

An RHS year

New RHS President Sir Nicholas Bacon summarises the Society's activities last year



Sir Nicholas Bacon became RHS President at the 2013 Annual General Meeting.

Anybody who works outdoors in the open air and relies on visitors, depends to a lesser or greater extent on the vagaries of the weather. For many people 2012 will be regarded as the low point of luck, whereas in 2013 the visitors to our shows and gardens came out in force. They liked what they saw and the RHS prospered.

At about 415,000 our membership is the highest ever and yet, I can't help but think that, with 8 million gardeners in this country, this number presents great opportunities for more substantial growth. Bearing in mind that three years ago our membership was 360,000 and declining, the reversal bears testament to our now much-clearer vision. During the year we recruited 70,000 new members – also a record. Additionally, there are now 97 RHS Fellows – our highest level of membership. The Fellows Scheme, launched by my predecessor Elizabeth Banks in 2011, has been an enormous success.

Horticulture for all

The many aspects of the community work of the RHS at grass-roots level in villages, towns and cities, in schools, colleges and training programmes are all developing further.

The establishment of our regional and national outreach programmes in Yorkshire and Scotland is making a big difference to our impact and enabling us

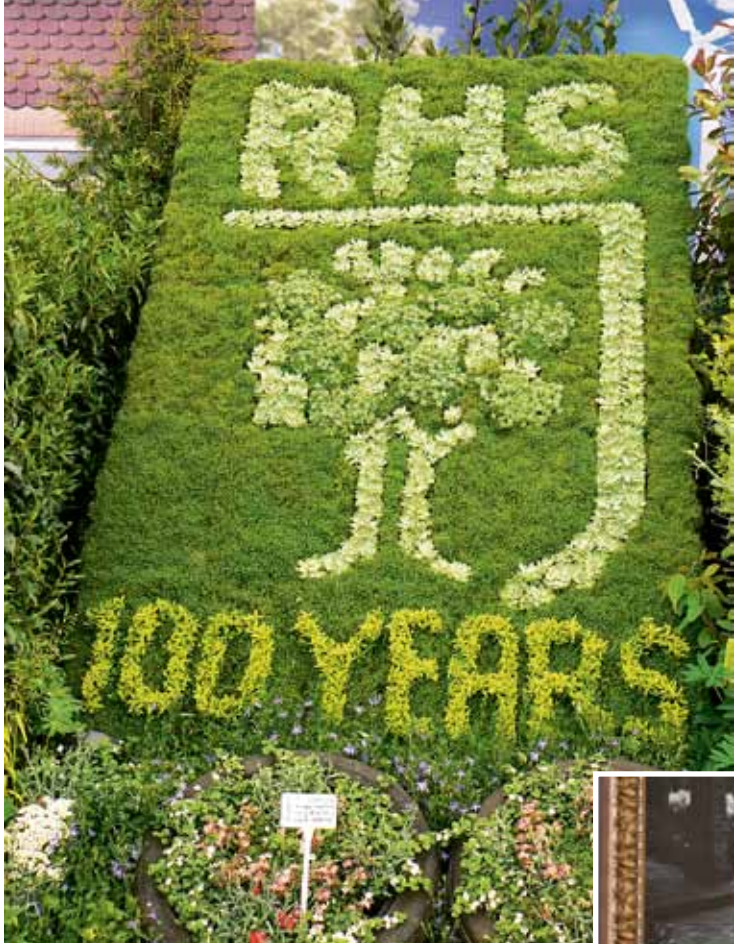
to improve links with groups, schools, colleges, businesses and members in those areas. In due course, we hope to roll out this programme throughout the UK.

We are continuing to support the next generation of gardeners through the RHS Campaign for School Gardening and this year signed the 18,000th school to help get children growing.

Frustratingly, horticulture as a career is still not regarded by many teachers, parents or students as appropriate for high flyers and yet it has so many varied aspects. There is a wide skills gap; horticulture businesses often recruit overseas in order to fill skilled vacancies. This is a sad state of affairs and, with this in mind, we worked with many other horticultural institutions to deliver to Government *Horticulture Matters*, a report on the state of the UK horticultural industry. Though as an industry we contribute £9 billion to the UK economy, the lack of skills in all sectors including science, the environment, design, management and horticulture itself has become a major issue. The fragmented nature of our industry has left us all but invisible to Government and is one of the reasons we gathered together as many constituents as possible in order to have a unified voice. I hope that, working together, we can strengthen the impact we make for the long-term benefit of horticulture.

The RHS on show

To so many people, our shows are the RHS; the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, our iconic international event celebrated its Centenary last year and won praise from all sectors.



RHS / LINDLEY LIBRARY

Above: a display at Chelsea to celebrate the show's centenary last year. Right: In May, previous President Elizabeth Banks launched the *Horticulture Matters* report.

Happily, a perfect English summer returned RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show to financial success, of which it had been deprived in 2012. We continue to look critically at the format of our shows, questioning how they can progress and be successful in a world of the tablet, Twitter and a host of competing virtual and actual events.



RHS / GEORGINA MABEE

Annual General Meeting 2014

You are invited to the 2014 Annual General Meeting to meet Members of Council (who are Trustees of the RHS), the Director General and Leadership Team, and ask questions on past performance and future plans.

This year's AGM will be held at RHS Garden Hyde Hall, Essex, at 2pm on Wednesday 2 July 2014. An agenda and voting papers are included with this issue of *The Garden* (members aged 18 and over only); please telephone Secretariat on 020 7821 3121 if the papers are missing.

At the meeting you will be presented with the *RHS Annual Review 2013/2014* and the full *Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements 2013/2014*.

- ✦ Download both documents from www.rhs.org.uk/agm
- ✦ For printed copies write to: The Secretary, RHS, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE.

A healthy future

In 2013 we welcomed Alistair Griffiths, now RHS Director of Science, who led the way in creating a five-year strategy for our scientific work. The strategy has four elements:

- ✦ A global knowledge-bank on gardening and garden plants;
- ✦ Gardening in a changing world;
- ✦ Plant health in gardens; and
- ✦ Plant science for all: people, plants, planet.

It is interesting to note that whereas so many other academic institutions have had to reduce their investment, we are able – thanks to the careful but inspired management which has produced a good financial result for this year – to invest in those areas where we are pre-eminent in the scientific world.

All this is only possible with efficient and up-to-date IT systems, a new website and a healthy surplus. With the financial success of this year aided by a large legacy, used entirely for the benefit of our charitable objectives, we can make such a difference in horticulture whether in the botanical arts, science, education, training, shows, gardens or communities. Thank you for your support. ●

2013 gardening highlights in pictures



Award of Garden Merit

In February we launched our revised Award of Garden Merit (AGM) list at the RHS London Plant and Design Show to coincide with a new growing season.



National Gardening Week

For a second year we encouraged the nation to get gardening in April. The theme was growing wildflowers and making mini-meadows.



Phlox on trial

Cold weather delayed the RHS Plant Trials programme, but a perennial *Phlox* trial performed well and 'wowed' visitors to RHS Garden Wisley.



Going wild in Essex

Younger visitors to RHS Garden Hyde Hall were given a treat with the summer opening of the BeWILDerwood play tower.



In the zone at Hampton Court

To help visitors make the most of their day, the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show was divided into three zones. The Plant Village was in the Grow zone.



Campaign for School Gardening

Brigshaw High School in Leeds is one of the 18,000 schools now involved in our campaign which brings horticulture into the lives of children.