24 September



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*Excludes RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Discounts for groups of 10+ and 50+. **Calls cost 7p per minute plus network extras. All dates correct at time of printing and subject to change. RHS Registered Charity No: 222879/SC038262