

Greening Grey Britain: 40 community projects get underway

Crocus planting
time for Bloom
groups with Rotary



**Wild About Gardens Week:
Plant a banquet for bats!**

**Campaign for School Gardening:
Rocket Science lifts off!**



Welcome...

RHS / Jerry Heenan

...to the Summer 2016 issue of *Grass Roots*, the magazine for all community gardening groups including Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups and RHS Affiliated Societies.

I'm delighted to introduce myself as the new Editor and say how inspired I've been by the fantastic stories of the ways in which groups are using gardening to brighten communities and improve lives around the country.

The Greening Grey Britain for Health and Happiness theme continues in this issue with a 'crocus focus' and a call to action for all RHS community groups to get involved in the RHS/Rotary partnership to plant 5 million purple crocuses in community spaces across the country; see page 5. We're also taking a look at some of the 40 inspiring RHS-supported Greening Grey Britain projects as they get underway (pages 6-7)

and looking forward to Wild About Gardens Week with suggestions on how to plant up a bat-friendly garden and enter our photo competition.

We're always looking for community gardening stories to share in *Grass Roots* so please do keep in touch with your news by emailing communities@rhs.org.uk. I very much look forward to hearing from you! Best wishes and happy gardening –

Fiona Brown, Editor

Your Letters Community planting in Bristol

We wanted to tell *Grass Roots* readers about the willows that we have used to add a splash of colour and transform an area of Redcatch Park in Bristol.

With funding from our Neighbourhood Partnership and our own funds, we recently planted *pulmonaria* to create a colourful border to our Jubilee Hedge of native hedgerow plants from the Woodland Trust. Local school children and disability group *Silva*, along with a good turnout of local residents, families and Friends of Redcatch Park enabled us to complete the border in 2 hours, and it proved to be a good social occasion as well.

This activity was twinned with the planting of 150 willows of all colours and varieties which were donated by a local resident who had closed a willow business. Together we planted a Willow Copse in a boggy area that will now provide a rainbow of colours and allow us to harvest willows for weaving. Willows have also been added to shrubberies and borders, including many with catkins to attract the bees.

We hope in future to hold willow weaving events and to be able to donate the willow to local crafts people.

Susan Davies
Chair, Friends of Redcatch Park Bristol



Susan Davies

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.

Correction: Britain in Bloom Finalists, Issue 25, Spring 2016, p6: St Saviour was incorrectly listed as a 'Small Town' when it should have been listed in the 'Town' category

Greening Grey Britain for Health & Happiness: from Chelsea 2016...

The Greening Grey Britain for Health, Happiness and Horticulture garden at the Chelsea Flower Show 2016 championed the health and well-being benefits of greening up our grey spaces and showed how uplifting and beautiful front gardens can be.

With bright borders, benches on which to relax and chat, a soothing water feature, a bee-friendly wildflower meadow, edible plants in pots and a stylish kitchen garden, it contained many ideas that can be incorporated into private and community gardens, helping the nation to become healthier and happier.

Designed by award-winning Ann-Marie Powell – and now relocated to Angell Town, Brixton – it was situated adjacent to the RHS Hub where visitors were encouraged to make their pledge to Green Grey Britain one plant at a time. You can get involved now: promise to plant at rhs.org.uk/science/gardening-in-a-changing-world/greening-grey-britain and make a difference!



The RHS Greening Grey Britain Garden for Health, Happiness and Horticulture RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2016

RHS / Tim Sandell

... to Angell Town

This spring, the RHS Community Outreach team enjoyed working with a local gardening group in Angell Town, Brixton, to run horticultural activities for residents, engaging local families and enabling them to take plants into their homes. Gardening has contributed significantly to bringing the community together and a number of the residents were involved in building the Greening Grey Britain for Health, Happiness & Horticulture garden at Chelsea, which was relocated to the estate after the show.



Young Angell Town residents sow seeds with RHS Community Outreach Advisor Chris Young

RHS / Luke MacGregor

New Britain in Bloom UK Finals Judges

Five new Britain in Bloom UK Finals judges, appointed in late 2015/early 2016, will be out and about on their first Bloom judging tour this August. With a wealth of experience and horticultural achievement to their credit, we look forward to seeing them in various locations around the country later in the summer.



Clockwise from top left: Bill Ronald, Geraldine King, James Cordingley, Richard Budge, Keith Jackson

Bloom judge awarded MBE

Congratulations to Bill Blackledge, Retired Horticultural Superintendent, Lancaster University, gardening broadcaster (Radio Lancashire) and for many years Britain in Bloom regional judge, who has been awarded an MBE in HM The Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to North West in Bloom, of which he is Chair.



Jan Simpson

Would YOU like to support community groups UK-wide? Volunteer as a RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals Judge

RHS Britain in Bloom is a nationwide community gardening campaign that has been helping communities improve their local environment since 1964 and now has exciting volunteering opportunities for horticultural enthusiasts to become Britain in Bloom UK Finals judges. More than 1,600 cities, towns, villages and urban communities take part each year to showcase their achievements in environmental responsibility, community participation and, of course, horticultural achievement.

Applicants should have a passion for horticulture and community gardening,

enjoy working outdoors and be reasonably physically fit. Good knowledge of plants, horticultural practice and/or environmental issues and experience working in and/or supporting volunteer-led community projects are essential. Training and support will be provided throughout the year.

The UK finals judging team visit Britain in Bloom finalists all around the UK, with an annual commitment of up to two weeks in August and approximately four meetings.

For further information and to view the role description, please visit rhs.org.uk/about-the-rhs/work-for-the-rhs/vacancies or email communities@rhs.org.uk

New RHS team members

Brid O'Dwyer recently joined the central team as Community Outreach Manager covering the South and East of England. She is enjoying meeting many of those delivering community gardening projects as she gets to know the region.



Fiona Brown joined the central team in April as Senior Communications Co-ordinator. She is the new Editor of this magazine and looks forward to sharing your inspiring community projects and achievements with readers of *Grass Roots*.



2 Welcome

3/4 News

5 RHS/Rotary Crocus Planting Partnership

6/7 Greening Grey Britain for Health & Happiness

8/9 RHS Science & Advice

10/11 Wild About Gardens

12 RHS Campaign for School Gardening

13 RHS Affiliated Societies

14 Britain in Bloom: Volunteering in Schools

15 My Bloom

Cover image: Planting in Gyllyngdune Gardens, Falmouth, for Falmouth Dementia Friends
Image credit: RHS/Guy Harrop

This magazine is printed on paper using 100 percent recycled fibre. Please pass it on or recycle it.

Grass Roots is published by RHS Community Horticulture
80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE
Tel 020 7821 3122
Email communities@rhs.org.uk

©2016 The Royal Horticultural Society

Registered Charity
no: 222879 / SC038262

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

Greening Grey Britain: Chelsea Front Garden Summit

Today, over five million gardens in the UK have no plants growing in them and one in four gardens is completely paved over, bringing a range of threats to our environment. **Guy Barter, RHS Chief Horticulturist, and Kay Clark, RHS Community Development Manager,** review the issues considered by participants from the worlds of planning, horticulture and public policy at the first-ever Summit aimed at halting the destruction of our environmentally and socially important green spaces across the country.

The RHS escalated its campaign to Green Grey Britain with a Front Garden Summit during this year's Chelsea Flower Show. Recent surveys have shown that three times as many front gardens are paved over now as there were ten years ago, and their decline aggravates environmental challenges, increasing the risk of flash flooding in urban areas, contributing to the reduction of plant and wildlife biodiversity and exacerbating the urban heat island effect.

Despite people saying that greener streets would make them feel happier, healthier and calmer, just 10% of respondents to a recent IPSOS MORI poll* said they would like to grow plants in their own front gardens, with lack of space, car parking requirements, insufficient time and too much hard work being cited as the main reasons for not growing and maintaining greenery.

The Summit, led by RHS Vice President Alan Titchmarsh, Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and



Delegates at the RHS Front Garden Summit

RHS Director General Sue Biggs, brought together planners, landscapers, estate agents, councils, housing associations, horticulturists and environmental charities to explore how to address this pressing issue.

"Front gardens ... aren't just permeable to rainwater, but to social interaction. So when we lose them, we don't just lose greenery, but a bit of our humanity."

A lively opening saw Alan Titchmarsh volunteering to buy, plant and maintain urns of plants outside the nation's most famous front door – Number 10 Downing Street – in order to raise the profile of front gardens on what he described as the "greyest frontage known to man". Mr Titchmarsh also lamented the loss of front gardens generally and challenged the audience of horticulturists, national and regional politicians, public policy figures, planners and engineers, to work together to halt the destruction of these

environmentally and socially important green spaces across the country.

The audience heard of the many health and wellbeing benefits of front gardens, while the Secretary of State also highlighted their social importance: "Front gardens, unlike many back gardens, aren't just permeable to rainwater, but to social interaction. So when we lose them, we don't just lose greenery, but a bit of our humanity."

Despite regulation being in place to limit the use of impermeable surfaces, more than three million front gardens have been completely paved over – and more than seven million partially paved over – in the last ten years. The stakeholders in the room considered that a combination of regulation, community and individual action would be required, not just in existing front gardens but in future housing developments and other public green space such as parks, with the audience agreeing that regulation needs to be reconsidered.

Mr Clark committed to asking his officials to review the rules on the use of permeable paving in order to assess how well they're working and whether they need to be

* Ipsos MORI survey conducted on behalf of the RHS. Results based on interviews with a sample of 2,067 British adults aged 15+. Face-to-face interviews undertaken between 11 March and 10 April 2016.

RHS/Luke MacGregor

Celebrity gardener and RHS Vice President Alan Titchmarsh chairs the panel at the RHS Front Garden Summit

improved, adding "I am delighted to stand in support of the RHS Greening Grey Britain campaign."

The RHS Greening Grey Britain campaign aims to harness the power of the public to turn 6,000 grey areas green by the end of 2017 and at the end of the conference attendees were asked to 'pledge' a Greening Grey Britain activity. The Front Garden Summit panel, which included a number of esteemed horticulturists, recommended that if individuals did only one thing to contribute towards mitigating the issue they should each plant a tree.

New RHS Front Garden Guide

As part of Greening Grey Britain, the RHS wants to bring back colour and life to streetscapes by reversing the growing trend of paving over front gardens and has created a new Front Garden Guide with achievable planting ideas for gardeners of all abilities.

RHS Director General Sue Biggs says: "We want estate agents, garden centres, housing associations, councils and as many people as possible to access and share the Front Garden Guide."

For inspiration, solutions and planting advice & maintenance, download the new RHS Front Garden Guide from rhs.org.uk/communities/pdf/Greener-Streets/rhs-front-garden-guide



Tell us what **you** are doing to help your community green its front gardens – email communities@rhs.org.uk

Planting crocuses for health and wellbeing – time to get involved!

Crocus tommasinianus 'Barr's Purple'

You will have seen in the Spring issue of *Grass Roots* that, as part of Greening Grey Britain for Health and Happiness, the RHS is partnering with Rotary International in support of their 'Purple4Polio' campaign to end polio by planting 5 million *Crocus tommasinianus* across the UK – and it's time to get involved!



Crocus planting at Torteval Church, Guernsey involving Rotary, the local Bloom group and Torteval Pre-School

This is a wonderful opportunity for RHS Bloom/It's Your Neighbourhood Groups and Affiliated Societies to join forces with up to 1,800 Rotary clubs across the UK, bringing people together to transform their local areas by planting thousands of crocuses which will provide a spectacular carpet of colour in community spaces next spring. The crocus is a symbol of Rotary's worldwide campaign to eradicate polio, its colour representing the purple dye used to mark the finger of a child who has been immunized.

How to get involved

RHS community groups are encouraged to work with their local Rotary clubs to plan, order and plant crocuses at the very special price of £85 per pack of 5,000 corms. RHS groups can use their gardening knowledge and expertise to help Rotary identify suitable planting sites. Together they can devise the planting schemes, agreeing how many corms are required, identifying how the cost of corms

will be funded – for example by Rotary, by Rotary and Bloom jointly or by finding third party sponsors – and together organising who will participate in the planting, including how local communities can get involved. There may also be opportunities for RHS Bloom/IYN groups and Affiliated Societies to purchase additional corms at £85 per 5,000 to enhance the displays.

In addition to developing partnerships, building new community networks and sharing the health and wellbeing benefits of gardening, these autumn planting and spring flowering activities will provide wonderful photo opportunities and encourage media coverage and profile for both the Greening Grey Britain and 'Purple4Polio' campaigns. There will also be two photo competitions, details of which will be available in due course, so be sure to have your cameras at the ready!

RHS community groups will have received full details through their Region/Nation of how to get involved by contacting their nearest Rotary district, and all who wish to participate in this exciting crocus planting opportunity should act quickly as the **final date for receipt of corm orders is 21 July**. You can find out more online at rotarygbi.org/what-we-do/purple4polio/. If your RHS community group does not have the Rotary contact details but would like to get involved, please email info@rotarygbi.org.



...and the flowering

Communities gardening for health & happiness

40 RHS-supported Greening Grey Britain projects get underway

Community gardening projects that will see fire-fighters in Cornwall using gardening to help people with dementia be involved in the community and a London initiative designed to tackle social isolation by bringing the elderly and cub scouts together are among 40 projects round the country each receiving £500 worth of tools, plants, materials and RHS support as part of our Greening Grey Britain for Health and Happiness campaign. There is an increasing body of evidence which shows that gardens and

green spaces have a tremendously positive impact on people's health and wellbeing, and both the physical activity of gardening and the use of green spaces for mental relaxation and stimulation have been shown to provide a range of positive health benefits.

135 RHS Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) groups applied to help develop projects to improve community cohesion, promote healthy lifestyles and increase wellbeing. All of the 40 RHS Bloom and IYN projects selected

have shown that they can use gardening as a tool to reduce social isolation, encourage outdoor activity, reconnect people with healthy seasonal food, promote improved mental health and aid relaxation, amongst other benefits. RHS advisors will be on hand throughout the development of the projects – which will be completed by September – to provide the groups with expert gardening advice, tips and insights in order to ensure that they make as great an impact as possible on their local communities.

A closer look: Greening Grey Britain from North-East to South-West

In this issue we take a look at three Greening Grey Britain projects as they get underway

Sunderland: Pallion Traders – It's Your Neighbourhood Group

Pallion is one of the most neglected and impoverished areas of Sunderland. The traders of St Luke's Terrace have suffered for years from anti-social behaviour and are joining forces to enhance the area and foster greater civic pride. They are supported by the local Council who have donated planters, by Farrans Victor Buyck Joint Venture, the nearby Wear Bridge contractors, who have made a donation to support the group's endeavours, and by the RHS.

The whole community is involved in planting up the area, with groups offering time and horticultural expertise to create a "green corridor" through Pallion. RHS Community Outreach Advisor Christine Wright has led hanging basket workshop and 'train the trainer' events with eight community groups, resulting in baskets brightening public spaces and newly-acquired gardening skills being shared.

Next steps include planting trees in the donated containers – long-term maintenance of which the traders are taking over from the Council by legal agreement – an RHS stand at a local summer event highlighting Greening Grey Britain for Health & Happiness, and enterprise work with 'at risk' 16-25 year olds.

Winlaton Centre – It's Your Neighbourhood Group

Winlaton is a large village on the outskirts of Gateshead which for months has been plagued by a unpleasant smell that is being carried by the wind from a nearby landfill. The Environment Agency has identified hydrogen sulphide gas as the cause and low levels of methane are also present in the air. The gases have increased due to the wet weather throughout 2015 and the flooding over winter, resulting in the residents suffering considerably as they can't hang out washing, open windows or even go for a walk in comfort.

This Greening Grey Britain project will help to promote health and happiness through horticulture by creating a fragrance garden on a piece of unused land, previously untended and covered in weeds, in the village centre.

Following the RHS Community Outreach Advisor's advice and designs, the community and IYN group are preparing the ground and planting up a garden to include lilac, lemon verbena and night scented stock, enhancing the area and increasing people's sense of well-being.

Falmouth Dementia Friends – It's Your Neighbourhood Group

All ages came together at Gyllyngdune Gardens in Falmouth to plant borders fringing the Edwardian bandstand for the Dementia Friends Planting Project.

A partnership between Falmouth Town Council, the RHS, Cormac and Devon and Cornwall Fire Service, this intergenerational project aims to raise awareness of dementia and create a safe, friendly environment for those living with the condition and their carers. Black Watch from Falmouth Fire Station became involved after receiving what they initially thought were hoax calls but later learned were confused calls from people with dementia and have now trained their staff to recognise such calls, extending this training to other Watches county-wide.

Members of the Fire Service joined the Cormac Garden Team and Merryn Preece, RHS Community Outreach Advisor for the South-West, to guide members of Falmouth and Penryn Memory Cafés and their carers, Constantine Primary School pupils, Penryn College and Mayors and Rotary Clubs from Falmouth and Penryn in rotating blue, white and yellow flowering plants to reflect the Dementia Friends logo. Monthly sessions continue for all involved to help maintain the borders.



Planting in Gyllyngdune Gardens

The 40 RHS Greening Grey Britain for Health & Happiness projects

East Anglia	
St Nicholas Hospice Care at the Burton Centre, It's Your Neighbourhood	Haverhill
Greening Our Station, Halesworth in Bloom	Halesworth
Heavenly Gardens, Mancroft in Bloom	Norwich
Red Gables Garden Project, It's Your Neighbourhood	Stowmarket
Incredible Edible Dunstable, Dunstable in Bloom	Dunstable
Stepping Stones, It's Your Neighbourhood	Norwich
East Midlands	
Doughty Quay, Boston in Bloom	Boston
Blooming Butterfly Project, It's Your Neighbourhood	Worksop
London	
Kingsgate Community Centre, It's Your Neighbourhood	Camden
Centre 404 Garden, London in Bloom	Camden and Islington
Prior Weston Primary School, It's Your Neighbourhood	City of London
Compton Terrace Children's Woodland Garden, It's Your Neighbourhood	Islington
Sufra NW London, It's Your Neighbourhood	Brent

North East	
Middleton St. George Railway Bridge, Northumbria in Bloom	Darlington
Seaton Sluice in Bloom	Northumberland
Newfield and Pelton Lane Ends Residents Association, Waldrige in Bloom	Chester le Street
Winlaton Centre, It's Your Neighbourhood Group	Winlaton Village
The Pallion Traders, It's Your Neighbourhood Group	Sunderland
North West	
That's Blooming Green Triangle, It's Your Neighbourhood Group	Liverpool
Martin Avenue Senior Citizens Club, It's Your Neighbourhood Group	Merseyside
Community food growing, Chorley in Bloom	Chorley
Heald Place School, It's Your Neighbourhood	Manchester
Scotland	
Madelvic Housing Association, It's Your Neighbourhood	Edinburgh
Dunbar High Street, Dunbar in Bloom	Dunbar
West Highland Way Project, Milngavie in Bloom	Milngavie
Craig Neuk Allotments, It's Your Neighbourhood	Airdrie

South West	
Newhaven Community Garden, It's Your Neighbourhood	Newhaven
Falmouth Dementia Friends, It's Your Neighbourhood	Falmouth
Queens Road, Keynsham in Bloom	Keynsham, Somerset
St George in Bloom	St George, Bristol
Sidmouth in Bloom	Sidmouth
University of Exeter Physic Garden, It's Your Neighbourhood	Exeter
Lost the Plot Allotment, Wadebridge in Bloom	Wadebridge
West Midlands	
Lichfield City Railway Station, Lichfield in Bloom	Lichfield
Let's Eat the Park, It's Your Neighbourhood	Kidderminster
St John's Church, Halesowen in Bloom	Halesowen
Church Avenue, It's Your Neighbourhood	Moseley
Yorkshire	
All Muck and Magic Garden Club, Scarborough in Bloom	Scarborough
Thurnscoe Flower Park, Thurnscoe in Bloom	Rotherham
Help Yourself Oxspring, Barnsley in Bloom	Oxpring, Barnsley



Planting up in Pallion



Community planting Winlaton's fragrance garden



Planting for Falmouth Dementia Friends in Gyllyngdune Gardens

RHS Advice What do hedges do for us?

Help for your community with regular news and tips from RHS scientists and advisors. To suggest a topic for this section of the magazine, contact communities@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118

Guy Barter, RHS Chief Horticulturist, looks at the many benefits of hedging, from helping to prevent flooding to intercepting airborne pollution and reducing energy use



Clipped yew hedges in the Modern Rose Garden in Spring at RHS Garden Hyde Hall

Hedges are highly attractive traditional garden features providing privacy and security, dividing areas of the garden, screening eyesores and offering a neutral green backdrop to the garden, with variegated and coloured foliage hedging also available.

However, hedges are not always appreciated, often for very good reasons: they take up much space, they need cutting twice a year and they can get annoyingly tall. Worse, some hedges cannot be renovated by cutting back to old wood and starting again. Leyland cypress (*Cuprocyparis leylandii*) and most other conifers are included in that category. Over-large evergreen hedges in fact have proved so troublesome that legislation has been enacted to curb them (see High hedges legislation, page 9).

Despite negative views on hedges, they have some significant environmental and cost benefits over fences and walls:

Absorbing surplus rainfall In winter the soil beneath hedges collects water and allows it to soak in, but the most significant benefits come in summer when flash floods following storms first wet the foliage, from which much water evaporates, and then sink into the dry ground beneath hedges with limited run-off into drains, resulting in reduced flooding of low-lying areas. Unlike trees, hedges have very limited root runs

and are highly unlikely to cause damage to paths or structures when the soil beneath them shrinks in summer.

Improving water quality Water running off roads and gardens can be rich in sediment and pollutants. Where run-off is intercepted by the porous root-permeated soil under hedges, soil microbes can do much to break down pollutants.

Preventing soil and sediment being washed into drains and rivers Soil from cultivated land is rich in phosphorus due to growers adding phosphorus-rich fertilisers. Phosphorus is very damaging to river ecology – hedges can help prevent it being washed into drains and ultimately rivers.

Hedges planted across slopes can **intercept water running downhill** allowing it to soak in or be retarded lessening flood risk, stopping erosion and avoiding water accumulating at the foot of the slope. Cross-slope hedges retain dense cold air flowing downhill potentially creating a damaging frost pocket uphill from the hedge that can be avoided by leaving gaps.

Clipped hedges have a dense structure **providing good cover for birds and wildlife**, with evergreen hedges being particularly valuable in winter and for early nesters. However, close pruned hedges produce few berries so, where space allows, less formal hedges of native and/or berrying shrubs are worth considering as less frequent cutting

is required. Mice, voles and other potential pests can multiply in hedges, requiring control in certain seasons but also, even in semi-urban areas, providing food for weasels and kestrels.

By **slowing wind speed**, hedges provide shelter from driving rain and chilling winds that affect both people and crops. Hedges that filter wind are best – mixing evergreens and deciduous hedges provides optimum filtration. Solid evergreen hedges, like walls, cause turbulence that is nearly as damaging as windy situations.

By sheltering houses, hedges **reduce energy use** in winter and green leaves help to **cool urban areas** in heat waves.

Urban hedges can **intercept and absorb airborne pollution and noise**. Dust and pollutants such as nitrogen oxides are reduced by vegetation, hedges proving especially efficient, and a certain amount of noise is blocked by a hedge in leaf.



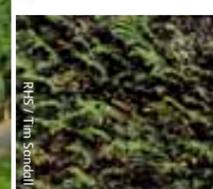
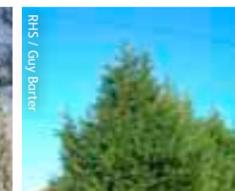
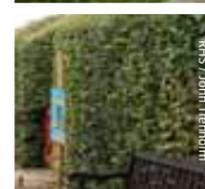
The best smaller hedging, box (*Buxus spp*) is at risk from new pests and diseases.

Hedge maintenance – six top tips

- Plant close together – closely planted subjects compete with each other and stunt their growth
- While hedges are growing, consider using light willow or bamboo screening for privacy
- Keep hedges slightly wider at the base than the top so they don't get thin near ground level
- Prune to keep narrow from the beginning, but let them grow upwards unpruned until they reach the height required
- Most hedges are best pruned in late summer, but check for birds' nests even in August
- Overgrown hedges can be cut back severely in winter (deciduous) and early spring (yew and evergreens, except conifers)



The native hornbeam is an easy to grow hedge for beauty, shelter and wildlife



Top left: Yew (*Taxus baccata*) is the best, if slow growing, evergreen hedge where drainage is good. Bottom left: *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam) is the mainstay of hedges at RHS Garden Wisley retaining its dead leaves in winter and having some honey fungus resistance. Right: Cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*) hedges can flower and indeed fruit if properly pruned.

Left: Neglected conifer hedges can seldom be remedied and must be replaced.

Top right: *Lonicera nitida* is often used for hedging as an alternative to *Buxus sempervirens*. Bottom right: Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), makes a fine mossy hedge in high rainfall regions.

High hedges legislation

'High hedges' means hedges over 2m (6½ft) and a line of two or more evergreen plants (excluding bamboo or ivy). Using a set formula that uses the hedge height, orientation and proximity of dwellings, home owners can determine if a hedge will cause difficulties and take steps to reduce their own hedges.

Residents can also seek action by the council if neighbours refuse, after due period of negotiation, to reduce over-bearing hedges. Although hedges may be required to be reduced, they cannot be ordered to be lowered below 2m, nor so much removed that the hedge is imperilled. Sanctions may be taken if there is failure to comply.

gov.uk/how-to-resolve-neighbour-disputes/high-hedges-trees-and-boundaries

Similar legislation applies in Scotland.

Box hedges

Box (*Buxus spp*) is an invaluable evergreen hedge used for very small to medium hedges. Unfortunately box blight and box tree caterpillar appear to be established across Britain and in the South-East respectively causing such damage that the popularity of box may wane. Box tree caterpillar defoliates box trees in summer which, according to much evidence from Germany and Holland where this pest is established, can be fatal. Although treatable by insecticide, good coverage of affected trees must be obtained early in the tree's infection; in practical terms it can be easy to miss the initial infestation.

Box blight is two fungal diseases, one less severe (*Pseudonectria buxi*) and the other, *Cylindrocladium buxicola*, more severe. Falling, dead, brown leaves and, in a case of *Pseudonectria buxi*, streaking of the stems and dieback are common symptoms.

Although destructive, box blight is not necessarily fatal, and there are reports of recovery or at least tolerable levels of infection.

In other cases however replacement with *Lonicera nitida* or yew might be required, as fungicides may not be reliably effective or practical.

Full details on box blight and box tree caterpillar can be found at rhs.org.uk



Pseudonectria buxi, the less serious form of box blight, may disfigure but seldom devastate box.

Linear Trees

Where hedges can be allowed to grow taller, perhaps where their shade and roots won't cause problems, there is a case for allowing them to grow above the sensible, practical limit of about 2.5m (8ft), to make linear well clipped trees. This is traditional in parts of Devon and Cornwall where tall hedges are grown on banks edged with stone walls, and could well be applied in community gardens and other public spaces where trees proper might be hard to accommodate.

Visit the RHS website for full advice on everything hedge-related: rhs.org.uk



Common pipistrelle in flight

Get Wild About Gardens – and batty about bats!

Wild About Gardens is a partnership between the RHS and The Wildlife Trusts to encourage year-round gardening for wildlife. With a special theme each year, **Wild About Gardens Week 2016**, running from **24 – 30 October**, is linking with the Bat Conservation Trust, encouraging families, schools, and communities across the UK to support wildlife in their gardens with a particular focus on our UK bats through a series of bat-related festivities and events.

Over the past 50 years we've seen a decline in two-thirds of UK plant and animal species, including many of our common garden species – from hedgehogs and house sparrows to common frogs and bats – due to loss of habitat, amongst a variety of reasons.

With an estimated 15 million gardens in the UK, together covering an area greater than all the National nature reserves, **we can help to support a wide range of species, including bats, by making our own gardens and local green spaces more wildlife-friendly.**



Bat box



What can you do?

Make your garden or community green space bat-friendly by:

Increasing the food supply

Certain garden features, such as compost heaps and ponds, are particularly good at generating the types of insect that bats like.

- **Grow plants with flowers** that are likely to attract moths and other night-flying insects – white or pale coloured flowers are more likely to be seen by nocturnal insects
- **Be more tolerant of insects.** A few caterpillars will not cause much damage but they will turn into a juicy meal for a bat
- **Avoid use of pesticides** where possible

Providing shelter

- Bats will generally find their own places to shelter but **bat boxes** can be placed on tree trunks or walls of buildings. Bat boxes can be purchased from garden centres or made from unplanned wood that has not been treated with wood preservatives
- Unlike birds, bats seek warm sheltered places in summer. When placing bat boxes, **choose locations with a sunny southerly or westerly aspect.** Avoid placing boxes above doors or windows, or anywhere that bats might be disturbed by people or pets
- **Be aware of the sorts of places that bats use as shelter** and do not disturb them
- **Retain old trees with cavities in the trunk**, loose bark or splits in the trunk or branches if safety considerations permit



Stars of the Night – get bat savvy online...

You can find advice and inspiration for helping bats in your garden in the new **FREE** booklet *Stars of the Night – working together to create a 'batty' neighbourhood* which draws on the partners' combined gardening and nature conservation expertise. Read it online at wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk/Downloads/wag-stars-of-the-night.pdf and learn about:

- **Lists of insect-friendly plants** which will provide a night-time feast for bats... great ideas for laying on a bat banquet in your garden, balcony or window-box!
- **Advice on reducing outdoor lighting** – floodlit gardens are detrimental to bats
- Fascinating tips on **how to look after bats** through the seasons
- Details of **which bats live in the UK** and how to listen for them

Lay on a banquet for bats: 'Plant a bat feast' photo competition

The RHS, The Wildlife Trusts and Bat Conservation Trust have joined forces to launch a **competition for the best insect-friendly plant display**. We have fantastic prizes, including a bat detector, bat box and a visit from a bat enthusiast. **The 'Plant a bat feast' competition runs until 6 November 2016** so get planting NOW and submit your entries later in the year! You'll find our 'bat feast' mobile, which includes the photo competition details, with this copy of Grass Roots.



Hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*)



Bishop's weed (*Ammi majus*)



Lavender (*Lavandula x intermedia*)



Purple top (*Verbena bonariensis*)



Ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*)



Hebe

Taking part is simple!

- **Choose** a gorgeous range of flowers and features that attract insects, which in turn are food for bats
- **Plant** & watch them grow
- **Take a photo** and send it to us

Remember: it doesn't matter how big or small your plant display is! Find inspiration on which are the best insect-friendly plants on our 'Stars of the Night' guide online at wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk/Downloads/wag-stars-of-the-night.pdf or use the RHS Perfect for Pollinators lists at rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators. To the right are some easy-to-grow examples.

Get involved!

You can help to raise awareness about wildlife gardening by organising a bat-related volunteering event during Wild About Gardens Week 2016 and adding it to the website at wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk/Organise-an-Event and we'll help you to promote it! Your event will be one of many being held across the UK by community groups, schools, Wildlife Trusts and RHS gardens. Take a look at the resources online at wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk/Downloads for ideas on the kind of things you might do.



It really is Rocket Science!

Robert Gordon's College, Aberdeen

Alana Tapsell, Schools' Communications Officer, RHS Campaign for School Gardening shares the latest update on one of the largest mass science experiments conducted in UK schools, involving and inspiring children and young people of all abilities and ages, from early years to University

Throughout May, over 600,000 young people from schools and educational groups across the UK took part in a very special science experiment called Rocket Science.

The schools and groups were sent two packets of rocket seeds – one that had spent six months on board the International Space Station with British European Space Agency astronaut Tim Peake and another packet that had remained on Earth. Over a 35 day

experiment, children were asked to grow the seeds side by side and measure their progress.

The results, which will be published this autumn, will help to form a clearer picture of the potential for astronauts to grow their own food to sustain them on long-term missions.

Here is just a snapshot of some of those who have taken part in this ground-breaking experiment...



King Solomon Academy, London



Kersey Primary School, Ipswich



The Portsmouth Grammar School, Portsmouth



1st Llanishen Paddletail Beavers, Cardiff



The Cotswold Academy, Cheltenham

For more information about Rocket Science, head to the RHS Campaign for School Gardening website rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening

Green Fingered George

RHS Young Ambassador George Hassall took part in Rocket Science at his school Buckton Vale Primary School in Stalybridge, Cheshire. Here's what he thought of the experiment!

"We were very excited to take part in the very cool Rocket Science Experiment set up by the RHS and the UK Space Agency. We sowed the two packets of seeds VERY carefully and marked each seed in each module with a number and colour code so that we can compare the results of each packet of seeds. We watched them grow and took measurements along the way. We then sent our results in and we can't wait to see how they compare to other schools.

"Taking part in Rocket Science has been so much fun and made us all think about what food astronauts need to survive and how we could grow food on another planet – it also made me think about gravity – just how would you water plants in space?! It also made us all want to become gardeners, scientists or astronauts one day."

Read more from George on his blog: greenfingeredgeorge.wordpress.com



Top Tips for Running a Successful Show

The Flower Show Forum, organised by The Gardens Group in Dorset in March, was attended by over 120 delegates who explored ways of revitalising participation in local flower shows.

The RHS's Susie Corr, Affiliated Societies Coordinator, was on the panel and shares some of the top tips for show organisers that emerged from a day of horticultural passion and lively debate, where encouraging participation and improving communication were considered key to success.

Participation

- Warmly welcome new and, particularly, younger members to the area – novice as well as experienced gardeners – and listen to their ideas.
- Actively encourage their involvement in shows – perhaps incentivise participation with a free raffle or complimentary refreshments.
- Broaden categories to encourage non- or novice gardeners to get involved, for example in a home craft section.
- Encourage gardening society members to share expertise in their 'specialist' areas, both with new members and at shows – there's nothing like horticultural knowledge and passion to inspire other gardeners!
- Be adaptable: However long your Society has been established, tune in to the needs and wants of your communities and put on new events/classes to keep your shows fresh and encourage a wider range of participants.

- Persuade newcomers to participate as stewards initially – this could inspire them to 'grow and show' in future.
- Involve schools in a variety of ways – growing and showing, design competition for show guide cover etc.
- Consider trying the wildlife/ environmental approach – always a hot topic and possibly a fresh route to engaging new recruits

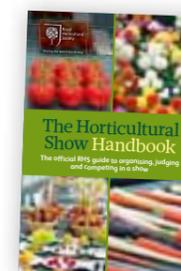
Communication

- Online: Make sure your Society's website is easy to find, appealing and up-to-date with advance information on events and shows, and provide a contact point for prospective new members.
- Build a blog: Encourage your Society's specialists to share their passion for plants and latest horticultural activities.
- Social Media: Get social media savvy, build a Facebook and Twitter presence for your society and post regular images and updates about your activities, events and shows. A younger member of your society might be particularly keen to manage your club's digital presence.
- Publicity: Promote your show at other local events – with posters, flyers or even a stall – and in the neighbourhood newsletter, shops and community spaces.
- Press: Negotiate a monthly column or article in your local paper – share news and views about your society's events, activities and shows and perhaps the occasional competition.

New edition of RHS classic guide

The 8th edition of The Horticultural Show Handbook, published in February 2016, is the essential RHS reference for organising, judging and competing in horticultural and gardening shows.

RHS Specialist Publications Editor, Mike Grant, said: "Anyone involved in horticultural competitions needs to keep up to date with the latest edition of this accessible guide. Whether you are holding a fun children's growing competition or undertaking a regional show, this book contains all you need to know."



Judging cauliflowers in the Fruit and Vegetable Competition at the RHS London Harvest Festival Show 2015

- PR: Consider involving a 'celebrity' ambassador to raise profile of both society and show.

Practicalities

- Make it easy for everyone to get involved: Ensure show guidelines and schedules are available online well in advance.
- When setting show dates, avoid the summer holiday period when many people are away. It's also easier to find judges if you avoid August!
- Encourage entrants to attend judging sessions – engaging and invaluable for feedback.
- Refer potential entrants to the RHS Horticultural Show Handbook (see below) which provides would-be show entrants with all they need to know.



Knebworth House Gardens – one of 176 RHS UK Partner Gardens

Reaching out to Partner Gardens

At the RHS Partner Gardens Forum held at RHS Garden Wisley at the beginning of May, the Partner Gardens were urged to consider getting involved with local community horticulture groups.

With 176 gardens in the network, you're never very far from an RHS Partner Garden and many of them may be able to host community activities or offer volunteering opportunities. Check rhs.org.uk/gardens/partner-gardens to find your nearest Partner Garden or email partnergardens@rhs.org.uk to find out how you can work more closely with an RHS Partner Garden.



Volunteers at St Mary's School Thornbury show off their bumper crop! (l-r: Andrea Bates, Julia Brimacombe, Guy Rawlinson)

RHS 'Super Bloomers' inspire next generation of gardeners

The inter-generational exchange of gardening skills, which used to take place in most families, can no longer be taken for granted and many young children only encounter horticulture through schools.

Access to gardens and the opportunity to learn about horticulture also varies a great deal between schools. It so often relies upon the skills and knowledge of individual teachers and, while many teachers are keen to promote outdoor learning, very few have the skills and experience to teach their students about horticulture or make full use of their garden facilities.

Last year the RHS initiated a pilot programme in the South West, which saw seven highly skilled volunteers – 'Super Bloomers' – support the development and progression of school gardening projects in schools that had little or no history of gardening. We wanted to empower the volunteers, who were already very experienced horticulturists, with the skills and confidence to

share their knowledge of, and passion for, horticulture with young students.

The initial pilot, which ran for six months and was coordinated by the local RHS Community Outreach Advisor, resulted in 65 pupils experiencing the wide variety of learning opportunities associated with gardening, some for the very first time.

Volunteers at two schools – Air Balloon Primary in St George's Bristol and St Mary's Primary in Thornbury – have enjoyed the project so much that they have continued well beyond the pilot phase into a second year.



St Mary's Gardening Club and volunteers celebrate their new allotment

Guy Rawlinson, RHS Volunteer, St Mary's Primary School, Thornbury, says, "It has been great running the After School Gardening Club at St Mary's in Thornbury and helping the children to take their first steps in gardening. They are so enthusiastic about all aspects of gardening, especially the first time they harvested a crop: radishes! We worked with them over the autumn term and they made a number of gardening themed items, including crackers filled with seed packets, to be sold at the Christmas Fair.

'They must have enjoyed themselves to want to come back for more.'

"We are now in our second year, working with on various projects. I guess we did something right in the first year as a number of the children have re-joined the group. They must have enjoyed themselves to want to come back for more!"

The success of the programme, which saw pupils attending regular school gardening clubs, participating in extra-curricular activities and in one case, developing an 80 strong waiting list to be part of the club, convinced the RHS to roll out the project to other schools this year in Gloucestershire, Norfolk, the West Midlands and Scotland.



My Bloom

Terry Bane (kneeling) with Friends of Norwich in Bloom, tree planting to mark their 30th year and participation in Communities in Bloom International Challenge

Terry Bane, Friends of Norwich in Bloom, Trustee & Ambassador and Judge, Anglia in Bloom

What does Bloom mean to you?

Being part of the Bloom community campaign has been a huge part of my life since I became involved with Norwich in Bloom when it formed in 1986. A life-long gardener and professional horticulturist, I left school in 1974 to train at the Norfolk College of Horticulture and The Royal Gardens, Windsor, before joining Norwich City Council in September 1976, nearly 40 years ago. My entire career has been in horticulture, starting as a Gardener/Propagator/Nurseryman then subsequently Parks Foreman/Supervisor, Nursery Manager, Horticultural Officer and currently Horticultural Sponsorship Officer.

My passion was always to grow and show plants but it wasn't until 1999 when I met Bloom Chairman and later Ambassador, the late Bill Webster, that I was encouraged to share my skills and knowledge with the Norwich community. Working together and sharing our 'Bloom passion' with the Norwich and wider Anglia community was so rewarding, instilling a great sense of pride and wellbeing in our teams and helping to keep our local landscape "Bloomin' Bootiful", as we say in Norfolk.

Above all, Bloom to me means "caring, sharing, enabling, pride, passion and life-long friendships through horticultural and environmental projects and activities".

What's happening in your region?

As part of our 30th Anniversary, Friends of Norwich in Bloom have an entry in

the International Communities in Bloom campaign, which is being evaluated during an 8-hour tour of Norwich on 7 July (as this magazine wings its way to you) and followed by a special Civic and 30th Anniversary Dinner; go online at norwichinbloom.co.uk for the latest update.

As part of Anglia in Bloom's 20th Anniversary there are new regional campaign categories for 2016 of Best Restaurant, Hotel and Public House



Students from City College, Norwich, plant hanging baskets for local sheltered housing schemes, celebrating the new special award for Sheltered Housing and Care Home Gardens

grounds and Woodland, plus a new special award for Best Sheltered Housing Scheme/ Care Home, sponsored by major supporter Kingsley Health Care (see angliainbloom.co.uk).

How would you encourage more gardening for health and happiness?

With my commitment to developing communications and sponsorship opportunities for Anglia in Bloom, I believe that sharing stories and encouraging involvement through press, publicity and social media is key to getting more people involved in gardening. There are opportunities for everyone to 'get active', increasing health and well-being and – perhaps most importantly – meeting people and making friends, and we all need to share our passion and shout louder about what we do.

I also believe it's not enough simply to focus on the winners of the best garden but that we must recognise the achievements, commitment and support of all the volunteers and supporters who generously donate both time and funds to make the campaign happen.

Over the last 6 months I have worked with my Anglia in Bloom colleagues to produce a brochure showcasing many of our campaign entrant's activities and achievements which is being distributed across the East of England to encourage more communities and individuals to become involved.

If you'd like to share your volunteering news in the My Bloom column, please email communities@rhs.org.uk




**Wild About
Gardens Week** 

24 – 30 October 2016

Make a difference for the
wildlife in your area



Enter our 'Plant a Bat Feast' photo competition for the chance to win fantastic bat-related prizes! *Go online for details*

Wildlife needs our help and this October the RHS is urging community groups across the UK to join together to make a difference for their local biodiversity

To find out more, visit
wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk