Growing Communities

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Britain in Bloom 2010: the finalists

Trees for evacuees
Guernsey remembers

Fundraising: everything counts
An inner-city success story

Conservation gardening
Welcome to Growing Communities, the new magazine for RHS community groups including RHS Britain in Bloom and RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood participants, and RHS Affiliated Societies.

The aims of this new magazine are to:

- Provide you with ideas and inspiration through the feature articles
- Update you on relevant news from the RHS, the regions/nations, the “in Bloom” and It’s Your Neighbourhood groups, and the Affiliated Societies
- Provide information about upcoming events or opportunities
- Serve as a showcase for the great work going on all across the UK through RHS community gardening programmes and schemes

This publication is about you and for you and so it will need your contributions and feedback to be a success. If you have any comments, news or stories you would like to send us, please direct them to communities@rhs.org.uk. We need stories that help us to highlight the environmental, horticultural and community benefits of community gardening, which would have a broad appeal or interest and/or which tell us about something genuinely innovative or unique. In addition, we can include (in our News In Brief section) quick updates about special anniversaries and awards or other similar items.

We hope you enjoy this first edition of Growing Communities and we look forward to your comments, news and stories for the next edition.

Best regards, The Editors
RHS Britain in Bloom and RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood kick off the year on 27-28 March 2010 in communities all across the UK.

The theme for this year’s launch event is “Creating a River of Green” or “mass greening” so we have asked groups to focus their launch event activities on planting or greening up activities. We will also be trying to link into the fact that 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity.

The RHS is organising the Press Launch which is being held on 24 March in London and we hope to really kick things off with a bang and grab the media’s attention so that the buzz will trickle down to regional and local media and help all the participating groups get plenty of coverage of their own events.

The RHS is providing groups with support materials to help them promote their events locally so keep your eyes open for information about events near you.

Twelve European countries participate in Entente Florale Europe and each year each country may nominate two communities to represent them. In 2010 the UK’s representatives are St. Brelade (Jersey; 2009 RHS Britain in Bloom Gold & Category Winner, Coastal 12k and below) and Stockton-on-Tees (Northumbria; 2009 RHS Britain in Bloom Gold & Category Winner, City).

Congratulations St. Brelade and Stockton-on-Tees!

The UK’s participation in Entente Florale is managed by the RHS as part of its stewardship of Britain in Bloom. In addition to having two communities participate in the campaign, the UK also has a member on the Entente Florale Board and two jury members. The jury members are former members of the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Judging Panel and are selected by the RHS and the Chairman of the Judging Panel. This year we would like to welcome Sue Rodrigues as one of our new jury members.

Congratulations Sue!

And last but not least…

We have one final announcement: our seasoned Entente Florale jury member, Clive Addison, has been selected as the Chairman of the Entente Florale Europe jury by a landslide vote.

Many congratulations to Clive!
The RHS Britain in Bloom 2010 Finalists have been confirmed and are already hard at work cleaning up and greening up cities, towns, villages, coastal resorts and urban communities all across the UK. Congratulations to them for having achieved the honour of being nominated to represent their region/nation – that alone places them amongst the best!

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2009 saw the unveiling of a new initiative, Dig Together Day (DTD), an event specifically designed to help put local horticultural societies and gardening clubs in the RHS Affiliated Societies scheme back on the map.

Plans for Dig Together Day 2010 are already well underway in order to ensure this year’s event is even more successful. Mark your calendars; 4th and 5th September are set to be a highlight of the horticultural calendar as clubs and societies all across the UK put on local Dig Together Day events.

The theme for this year’s event is going to be “Growing as a Community.” We are asking those participating clubs/societies to organise an event/activity that the whole community can get involved with and get their hands dirty gardening together. You might choose to make a start on a larger project that will continue after DTD or to pick a project that can be completed on the day; the important things is to bring your community together and get them gardening! Not sure what you might do in your community? Don’t worry, the RHS has plenty of experience with community gardening and we will provide you with plenty of ideas of what you can do on the day, as well as support to help you promote your event and ensure it is a success.

Feedback from 2009 DTD participants has been instrumental in helping us to shape Dig Together Day 2010. As a result of this feedback the RHS is going to focus its energy and resources much more on getting even more national and regional press coverage. In addition, our press team will be able to provide a bit more support to you in getting local press coverage of your event. Since this is where we will be focusing our resources we will not be organising a press launch event as we did last year; previous participants suggested that better national and regional press coverage would be much more valuable.

There is already information available to you on the RHS website at www.rhs.org.uk/digtogetherday, including suggestions about what to do on the day. Furthermore, we will be putting together and distributing the support packs as early as possible but in order to receive your pack you will need to register your society’s/club’s Dig Together Day event by going to the web address shown above.

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Left: Germinian Guesthouse owners Michael and Denys Dean with Mary Bond from Harrogate in Bloom (co-ordinator of garden mentoring project)

Harrogate in Bloom has launched a new community campaign called ‘First Impressions‘, with members of the group offering to become ‘garden mentors’ to Harrogate’s small hotels and guesthouses.

Proprietors of the ‘Germinian Guest House’, Michael and Denys Dean, have signed up to this project and readily admit that guests’ first impression of their garden leaves room for improvement.

Denys said: “We’ve spent a fortune on plants and containers for the front of our two properties but nothing we plant seems to grow. This help from Harrogate in Bloom is going to be invaluable to us. It will improve our look, save us money and also stop us making those annual horticultural howlers.”

Mary Bond, First Impressions Co-ordinator for Harrogate in Bloom, added: “Anyone in the hospitality trade knows that making a good first impression is vital.

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Local resident Maureen Ingles, a regular contributor to and winner of the Harrogate in Bloom competitions, will join Harriet Andrew, a former member of Harrogate in Bloom, to offer help and advice to Michael and Denys.

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Welcome to our new news section where we will post announcements and news-in-brief or “nibs” from the RHS, the regions and nations, Affiliated Societies, “in Bloom” groups and Neighbourhood groups. The section is only as good as its contributions so if you have something you think other readers would be interested to know, please do tell us about it.

Highgate Horticultural Society celebrated 150 years as a society

To mark the occasion, they completed a joint project (in partnership with the United Reformed Church) to refurbish the garden in the front of a local chapel. The garden was officially opened by Lynne Featherstone, MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, during a celebration party held on 11 September 2009. The event was attended by many of the society’s members and included a display of memorabilia from their archives. The newly refurbished garden has since won a Certificate of Excellence from the London Garden Society in the Garden Display in a Public Place category. On 15 December 2009 the current committee met to mark the 150th Anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the Society and to toast its longevity and look to the future.

And also celebrating 150 years as a horticultural/gardening society are:

- Hailsham Horticultural Society
- Kidlington Horticultural Society
- Aylesbury Gardening Society
- Bovey Tracey Horticultural Society

Highgate and Harringay Horticultural Society (2001) and an MBE for services to horticulture and the community (2002). We wish Vic all the best for his retirement and thank him once again for his tremendous contributions.

Cumbria in Bloom celebrates 25th Anniversary in 2010.

The voluntary group was set up in 1985 with the aim of encouraging community involvement in working to enhance the appearance of the local towns, villages and hamlets. Over the intervening years more than a third of villages and towns within the County have benefited from being part of the region’s campaign. Joan Johnstone of Birtwistle/Grenfell medals and thank him once again for his tremendous contributions.

RHS Neighbourhood Awards becomes RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood in 2010.

See the feature article on page 16 for more information.

South West in Bloom Chairman, Vic Verrier MBE, to retire.

After 26 years serving South West in Bloom, the last 10 of which he spent as Chairman, Vic Verrier has recently retired. There can be no doubt about Vic’s contributions to the “in Bloom” cause as he was recently recognised with the RHS Britain in Bloom Outstanding Contribution award. Vic’s contributions to horticulture go well beyond “in Bloom” as he was also awarded an RHS Long Service Medal (2001) and an MBE for services to horticulture and the community of Somerset (2002). We wish Vic all the best for his retirement and thank him once again for his tremendous contributions.

Banksian/Grenfell medals update

The time for medal ordering is upon us again. To order your Affiliated Society’s personalised, engraved medal, you can now order online at www.rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocieties or by e-mailing affsocs@rhs.org.uk or by post at RHS Affiliated Societies, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Please ensure those of you who have ordered send us a copy of your show’s schedule and visit our web pages for more information and the rules of awarding these prestigious medals. The final deadline for ordering your society’s medal is 31st March 2010.

Stationery prices stay low for 2010

Great news for all the Affiliated Societies who take advantage of the extremely competitively priced stationery available from the RHS Mail Order department… prices have not increased at all from last year! You can download the order form at www.rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocieties, or you can request it be sent to you by phoning 0207 821 3069.

The Growing for Success talks series

The Growing for Success series is an annual charitable talks programme that aims to inspire gardeners across the UK to enjoy the range of benefits associated with gardening on a more regular basis. The RHS subsidise these talks to encourage a diverse audience to listen to high profile speakers. The talks are often held within beautiful gardens, sometimes offering a drinks reception and/or book signings. There is also a Growing for Success talk at each of the RHS London Shows in 2010. We have some fantastic speakers lined up this year including Chris Beardshaw and Ursula Buchan. For more information on all of the talks taking place in 2010 please visit www.rhs.org.uk/rseventfinder.
Trees for evacuees

This year sees the 70th anniversary of the evacuation from Guernsey of over 20,000 inhabitants escaping the imminent arrival of German occupying forces at the start of World War II.

To mark the occasion, the island’s Britain in Bloom entry of St Pierre du Bois, or St Peter’s as the parish is more commonly known locally, brought the community together to plant a lasting legacy of trees.

Marguerite Talmage, a member of the Floral St Peter’s Group (the parish’s “in Bloom” group), explained more about this local roots initiative. She said: “In June 1940, many St Peter’s families were involved in the heartrending decision of whether to send their children away to safety, or remain in the island and face occupation by the enemy. Those who left were to be away from their homes for five long years. 70 years on, the parish wanted to commemorate those difficult days by planting 70 trees.

“A canopy of English Oak, Alder, Willow, Sweet Chestnut and Ash with an under story of Hawthorne, Crab Apple, Holly and Elder was planted in the heart of the parish in Le Ch’min du Trésor. The name means ‘a walk on church land’ in Guernsey French, and it’s a circular route created on glebe land winding around the rectory through natural woodland, into a meadow below.

“The trees were provided by ‘The Green Legacy Project’, a local charity that aims to facilitate the enhancement of Guernsey’s green infrastructure and educate both adults and children about the value of plants.”

Commemorating the island’s heritage in this way involved young and old alike, said Marguerite: “Over 150 St Pierrais, (St Peter’s parishioners) took part, including evacuees, representatives from youth and sports clubs, as well as primary school pupils. The planting event was also entered in the BBC ‘Breathing Places Tree O’Clock’ attempt to plant a world record number of trees.

“It is hoped that these trees will benefit our community, as well as our native wildlife and the environment. We are working with local conservation organisation, ‘La Société Guernesiaise’, to establish a working plan for encouraging insects, birds and all types of wildlife into the meadow, as well as protecting the rich variety of plant life already established there.”

Concluding, Marguerite said: “Once the majority of trees had been planted, Guernsey’s Bailiff, Sir Geoffrey Rowland, and six former evacuees planted a copse of seven English Oaks which will create an area for quiet reflection. The church bells rang out to bring the formal part of the occasion to an end, and everyone gathered to chat about their morning’s work and enjoy well earned coffee and bacon rolls.”
In June 1940, many St Peter’s families were involved in the heartrending decision of whether to send their children away to safety, or remain in the island and face occupation by the enemy.
Everything counts in fundraising

Walthamstow Village in Greater London may have only 2000 people on its electoral roll, but it has already raised £12000 for its 2010 ‘in Bloom’ initiatives.

As Helen Lerner, Chair of Walthamstow Village in Bloom and Environment Co-ordinator for the Walthamstow Village Residents’ Association explained, it’s all about who you know.

She said: “Walthamstow Village in Bloom is one hundred per cent volunteer-led, and when we first started “in Bloom” in 2009, we approached everyone we knew to try and raise money for our projects. Some people came to us because they wanted to join in and help, others just wanted to donate money. Some businesses like to give products rather than cash, and we use these as raffle prizes, again raising monies. Everything really does count in fundraising!

“One of our committee members, Teresa Deacon, is a great fundraiser and a staunch campaigner and for Walthamstow Village in Bloom. She does our presentations and, as the grant application forms can be quite demanding, we complete them together. We found out that our community council, London Borough of Waltham Forest, gives up to £10,000 to each council ward for a specific project that benefits the community. So we applied for and received a grant of £6,700 to refurbish some planters that had fallen into disrepair and had become overgrown.

“With the funds, we will empty the planters, repair the brickwork under conservation rules, refill them with topsoil and our designer, Graham Sherman, will create a new design for them, using drought-tolerant, hardy perennials that give year-round colour.”

Offering advice to other “in Bloom” groups, Helen said: “There’s a lot of monitoring involved after you are awarded a grant, and I would recommend that groups negotiate with the grant holders to make the process as easy as possible. Also, get to know the stock phrases to use on grant applications and talk to other groups to find out how they were successful in getting funding.”

Describing their other fundraising activities, she said: “We held a quiz night in November and served a curry supper to 130 people and we also held a big garden party in July which was supported by over 1,000 people.

“But not everything has to cost money. Our monthly gardening club includes a plant pot and seed swap, where we ask residents to bring a plant, terracotta pots or some seeds and swap them for something different. We then encourage them to plant them in their front garden as part of our entry into London in Bloom’s Urban Community category.”

Walthamstow Village in Bloom is one hundred per cent volunteer-led.

Helen Lerner
Creating compost from garden waste is a great way to be environmentally responsible.

Thanks to the Tatsfield Community Composting Scheme, this message has been spread throughout its Surrey community, and more widely through Tatsfield’s participation in South East in Bloom and Britain in Bloom.

As Bob David, President of the Tatsfield Horticultural Society explained, the scheme consists of volunteers working together to benefit their village. “It’s run entirely by volunteers from the Tatsfield Horticultural Society and the Tatsfield in Bloom committee, with the support of our Parish Council, Surrey Council and Tandridge District Council. Youngsters doing volunteer work to gain their Duke of Edinburgh bronze awards also help us.

“The benefits of the scheme are clear; it reduces fly-tipping, reduces car miles of residents travelling to the recycling centre, and it generates a good supply of compost right on your doorstep.”

Describing how the composting initiative works, Barry Bull from the Tatsfield in Bloom committee said: “Our composting centre is open every Saturday from 10am until 12 noon, from April through to September. Over the season, almost 90 people use the site and we generate 400 bags of compost.

“We sort out the material that people bring to be composted, ranging from grass cuttings and tree branches, to shredded paper. Branches, up to a maximum diameter of one inch, go into our larger shredder, followed by a smaller shredder to make it finer. We build up the composting bins in layers, starting with whatever is shredded, then grass, paper and leaves. Gradually it’s all rotated over a 4-month cycle.

“When it’s complete, we lift the compost out with a pitchfork, and pass it through a mechanical sieve. Then our ‘black gold’ compost is put into bags and given away to the community, in return for a small donation to help cover our running costs.”

Chair of Community Composting and “in Bloom” committee member, Jennie South instigated the composting scheme. Explaining her motivation, she said: “I’m a keen gardener and member of the Horticultural Society, so all environmental benefits are close to my heart.

“To make it sustainable, we use recycled pallets to create the composting bins. All of our ‘in Bloom’ green waste goes to the composters and we take the compost back for soil enrichment. We do what we can to make the site available to all and encourage people to use it. It’s good to feel part of something that’s so valuable to the community.”

Villager and professional horticulturalist Jon Allbutt was happy to offer his advice: “I gave the Community Composters technical advice on how to make compost. I also now give advice to other groups, even our nearby “in Bloom” rivals Limpsfield in Bloom! Any other “in Bloom” or community group is welcome to contact us for help. All you need is space and enthusiasm, the technique is easy to understand.”

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Bob David
A strong dislike of litter developed into the discovery of a protected species when Doreen Tilley of Bury St Edmunds waded into her local river to remove bottles and cans that had been carelessly dumped.

Describing her actions, 89-year-old Doreen said: "I was out walking my dogs in 1990 when I noticed the rubbish-strewn state of the River Linnet. I decided to do something about it, as I can’t bear to see rubbish thrown about. So I got a few friends together, we put on our wellies, waded in there, and got the rubbish out. That’s how it all started, and then we discovered the wonderful wildlife that lived near and in the river, including water voles and a colony of great crested newts."

The great crested newt is the largest newt found in Britain, and it’s one of the most protected species in the British countryside.

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Caring conservationist nurtures native wildlife

I’ve learned so much about nature that I didn’t know before this project.

Doreen Tilley

Project volunteers; Balancing Pond, which was constructed to take flood water away as part of the adjacent residential development; and Tilley Pond, which was dug out in recognition of the important colony of Great Crested Newts that were discovered in the area, and named after Mrs Doreen Tilley.

“Doreen is a shining example of a stalwart of the community. She has spent a lifetime improving her local environment. If everyone was like that, we would all enjoy beautiful places.”

After 20 years of working as a volunteer conservationist, dedicated Doreen is now hanging up her wellies. She said: “It was lovely to get involved and well worth the hard work. But I’ve done enough now; it’s well looked after and the wildlife is well protected.”
Sowing the seeds of interest in our horticultural heritage

Alan will be working alongside Horticulture Apprentice, Pamela Marnie, to relate the many adventures and achievements of five intrepid Scottish plant hunters to the children of St Columba’s Primary School in Cupar, Scotland. Together, they will be exploring the lives and work of David Douglas, George Forrest, Robert Fortune, Francis Masson and Archibald Menzies.

Mary Law, MBE, Chairman of Cupar in Bloom explained: “We are keen to nurture a deeper understanding and love of horticulture amongst the younger generation. The school has already worked with Cupar in Bloom to develop an Eco Group, and is keen on all environmental issues. Their lovely garden has sustainable planting and they even grow veg for the school kitchen. Now, Head Teacher, Jo Boggan, sees our Plant Hunters Project as an innovative way to enhance another part of the curriculum, linking in with History and Heritage. Set to go ahead in the springtime, Alan and Pam will be going into the school to give several illustrated talks to Primary 6, then help them plant and look after some of the plant varieties introduced by the plant hunters.

“Alan Graham has been a professional gardener for nearly 50 years and is keen to pass on his knowledge to the youngsters. Anyone who hears Alan speak is enthused by his great passion for plants; he is a captivating and animated story teller and really does a fine job in bringing alive the many exciting adventures.”

Alan, keen to sow the seeds of interest in what he believes is such an important, yet little studied topic, said: “The fascinating stories of the Scottish plant hunters have to be told because the horticultural map of Britain would be very different if it were not for these dedicated men. They travelled the world in search of new plants, endured terrible hardships, often risking their lives and spent years away from home. Francis Masson sailed with Captain Cook and defended his plants from pirates, Robert Fortune disguised himself as a Chinaman and took tea plants to India and some say that Steven Spielberg based the look of his Indiana Jones character on a photo of George Forrest!”

With such exciting tales to tell, this is one school project that looks certain to capture the imagination of the children.

The RHS is pleased to announce a partnership with Reciproc8™
Recycling to benefit our community gardening groups which include ALL Affiliated Societies, “in Bloom” groups (finalists and region/nation participants) and It’s Your Neighbourhood groups.

Reciproc8™ is a recycling company that provides free products and experiences to community organisations and clubs throughout the UK through a recycling rewards scheme. The Reciproc8 Rewards™ programme offers a wide range of products and experiences to support community groups and clubs. All of these are available free of charge by redeeming points for recycled goods and it’s free to enrol.

Products include:
- Growing and Planting range – seeds, vegetables, plants, trees and much more
- Gardening Equipment – a range of tools for children and adults
- Outdoor Furniture – including compost bins, raised beds, tables and benches
- Husbandry range – hen houses, nesting boxes, hibernation houses and much more

The experiences include:
- Visits to venues such as botanic gardens, field study centres, farms, museums
- Free transport to these locations and others
- Courses on the RHS Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme

The schemes are simple to start and manage. You gain Reciproc8 Points™ for the products (eg. mobile phones, inkjet cartridges and toners) that you collect for recycling. You can then redeem these Reciproc8 Points™ against the range of products and experiences in the Reciproc8 Rewards™ programme. By creating your own network of support through the community and local businesses, you can make the scheme a huge success. Local companies can not only collect items, they can also register and donate their points to your community group or club.

There are ample resources on the Reciproc8™ website to help make your scheme a success and setting up a scheme is easy; it’s done online and only takes a couple of minutes. The schemes are on-going so you can keep recycling and keep redeeming!

For a fact sheet about exactly how the scheme works please contact the RHS Community Horticulture team on communities@rhs.org.uk
For details of the full range of rewards please visit www.reciproc8.co.uk

Help the environment and get free products

“Any opportunity to roll up their sleeves and dig in the dirt always puts a smile on the children’s faces but combine it with stories of explorers and pirates and that has to be a winning formula.”

So said Alan Graham, Head Gardener at Craigtoun Country Park.

For details of the full range of rewards please visit www.reciproc8.co.uk
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For details of the full range of rewards please visit www.reciproc8.co.uk
**Special offer for groups**

Spring is nearly here and that means it’s time to start planning your horticultural calendar. Why not take advantage of some of the fantastic offers available to groups to go and visit gardens? Better still, make 2010 the year that you finally make it to one of the RHS’s world-renowned shows for an unforgettable experience.

The RHS shows and gardens want to encourage more groups to take advantage of what they have to offer and so they have created special group packages and discounts that can save you up to £12 a ticket.

Please read on for more information!

**Shows offering group rates:**

**RHS Show Cardiff** – Kick start the season with this celebration of the best of spring and the best of Wales. 16-18 April, Bute Park, Cardiff Castle

Groups of 10+, £7.50pp, individuals from £10, call 020 7014 8444.

**RHS Chelsea Flower Show** – The world famous pinnacle of the gardening calendar, don’t miss out. 25-29 May, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London

Individual tickets priced at £45pp. Special for Affiliated Societies call 0844 209 1668 to purchase up to 4 tickets for public days for only £33pp.

**RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show** – Walk around the show and enjoy this inspirational horticultural extravaganza. 6-11 July, East Molesey, Surrey

Groups of 10+, £27pp or £25pp for Affiliated Societies, individual tickets from £30, call 020 7014 8444.

**RHS Tatton Park Show** – The greatest gardening show of the north, with something for everyone. 21-25 July, nr Knutsford, Cheshire

Groups of 10+, £20.50pp, individual tickets from £27pp, call 020 7014 8444.

**Other shows:**

- **BBC Gardeners’ World Live** – 16-20 June, The NEC, Birmingham
- **Malvern Spring Gardening Show** – 6-9 May, The Malvern Showground, Worcestershire
- **Malvern Autumn Show** – 25-26 September, the Malvern Showground, Worcestershire

For details of these shows please visit the RHS website at [www.rhs.org.uk/shows](http://www.rhs.org.uk/shows)

(Please note that only RHS individual members are able to attend RHS Shows on members’ days.)

**Group garden visits:**

**RHS Garden Harlow Carr** – A beautiful informal Yorkshire garden, full of delightful surprises and innovative planting throughout the year.

*Event Highlights:*
- Tulip Festival, 1-16 May
- RHS Grow Your Own Days, 6-7 March, 3-4 July & 23-24 October
- Exhibition of Garden Sound, 4-30 September

Groups of 10+, £6pp, please call 01423 724 690

**RHS Garden Hyde Hall** – An inspirational Essex garden with sweeping panoramas, big open skies and far reaching views.

*Event Highlights:*
- RHS Grow Your Own Day, 6 March
- A Celebration of Roses, 12-13 June
- Chilli Pepper Weekend, 18-19 September
- Taste of Autumn, 23-24 October

Groups of 10+, £6pp, please call 01245 400 256

**RHS Garden Rosemoor** – A jewel nestling within a wooded Devon valley

*Event Highlights:*
- RHS Grow Your Own Day, 6 March
- RHS National Rhododendron Show, 24-25 April
- Rosemoor’s 20th Anniversary: Walk & Talk with Garden Curator, 1 June
- Apple Day, 10 October

Groups of 10+, £6pp, please call 01805 626 810

**RHS Garden Wisley** – A world-class garden of extraordinary diversity and depth, the historic heart of the RHS.

*Event Highlights:*
- RHS Grow Your Own Day, 6 March
- Orchids in the Glasshouse, 13 March-11 April
- Berry Weekend, 3-4 July
- Wisley Flower Show, 10-12 September
- Taste of Autumn, 21-24 October

Groups of 10+, £7.50pp if booked and paid 3 days in advance, £8.50pp after, please call 01483 212 307

(Please note: this does not replace the Affiliated Society group visit benefit; this is for additional group visits by Affiliated Societies and/or other groups’ information.)

**www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom**
Throughout 2009 the RHS Britain in Bloom Development Steering Group (DSG) worked with the “in Bloom” regions and nations to further develop the Neighbourhood Awards programme and thus we now have RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood!

It was felt that, given the 2009 changes to RHS Britain in Bloom and the relationship between the campaigns, the Neighbourhood Awards needed to be “re-aligned” with RHS Britain in Bloom. In addition, there was concern over the name; its lack of impact and the use of “awards” for a non-competitive programme. And finally, there was the belief that, like Bloom, Neighbourhood Awards would benefit from:

- being modernised, made more relevant
- simplification and clarification
- emphasizing the community and environmental benefits of participation

RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood is not a new programme; it is the next evolution of Neighbourhood Awards, which is aligned with the core pillars (or principles) of RHS Britain in Bloom and which should help carry the programme successfully into the future.

In addition to changing the name of the programme to RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood, we have also revised:

- the terminology
- the definition of a “neighbourhood”
- the core pillars
- the levels of achievement and recognition
- the assessment form and role of assessors

At the same time the decision was also taken to remove the three-year limit on participation so that now groups may participate in RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood for as long as they like.

The terminology of the campaign has changed to more implicitly and explicitly reflect its non-competitive nature and so now, for example, there is an assessment done by an assessor instead of judging by a judge. In addition, some other terminology has changed to make it more accessible to everyone, instead of being geared for experts. The core pillars of RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood, in priority order, are:

- Community Participation
- Environmental Responsibility
- Gardening Achievement

These core pillars also form the three sections of the assessment and are attributed 40%, 30% and 30% of the marks, respectively.

Groups’ accomplishments will now be recognised with certificates of achievement covering five different levels (instead of only three) and they are: Establishing, Improving, Developing, Thriving and Outstanding.

Expanding the certificates to five levels allows for a genuine starting point for groups entirely new to community gardening and a more gradual progression through to the top level.

In addition to these certificates of achievement, through which every single group’s contributions are recognised, a National Certificate of Distinction has also been introduced to allow regions and nations to put forward truly exceptional and exemplary groups for special recognition. This certificate will be presented to recipients at the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals Awards Ceremony.

If you would like more information about RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood, please contact us at britaininbloom@rhs.org.uk or 020 7821 3360 for an info pack.