

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

*Britain in Bloom
turns 50*

GROWING
FOR GOLD
- Sign up!

Litter Special

PLANTING FOR
POLLINATORS



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Village catches the edibles bug

Cover image: Friends of the Estuary Coastal Care
Group, part of Lytham in Bloom, celebrate 50
years of Bloom. RHS/ Julian Weigall

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leading gardening charity, dedicated to
advancing horticulture and promoting gardening.

Our community campaigns support more
than 5,000 groups in creating greener and
more interconnected communities. For more
information about RHS Britain in Bloom, RHS
It's Your Neighbourhood and RHS Affiliated
Societies, please visit rhs.org.uk/communities



WELCOME

To the winter issue of *Grass Roots*, the magazine for all RHS “in Bloom” and It’s Your Neighbourhood participants and RHS Affiliated Societies - and a Happy New Year!

This year we celebrate 50 years of Britain in Bloom and we hope as many groups as possible can join us in marking the occasion. See pages 4 -5 for ideas about how you can get involved and help to turn Britain golden with pollinator-friendly flowers this summer. We'll bring you more on the 50th anniversary throughout the year, along with lots of stories from groups around the UK.

As ever, please remember to keep us in touch with your news. Send your stories to: sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118
Many thanks,

Sophie

Sophie Dawson, Editor

YOUR LETTERS Wasteland transformed

You included a story about our group, Acocks Green Village in Bloom in the spring 2013 issue, when we were just setting out with our new community orchard. I thought your readers might like to see how it looks now. This little space in the middle of two blocks of shops has been transformed from a dumping ground into the new heart of our community.

We used the RHS Britain in Bloom ‘Edible Britain’ theme to create an orchard that would be a resource for people to enjoy over the years. We used local skills and donations to create a raised herb bed, paths, and a fruit orchard. Hannah Brown, a talented local schoolgirl, designed and painted a beautiful mural for us and others got stuck in with the digging, weeding, rubbish removal and then planting; up to 12 people at a time worked on the land and a real sense of community spirit blossomed. From the shared cups of tea together during the cold weather to the iced drinks in July, this project has brought us

all closer and just shows what can be done when members of the community work together.
Fran Lee, Acocks Green Village in Bloom Co-ordinator



The community orchard before and after its transformation by local Bloom volunteers



Please send your letters to sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk or Sophie Dawson, RHS, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Letters on all community gardening topics are welcomed, but may be edited for publication.

Correction: We'd like to correct an error printed in the October issue of *Grass Roots* magazine. The story about the RHS Britain in Bloom awards ceremony host, Cleethorpes, stated that the Bloom group had been responsible for caring for the town's public spaces since 1996. In fact Cleethorpes in Bloom works in partnership with North East Lincolnshire Borough Council and it is the council's grounds maintenance team who care for these areas. It is the council working together with the Bloom volunteers that makes Cleethorpes the colourful and award-winning coastal town it is today.

Make the most of your free RHS advice

All RHS Affiliated Societies, Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) groups can contact the RHS Advisory Service for free advice relating to their group activities. The team of expert horticulturalists can help with all sorts of community-related issues including: show schedules and show judging disputes, health and safety (for example, potentially harmful plants; disposing of old chemicals; use of tyres and carpets on allotments; potentially contaminated soils), how to assess sites, source plants and maintain community gardens and orchards, how to garden without peat, and the team's favourite - how to convert a van into a mobile bowser!



How to contact the Team:

- RHS Affiliated Societies can find out how to contact the team in the Affiliated Societies Information Pack. To receive a replacement pack, please email affsocs@rhs.org.uk with your affiliation number or phone 020 7821 3069.
- Bloom and IYN groups should visit the online hub. To receive the log-on details for the hub, please email communities@rhs.org.uk or phone 020 7821 3069.

NEW IN 2014: Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups and RHS Affiliated Societies can enjoy special offers at 28 RHS Partner Gardens around the UK. For more information, visit: rhs.org.uk/groups

FUNDING UPDATES

RHS community funding

The RHS will be offering a further £60,000 to community groups in Yorkshire and Scotland in 2014. Last year, funding was awarded to 12 groups in Scotland and 32 across Yorkshire to help with gardening projects in communities. Successful groups received grants of between £300 - £8,000, along with support and training from the RHS Scotland and Yorkshire teams.

Ruth Evans, RHS Director of Education, Funding and Communities, said, “We're delighted to be helping gardening groups in Scotland and Yorkshire on such important local projects that will make a substantive difference to people's lives. An important aim of the RHS is to provide direct and meaningful support to grassroots gardeners and to have a more lasting presence in communities.”

To find out more about 2014 funding and to apply, visit: rhs.org.uk/regional

Sharing Heritage grants

The Heritage Lottery Fund's Sharing Heritage programme is for any type of project related to national, regional or local heritage in the UK. If your project focuses on the heritage of the First World War, please apply under 'First World War: then and now': hlf.org.uk

More funding available for sustainable growing

A further £50,000 is available to Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups in the second and final round of the Sustainable Horticulture in Partnership (SHiP) Scheme, run in partnership by Defra and the RHS.

To apply for funding, Britain in Bloom or It's Your Neighbourhood groups (in England only) must be led by, or be working in partnership with, their local authority. Groups will need to develop partnerships with their local supply chain of growers, landscapers or growing media suppliers.

Project Wild Thing

This new campaign aims to reconnect children with nature and outdoor play by encouraging the nation's parents to swap some of their kids' screen time for wild time. Swapping thirty minutes of screen time for an extra half an hour of wild time every day would decrease children's time in front of screens by ten per cent. This could help increase levels of physical activity, alertness and ultimately improve their well-being. The new campaign was launched in October 2013 on the back of a new documentary film, 'Project Wild Thing'. projectwildthing.com/

Budding young gardeners and green-fingered teachers wanted!

The RHS Campaign for School Gardening has opened applications for its exciting Young School Gardener of the Year competition. Schools are invited to nominate a young person, aged 5-16, who they feel demonstrates exceptional gardening knowledge and has made an outstanding contribution to their school and local community.

Two new categories have also been added for 2014. School Gardening Champion of the Year will be awarded to a teacher or gardening club leader, nominated by a colleague, who is an inspiration and has shown a passion for encouraging gardening in their school. School Gardening Team of the Year is a chance for schools to showcase their entire gardening team and the difference they have made to their school environment.

Nominations can be made free at: rhs.org.uk/ysg

There are no restrictions on the size, English location, or type of horticultural project.

Check the RHS website for the updated and revised guidance and application form: rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom

Rethinking Parks

This new £1 million fund sets out to support park innovation, with a focus on finding the new business models that will enable our parks to thrive for the next century. Up to £100,000 is available per project. Four workshops are being held across the UK throughout January 2014 to help applicants develop ideas and to apply: nesta.org.uk/rethinkingparks

Coastal Communities Fund

Lottery funding to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs in coastal communities. For more information and to apply, visit: biglotteryfund.org.uk

50 YEARS

RHS BRITAIN IN BLOOM



Celebrate 50 years of Britain in Bloom

Growing for Gold

The 2014 Britain in Bloom launch theme is 'Growing for Gold' to celebrate Bloom's special golden anniversary. We hope as many groups as possible will join us to turn Britain golden with pollinator-friendly plants. The RHS is offering all registered Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups, as well as RHS Affiliated Societies, free sunflower seeds to plant this spring.

Groups are encouraged to sow their seeds during National Gardening Week, 14 – 20 April, as part of the nationwide launch of RHS Britain in Bloom. Groups can organise any community gardening event to take part in the launch – the key thing is to publicise your event to lots of potential new volunteers.

Seeds will be sent out to groups in early April so that you can sow them straight into the ground or into pots for growing on and planting out at a later date.

Next steps:

- To apply for your group's packet of mixed sunflower seeds, fill in the form online at: rhs.org.uk/britaininbloomlaunch (for those without internet access please call 020 7821 3069)
- Have a look at the resources available on the website to find other golden plants you might like to use in your displays.
- Identify a suitable area to sow your sunflower seeds and ensure you have permission from the landowner.
- Download template press releases and posters to publicise your event: rhs.org.uk/britaininbloomlaunch

For advice about sowing and growing your sunflower seeds, and sourcing other golden/ yellow plants that are attractive to pollinators, visit: rhs.org.uk/britaininbloomlaunch

SHARE YOUR STORIES!

Help us to celebrate the anniversary by sharing your Bloom stories and photos. Let us know how you, or your neighbours, helped to improve your community through gardening with Bloom, and what a difference it's made to the place where you live. We hope to publish as many stories as possible in *Grass Roots* and will also be using stories in the press and social media throughout the year.

Don't forget to dig out your Bloom photos too, though please ensure you have permission to use them before sending them in. In the next issue of *Grass Roots* we'll be launching a Bloom50 photo competition with a range of fantastic prizes, so another good reason to look through your archives!

Please email all your Bloom stories, case studies and photographs to bloom50@rhs.org.uk or post to Bloom50, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. We can't guarantee to use everything but we hope to use as many stories as possible over the coming year.

Other things you could do to celebrate

Here are a few ideas for how you might like to celebrate the 50th anniversary in your community – these are just suggestions so please feel free to pick and choose any that you think will work in your local area.

Adopt the 50th anniversary golden/ yellow colour theme for your main 2014 displays.



Keep pollinators in mind with everything you do – use the RHS Perfect for Pollinators list for inspiration: rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators



Invite local people to 'donate an hour' to a Bloom project and provide a selection of volunteering opportunities to engage more people in your campaign.

Dress empty shop windows (and trading ones too!) with celebratory displays. You could invite school children to create a celebratory '50 years of Britain in Bloom' poster, and display the winning one.

Share your favourite Bloom photos on the Bloom50 photo competition in April. Details about how to add your photos will be in the next issue of *Grass Roots*.

Give your street a 50th anniversary makeover with golden / yellow plants in gardens, flower pots, baskets or tree pits.

Hold a plant sale, cake sale, street party or community film night to celebrate the anniversary and how being involved in Bloom has changed your area.



Celebrate the impacts your volunteers make during Volunteers Week (1 – 7 June) – send your volunteers' stories to the local paper, or arrange a thank you event.



Invite local businesses to add statements of support for your campaign to their websites and shop-fronts in the 50th year of Britain in Bloom (visit the online hub for more advice about involving businesses – for a reminder of how to access the hub, email communities@rhs.org.uk).



Ask your local paper if you can contribute a regular 50th anniversary column about community gardening in your area, with seasonal tips. Or publish your own newsletter.

Invite people to design a celebratory horticultural display and plant up the winning design.



Challenge pupils at local schools to imagine the gardens of the future – what will gardens look like in 50 years' time – will we need to be growing more food in our gardens, recycling more water, creating energy in them?

Create a bug hotel with a 50th anniversary welcome sign!



Use social media regularly throughout the year to keep people updated about what your group is doing. You can 'Like' the Bloom Facebook page and follow RHSBloom Tweets to keep in touch with everything the RHS is doing to celebrate. twitter.com/RHSBloom facebook.com/rhscommunitygardening

Bury a 50th anniversary Britain in Bloom time capsule for the gardeners of the future to find!

Bring it to life with Bloom: ask the community to nominate a grot spot to be transformed during the 50th year.

Work with artists and schoolchildren to create colourful murals on hoardings (with permission from the landowner!) or to make a mosaic, artwork or film to celebrate the anniversary.

Plant a commemorative tree – for information about trees to plant, visit: rhs.org.uk/advice



RHS ADVICE

Planting for pollinators

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 sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118

Some flowers seem to be better than others at attracting visitors. The shape, abundance and duration of flowering, together with quantity and availability of nectar and pollen mean different flowers cater for different feeders. Guy Barter, RHS Chief Horticultural Advisor, shares his top tips on attracting more pollinators to the garden.

Bedding: colourful and tasty

Bedding plants flower for very long periods in late summer and can be valuable to pollinators, this being a time when many native flowers have set seed; however not all plants offer equal nourishment.

Single flowers are best for insects. Plant breeders have developed double or semi-double flowers where extra petals take the place of stamens. Although more colourful and longer lasting, double flowers produce little if any nectar or pollen. It is good practice to grow plenty of single flowers to provide food for insects. Wild species are single flowered but not always great garden plants. Happily, cultivated single-flowered forms are available, producing excellent displays while retaining good nectar and pollen production. *Tagetes* (French marigold), fuchsia, cosmos and dahlia are bedding plants of especial merit. As a guide, look for the RHS Perfect for Pollinators symbol (right) at garden centres.



RHS / Carol Sheppard



RHS / Tim Sandell



Carl Lewis



RHS / Mike Sleigh



RHS / Lee Beel



RHS / Tim Sandell



Swaminathan



RHS / Annabelle Taylor

HOT, DRY SITES: Pelargoniums (top) are good for hot, dry sites and containers – but try insect-friendly alternatives such as tithonia (pictured bottom) and zinnia.

MOIST, LIGHT SHADE: For moist, lightly shaded areas, switch begonias (top) with single-flowered fuchsias (bottom).

CONSIDER SPECIES PLANTS: Colourful nicotiana cultivars (top) are less attractive to insects than their wild forebear *Nicotiana glauca* (bottom).

SINGLE FLOWERS: Chose single flowers (dahlia at bottom) rather than doubles (dahlia at top), to provide more nectar and pollen for insects.



Plant for year-round nectar

Aim to have plants that are attractive to pollinating insects in flower from early spring to late autumn, with a diversity of plants, shrubs, climbers, perennials and annuals, space permitting. Annuals and perennials provide the bulk of pollen and nectar through the summer months, while trees, flowering shrubs and bulbs cover the gaps at either end.

In spring, bulbs are the mainstay, as are willows (notably *Salix caprea*), which have abundant pollen at a time when bees and other insects are building up their numbers. Wallflowers can make a valuable contribution in late spring. Matters are a lot easier in summer when a wide range of plants flower, such as *Centranthus rubra*, foxgloves, lavender and rosemary, which are relished by bees and other insects. In late summer, supplies tighten but heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), *Jasminum officinale*, honeysuckle, penstemons, and summer bedding offer sustenance. In autumn, food supplies dwindle, but ivy is an invaluable late nectar source [try to prune ivy in early spring, so that wildlife can benefit from its flowers and berries throughout autumn and winter]. Other especially beneficial late flowers include *Sedum spectabile* and many of the asters (such as *Aster novi-belgii*).

Make space for wildflowers

Wildflowers are a magnet for pollinators. The RHS has recorded those that offer the most nectar and pollen on the RHS Perfect for Pollinators Wildflowers list [there is a second list for cultivated garden plants]. If you see any wildflowers that are particularly favoured by insects but aren't on the list, let us know - we are sure the list is not yet exhaustive.

Many perennial wildflowers require an impoverished soil; however cornfield annuals and the 'meadow mixes' are happy in most garden soils. You can establish meadows from seed or by using plug plants 'plugged' into grass. Meadows can be sown in spring or autumn, depending on the soil and will require only small amounts of maintenance once established. Visit the RHS website (search for 'Wildflower meadow') for advice about sourcing plants or seed, preparing the ground, sowing and maintaining wildflower meadows.

Wildflowers can also make an attractive addition to flower beds and lawns; clustered bellflower, viper's bugloss and ox-eye daisy are all easy to grow and provide abundant food for wildlife.

Groups wishing to plant golden wildflowers to celebrate Bloom's anniversary have lots to choose from; corn marigold, primrose, cowslip, bird's foot trefoil and marsh marigold are just a few.

Growing for Gold - 10 golden plants

Groups will be sowing sunflowers to celebrate this year's Britain in Bloom golden anniversary. If you'd like to extend your golden displays, here are a few recommended reliable, pollinator-friendly plants to choose from.



RHS / Ali Cundy



RHS / Herbarium



RHS / Graham Titchmarsh



RHS / Carol Sheppard



RHS / Herbarium



RHS / Herbarium



Chunras



RHS / Barry Phillips

Plant name	Appearance	Growing and maintenance
<i>Tagetes patula</i> 'Disco Yellow' (Disco Series)	A compact French marigold with single, bright yellow flowers from late spring to early autumn. Height / Spread = 25cm / 10 - 50cm	Seeds are easily sown in early to late spring and the plants put outside in any garden soil in full sun for a long-lasting display.
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> 'Indian Summer' AGM	An erect annual with golden yellow daisies in summer and early autumn. Height / Spread = 50cm - 1m / 10 - 50cm	It is raised and grown in the same way as 'Disco Yellow', but is more tolerant of cold (but won't survive winter).
<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	Evening primrose is an erect biennial with bowl-shaped, fragrant, yellow flowers which open in the evening in summer and autumn. Height / Spread = 1 - 1.5m / 10 - 50cm	Seeds sown in spring won't flower until the subsequent year, but will come true from seed which can be collected to maintain a stock at little cost.
<i>Eschscholzia californica</i> 'Butter Bush'	A compact, hardy annual with dissected blue-green leaves and light lemon-yellow flowers 5cm wide. Height / Spread = 10 - 50cm / 10 - 50cm	Sow in spring in cell trays or in sunny borders where it is to grow. It will flower for long periods if dead-headed. A good plant for children.
<i>Helianthus</i> 'Lemon Queen' AGM	A strong-growing perennial sunflower, with dark green foliage and light yellow flowers 5cm wide. Height / Spread = 1.5 - 2.5m / 50cm - 1m	It is widely sold and easy to grow in any good sunny garden soil. Propagate by division in spring or autumn.
<i>Helianthus annuus</i> 'Valentine' AGM	A robust, hardy annual with single flowers to 17cm across, with light yellow rays around a contrasting deep rich-brown centre. Height / Spread = 1 - 1.5m / 10 - 50cm	Sow in spring in cell trays or in sunny borders where it is to grow. It will produce masses of flowers and the seeds formed in warm summers are also relished by wildlife. A good plant for children.
<i>Dahlia</i> 'Moonfire' AGM	A dwarf bedding dahlia with bronze foliage and single flowers. Single flowered dahlias are relished by insects in late summer. Height / Spread = 50cm - 1m / 10 - 50cm	Tubers can be planted in mid-spring, while plants can be set out once the risk of frost has passed. The tubers can be gathered in autumn and stored for re-use year after year.
<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> 'Zagreb' AGM	Coreopsis or tickseeds are reliable plants for sunny or lightly shaded borders or containers. 'Zagreb' is a compact herbaceous perennial with flowers in early summer. Height / Spread = 50cm - 1m / 10 - 50cm	Grow in a fertile, well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade. Propagate by seed or by division in early spring, or root basal cuttings in spring.
<i>Glebionis segetum</i>	Corn marigold is an annual plant of great interest for wildlife gardens, with bright yellow, daisy-like flowerheads 5cm across in summer. Height / Spread = 50cm - 1m / 10 - 50cm	Easily raised from March/April sowings it will flower from mid-summer, and seed can be taken for the following year.
<i>Anthemis tinctoria</i>	Yellow Chamomile was introduced in 1561 as dye plant and has remained a garden favourite, with vibrant yellow daisy flowers in summer. Seeds are available for the wild form, and the cultivated variety 'Kelwayi'. <i>Anthemis tinctoria</i> 'E.C. Buxton' (lemon-yellow flowers) are only sold as plants Height / Spread = 50cm - 1m / 50cm - 1m	Although biennial or short-lived perennial it may flower in the first year if sown early.

To find other pollinator-friendly plants (wildflowers and garden plants), visit the RHS website and look through the RHS Perfect for Pollinator plant lists: rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators

Pupils plant up the town-centre

Pupils at Downshire School in Carrickfergus, County Antrim, are getting first-hand experience of enhancing the local environment through a partnership with Carrickfergus in Bloom.

The school has been working with Carrickfergus Traders Association and Carrickfergus Borough Council, which runs the Bloom campaign, to provide opportunities for pupils to design and maintain planters and floral displays in the town centre.

Last winter, Year 12 horticulture students helped to plant up containers supplied by the council and traders with a selection of winter bedding. The school is hoping to continue the activity this year.

Downshire School Principal Jackie Stewart said, "The experience was excellent for the young people as they were able to put something back into their local community whilst working on their horticultural skills. The project certainly stood them in good stead as they all achieved "blooming marvellous" results in their Horticulture BTEC examinations!"

Chairperson of Carrickfergus Borough Council's Parks, Countryside & Amenities Sub-Committee, Alderman May Beattie, who visited the pupils said, "The aim of the project, which has been funded by the



One of the designs submitted for the new town-centre planters, from year 10 student Rebecca Noble. Winning designs will be selected and built ready for planting this summer.



Downshire School pupils Sasha Walker, Erin Hamilton, Tom Simms and David Edge with their winter hanging baskets ready to put up around town.

Council's Carrickfergus in Bloom initiative, is to brighten up the town centre and use the horticultural talents of the Downshire School pupils."

She explained that Downshire pupils were the natural choice to create the displays as the school taught horticulture, with enormous examination success, and had an active gardening club. "Such examinations and clubs promote vocational opportunities for the young people and certainly their work on the planters for the council has let them see a possible horticultural career path," she said.

Horticulture teacher Mr Robert Simpson agreed. "Doing work like this adds an extra dimension to the pupil's experience of school and certainly provides added value to their educational experience," he said. "They all really enjoyed the day and left feeling proud of their achievements."

Pupils are also being given the chance to design planters for the town centre as part of their Design and Technology lessons. Students were challenged to consider factors such as seating and accessibility, personal safety, plant growing and maintenance, appropriate materials, cost and durability. The winning designs, chosen by the council

and the Traders' Association, will be built ready for planting up in summer 2014.

Head of Technology, Mr Wilson Kirker said, "We've had some really creative designs proposed. It will be a struggle to select one winner so we hope eventually to construct a few of the best design ideas."

downshireschool.co.uk

Horticulture Matters

A survey of 200 horticultural businesses has demonstrated a skills shortage in UK horticulture, with 70 percent of businesses unable to fill skilled vacancies.

Horticulture contributes £9 billion to the British economy each year, employing 300,000 people. The report, commissioned by Britain's leading horticultural organisations, including the Institute of Horticulture, British Growers Association, HTA and Lantra, concludes that a government commitment to bridging the green skills gap is urgently needed.

To read the report, search for 'Horticulture Matters' at rhs.org.uk



50 years of Bloom

Sue Biggs, Director General of the RHS, the UK's leading gardening charity, oversees all of the charity's work including the high-profile RHS Britain in Bloom campaign. In Bloom's 50th year, she explains why the campaign is so important for Britain's communities.

Bloom turns 50 this year, what lies behind its on-going success?

SB: There is no doubt that Britain in Bloom truly captures the enormous power of volunteers, people who are totally committed to their community, giving their time generously and selflessly, and often bringing about a life-changing and far-reaching transformation of their local area. Gardening together makes communities stronger and Britain in Bloom has been at the forefront of this movement for the last five decades, offering a shared sense of purpose which enables us to tackle projects we'd never be able to do alone.

At the RHS we're in the lucky position of constantly hearing the amazing stories from groups involved in the campaign, where people have met neighbours and made new friends, found a new passion or personal sense of direction, even tackled anti-social behaviour and crime together



Over 300,000 people use Bloom to help them improve their local area.

through gardening. I am very proud of each and every one of the people across the UK that make Britain in Bloom what it is today. It is truly inspirational to see the benefits that gardening brings to our communities, and I hope more people will join this great organisation.

How can groups celebrate this year's Bloom anniversary?

SB: We are encouraging the 300,000 volunteers involved in RHS Britain in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood to sow golden flowers for pollinators in 2014. The RHS will be giving away sunflower seeds to plant in town-centre flower beds, allotments, village squares, pots – anywhere you can find a space – so that we can help our pollinators while turning Britain gold for Bloom's golden anniversary!

Our own RHS gardeners will also be helping out, joining their local Bloom groups to lend a hand during this year's National Gardening Week [14 – 20 April]. We want to raise the profile of the work that volunteers do to care for their neighbourhoods and attract lots more people to get involved in the process.

How has the campaign changed over the last 50 years?

SB: Britain in Bloom was launched in 1964

to boost tourism, so its primary focus was on show-stopping floral displays. Today's campaign of course still encourages horticultural excellence but the criteria have widened considerably – there's more emphasis on community involvement for example, and environmental conservation and sustainability now play a big part. It continues to evolve with the times and that's why it has remained Britain's most popular gardening campaign.

What does the future look like for RHS Britain in Bloom?

SB: We are working in exciting times. As well as this year's anniversary we are also celebrating the launch of the Bloom Federation. This will see the RHS and all the regions and nations that run Bloom across the UK working together to make the campaign even better and more productive in the future.

Together we'll be generating more opportunities to get involved, as well as more support for groups and more publicity for the campaigns. We want to ensure that Britain's favourite community gardening campaign continues to grow more and more over the next 50 years, preparing the way for a scintillating centenary in 2064!

The litter problem

We've got a problem on our hands - a big, smelly, polluting problem. How do we tackle the ever-growing amount of litter in our streets and oceans.

Since the 1960s the population of UK has increased by just over 20 percent but according to the 2009 Litterbugs report, the amount of litter being dropped yearly has increased by 500 percent. More than 30 million tonnes is collected from the streets of Britain every year, mostly food and drink packaging and cigarette butts.

Litter impacts our towns, cities, villages and countryside and affects people's quality of life. Highly littered areas often see higher levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, businesses struggling and investment decreasing. And studies suggest that

when an area is already littered people are more likely to drop more litter.

It's a costly problem – financially, socially and environmentally. A new report from Keep Britain Tidy, *Which Side of the Fence are You on?*, finds that in England alone, we spend £1 billion of taxpayers' money picking up litter. This money, it says, could pay for 38,644 social care workers, 4,400 libraries or 33,200 nurses. The report calls on government and businesses to do more to reduce excess packaging, to reduce the blight of litter, and encourages communities to increase recycling.

Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups play an important role in combatting litter, from organising litter picks, removing graffiti and keeping streets looking clean through to encouraging local recycling and waste-reducing initiatives. Groups' care for their local environment has a significant impact, with 86 percent of Bloom groups reporting cleaner and greener surroundings as a result of their participation in the campaign.

And this is important work. Rubbish is not just unsightly, it's also dangerous. We're all impacted by the disposal of our rubbish: incineration pollutes the air we breathe and land-filling carries the potential for toxic leachate to escape into groundwater supplies.

Much litter, both from the UK and abroad, ends up in the ocean. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, created by oceanic currents, is located in the central North Pacific Ocean and scientists estimate it is larger than the state of Texas. There are also floating garbage patches in the Indian and Atlantic oceans.

In 2006, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) found that there were over 46,000 pieces of plastic floating in every square mile of the ocean. Plankton and a wide range of other marine animals, including shellfish and marine worms, ingest these small fragments. When predators feed on these animals, the plastic is passed up the food chain,

increasing in concentration. A recent study by the University of Plymouth found that one third of fish caught for human consumption in the English Channel carried small pieces of plastic in their gut, from products including sanitary items and plastic bags. Scientists are currently investigating the potential impacts on human health.

The impacts on marine life are more obvious: UNEP claims that ingestion or entanglement in plastic waste causes the death of up to a million seabirds, 100,000 marine mammals and sea turtles and countless fish each year.

It's a growing problem and education and community action have an important role to play. This is where Bloom groups take centre stage. "The work groups do to tackle litter is an important part of building stronger communities and healthier environments," says RHS Community Horticulture Manager Stephanie Eynon. "It's true that Bloom is about more than just flowers, and this is just one example of that."

Further information:
keepbritaintidy.org
trashedfilm.com
myplasticfreelife.com

wrap.org.uk
storyofstuff.org

Keep Britain Tidy

In England alone, we spend £1 billion of taxpayers' money picking up litter, money that could pay for 38,644 social care workers, 4,400 libraries or 33,200 nurses.
 Keep Britain Tidy

Streets paved with litter: more than 30 million tonnes of it is collected from the streets of Britain every year

Did you know

- It takes one month for a paper bag to disappear; an apple core, 8 weeks; orange peel and banana skins, 2 years; cigarette ends, 18 months to 500 years; plastic bags, 10 to 20 years; a plastic bottle, 450 years; chewing gum, 1 million years (Keep Britain Tidy)
- 42 percent of smokers think it is acceptable to drop cigarette butts as litter (Litterbugs, 2009); however they are a serious fire hazard and also contain toxic chemicals which leach into water supplies.
- The RSPCA receives 7,000 calls per year about litter-related incidents,

which it estimates is just the tip of the iceberg with many pet and farm owners going direct to vets, and many injured wild animals never being found. The charity asks people to avoid releasing balloons and Chinese lanterns as these can cause serious injury or death to animals when ingested. (RSPCA)

- The average cost to the landowner of clearing fly-tipped rubbish from private land is £170. Farmers reported a 45 percent increase in fly-tipping in the year 2011 – 2012 (NFU). On public land, the taxpayer foots the bill.



Left: In the Hawaiian archipelago thousands of albatross chicks die every year from consuming plastic fed to them by their parents, who confuse it for food. Right: The RSPCA asks people to avoid using Chinese lanterns, which create litter that poses a serious danger to animals.



Solving the litter problem?

Plastic Bag charge

The government is to introduce a 5p charge for plastic bags in England after the 2015 election in a bid to discourage their use. The charge will only apply to supermarkets and larger stores, with the proceeds going to environmental charities.

A similar charge applying to single-use carrier bags is already in effect in Wales and Northern Ireland, where data shows that there has been an 80 % reduction in plastic bag use since the levy was brought in. Retailers in Scotland will start charging for bags in October 2014.

Bottle deposit scheme

The Campaign to Protect Rural England is calling for a return of the bottle deposit scheme in England, which was phased out 20 years ago, when it became cheaper to manufacture throwaway plastic containers. New York has run a bottle return scheme for 30 years. State department figures show it has recycled over 90 billion containers, reduced roadside container litter by 70

percent, saved 52 million barrels of oil, and prevented 200,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year. Other countries that run bottle schemes include Germany, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands.

Sustainable design

The increasingly short lifetime of products, especially electronic goods, means that more waste is being produced in today's upgrade-and-dispose culture. A key example of this is the mobile phone, which contains several toxic substances within its plastic components. Design plays an important role in combatting waste, when manufacturers increase the lifetime of products through redesign, replaceable parts, recycling and producing upgrades.

The Circular Economy concept borrows from the closed loops of nature, where waste is re-used. This approach sees production processes designed to be regenerative (production, re-use/ re-purpose), rather than linear (extraction, manufacture, disposal). For more information on the Circular Economy: ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/

Lytham volunteers lead the way

Lytham in Lancashire sits at the mouth of the Ribble Estuary on the Irish Sea. Last year the town picked up the RHS Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions award for its outstanding horticultural displays, its pristine environment and its strong sense of community. One of the many things that impressed the judges was the voluntary work to combat litter in the estuary.

The Friends of the Estuary Coastal Care Group (FotE) is spearheading a campaign to keep the area litter-free. The group was born out of one couple's determination to protect an environment they loved. Meg Green and her husband Jim came to live in Lytham six years ago and were saddened by the state of the estuary. "It was full of litter," says Meg. "As the tide comes it gets trapped in the saltmarsh grasses and just sits there. It's devastating for the marine life that becomes trapped in it or eats it."

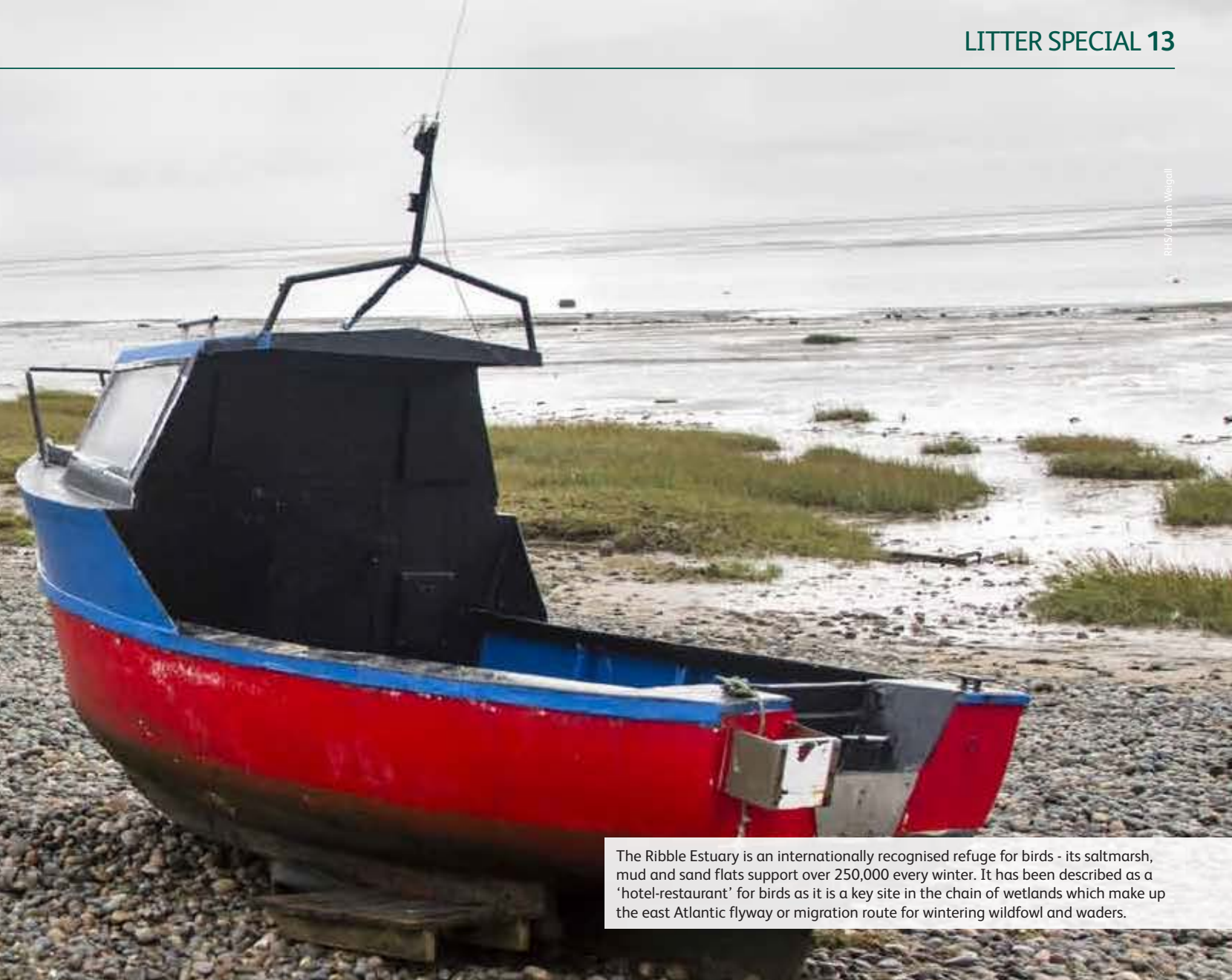
The couple started collecting rubbish when out on their walks. They met someone else who was interested and together they approached the council for litter-pickers. More and more people began to notice the small group on the foreshore and today FotE has 32 members.

"Most people see rubbish and think 'why don't they do something about it?' - but who's they?", says Meg. "The council didn't have the resources to do it, so we're working with them to tackle the problem. Our volunteers are all passionate about protecting the estuary and its wildlife."

Every Monday, FotE volunteers patrol the sand and mudflats collecting litter. Over the past five years they've amassed more than 3,000 bags of it. The group has inspired copycat action up the coast: in neighbouring Ansdell the Fairhaven Group care for their local beach.



The group's *Fishing for Litter* campaign provided local fishermen with bags to collect the litter caught in their nets, which is then deposited in council bins rather than being returned to the sea.



The Ribble Estuary is an internationally recognised refuge for birds - its saltmarsh, mud and sand flats support over 250,000 every winter. It has been described as a 'hotel-restaurant' for birds as it is a key site in the chain of wetlands which make up the east Atlantic flyway or migration route for wintering wildfowl and waders.

Group members are dedicated to raising awareness of the problems litter can cause. They hold open days and school visits to teach children about the wildlife that can be found along the coast and how litter endangers it. To help children understand how long rubbish takes to break down Meg keeps a jar of seawater filled with small pieces of plastic, which remain obstinately intact.

FotE also encourage people to learn about the unique flora along the coastline and have produced a booklet, *Wildflowers on our Coast*. "We've got edibles too!" says Meg. "Lots of samphire and scurvy grass, full of vitamin C."

The group works in partnership with organisations such as Fylde Borough Council, Lytham in Bloom, RSPB and The Wildlife Trusts as well as with local businesses; the Fat Face clothing store allows the group to put up a display in its window. There is further work planned to approach local businesses about providing alternatives to plastic bags and containers.

In summer 2013 they launched an initiative to reduce the amount of marine litter in the estuary. FotE's *Fishing for Litter* campaign provides fishermen with bags to collect the rubbish caught in their nets, which is then deposited in bins provided by the council rather than being returned to the sea. The scheme has been so popular that the group is hoping to roll it out to more fishermen and a sailing club further up the coast.

Meg believes that litter has become less of a problem in Lytham since the group first started out. "We've seen less litter in the estuary

over the summer months, with less blowing out from town," she says. "Of course we still have lots after big storms, when it blows in from the sea, but in Lytham we deal with problems and the word is getting round."

She's positive about the future and is buoyed by the group's successes after a hardworking year. "We enjoy what we do and it is a great pleasure to be involved with these marvellous friendly people and all the other organisations in this community of Lytham."

"I've always loved the sea," she adds. "This year we have seen the highest number of reported sightings of basking sharks, whales, turtles and porpoises."

"Knowing what amazing creatures we've got out there, I feel that I need to let people know what marine life we have here along the North West coast and in the Irish Sea."

friends-of-the-estuary.co.uk



Education plays a vital role in the group's efforts to reduce litter

Clean waterways

Clear Cut Conservation is an RHS It's Your Neighbourhood group that removes litter from four miles of the Grand Union Canal near Loughborough.

Approximately twice a month throughout the year the team patrols the canal and collects around three bags of floating rubbish, as well as grappling out larger items such as bikes and shopping trolleys. The collected waste is then sorted, with cans and metals sold as scrap and recycled.

"Litter is a real problem in the canal," says It's Your Neighbourhood assessor Peter Benham. Submerged under the water it can damage boats' hulls or get stuck in rudders. It's also a risk to wildlife, which can become entangled in it. And of course it's unsightly to look at. "Working closely with the Canal and River Trust, Clear Cut Conservation have significantly reduced the problems posed by litter in this stretch of the canal," says Peter.

Group founder Barrie Ball believes the group's work over the past three years has helped to reduce the amount of rubbish now being thrown into the canal. "It used to be very untidy, full of floating litter," he says, "but now people seem to be keeping it cleaner."

Barrie Ball surveys for litter from the group's boat, which was donated by a local boatyard.



Peter Benham

"We can't prove it's down to us of course, but there has been a big drop in the amount of rubbish we're collecting. It used to be six bags every week when we started out, now it's only three."

Volunteers patrol the water in a boat donated by local boatyard owner Mark Harris. Litter-picking equipment is sponsored by canal-side businesses and fuel is purchased with funds raised from the sale of scrap metal. In total, Barrie estimates they have pulled 56 bicycles and nine shopping trolleys out of the water, plus a few more surprising items such as a toilet bowl and a 20-foot aluminium ladder. "We always have a good laugh about the things we find," he chuckles.

Grrreat litter-picking in Stone

Stone in Staffordshire has a secret litter-fighting weapon up its sleeve: Aslan, the white German shepherd dog belonging to Stone in Bloom member, Tony Panter.



Stone in Bloom

Aslan's fondness for collecting plastic bottles and aluminium cans on his walks led Tony to an idea. To raise funds for the group, Stone in Bloom challenged local residents to guess how many cans and bottles Aslan would pick up over a three-month period. They charged £1 per guess and in total received 480 entries. Many people were so engaged by the initiative that they left their details with the group, keen to get involved in future activities.

"Aslan collected 190 containers over the three-month period and the funds he raised helped us to repaint all the town-centre street furniture," says Tony. "He also helped us to raise awareness about litter and recycling, engaging people in a serious issue but in a fun way."

stoneinbloom.com

Litter-picking star Aslan (left) and friend manning the Stone in Bloom stand at the farmers market with owner Tony Panter (left). The German shepherd dog helped the group to engage many more people in the local Bloom campaign.



Tubs placed around the village contained a range of edibles, which the public were invited to share.

Horsley Garden Club

Village catches the edibles bug

RHS Affiliated Society Horsley Garden Club in Northumberland joined last year's Edible Britain campaign and was overwhelmed by the response from local people.

One of our members heard of the initiative taking place across the country to plant edible displays and felt that this would be a lovely scheme for the village which would include input from various groups and organisations," explains Society Treasurer Anne Hudson.

Horsley W.I. participated and raised £200 to purchase four tubs for the village with the aim of filling them with edible plants. Garden club members then provided the plants, which were grown from the free herb and

vegetable seeds provided by the RHS.

Group members walked through the village and selected four locations where the edible planters would offer the most benefit to nearby residents. Tubs were planted up in May and residents were invited to water them throughout the summer.

"By this time just about everyone in the village knew of this scheme, so volunteers were not an issue," says Anne. "We put up signs encouraging people just to go and snip a few herbs. Others have taken full lettuces,

Affiliated Society Updates

Updated Information Pack

Affiliated Societies receive a range of benefits with their membership, including a monthly copy of *The Garden*, free access to the RHS Advisory service, a free annual visit to one of the RHS Gardens, plus access to a range of special show stationery and medals, insurance and an Affiliated Society logo.

The RHS Affiliated Societies Information Pack contains the details of how to access all the scheme's benefits, plus additional advice about organising shows, generating publicity and attracting members.

Affiliated Societies are provided with a pack when they first register for the scheme. Should you like to receive an updated 2014 pack by email, please contact affsocs@rhs.org.uk.

RHS Shows and Gardens

Affiliated Societies will find the details of the 2014 special affiliated society rates for RHS Shows and Gardens inserted into this magazine. Should you also require this information sent by email, please contact affsocs@rhs.org.uk quoting your affiliation number.

RHS Partner Gardens

In 2014, Affiliated Societies, Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups can enjoy special offers at 28 RHS Partner Gardens. For the details of what's on offer, please visit: rhs.org.uk/groups

but we didn't mind as the main objective is the enjoyment of the produce."

For Anne, the thrill has come from encouraging people to discover the joy of picking fresh salad leaves and herbs. "Many people were trying fresh herbs for the first time and wanted ideas on how to use them, resulting in the swapping of remedies and recipes. The produce has provided a good talking point in the community and had positive health benefits.

"The residents have given us excellent feedback about the tubs and tourists stop to sample the herbs after reading the signs. It's been so successful that the garden centre is now keen to encourage something similar in the next village. I don't think at the initial stages we realised just how many people this would involve!"

Special offers for groups

Community groups can access great rates to visit RHS Shows and Gardens in 2014. Book your ticket today and enjoy a fantastic day out.



Enjoy the outstanding summer displays at RHS Gardens such as Hyde Hall in Essex. Below: RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show offers inspirational show gardens as well as the chance to buy special plants for your garden

Group rates for RHS Shows

We have fantastic rates for groups, simply call our groups booking line on **0800 358 0058** (opening times Monday to Friday 8am – 6pm) and quote **COMM14**.

RHS Flower Show Cardiff, 11-13 April

Bute Park, Cardiff Castle
Join us this spring for great gardening, good company and a host of fascinating things to see and do, as the RHS Flower Show Cardiff celebrates its 10th year!
Advance full day prices: Groups of 10+ £8.00pp; Individual £8.50pp.

RHS Chelsea Flower Show, 20-24 May

Royal Hospital, Chelsea
After last year's magnificent centenary event, the future takes centre stage at Chelsea 2014, promising to be one of the most exciting shows in years.
Advance full day prices: No group rates available; Individual £58pp.

RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, 8-13 July

East Molesey, Surrey
Packed with exciting features, this year's RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show promises to be the ultimate "Great Garden Festival".
Advance full day prices: Groups of 10+ £25pp; 40+ £21pp; Individual £30.00pp.

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park, 23-27 July

Knutsford, Cheshire
Set in the grounds of one of Britain's most historic estates, RHS Flower Show Tatton Park is the setting for chic style, innovative garden designs and the best young talent around.
Advance full day prices: Groups of 10+ £21pp; 40+ £17.50pp; Individual £24pp.

Group rates for RHS Gardens

Here is just a selection of the many events taking place at each of the four RHS Gardens. For information please visit rhs.org.uk/gardens

RHS Garden Harlow Carr, Yorkshire

- The British Iris Show, 22-23 March
 - Rhododendron Show, 10-11 May
 - Spring Plant Fair, 4 May
 - Orchid Show, 12-13 July
 - Autumn Plant Fair, 7 September
 - Taste of Autumn Festival, 4-5 October
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Groups of 10+ £6.90pp. To book please call 01423 724690*

RHS Garden Hyde Hall, Essex

- Spring Flower Festival, 22-23 March
- Spring Plant Fair, 26-27 April
- Real Ale and Cider Weekend, 7-8 June
- Hyde Hall Flower Show, 31 July-3 Aug
- Contemporary Craft & Design Fair, 22-25

August

- Autumn Plant Fair, 20-21 September
 - Autumn Festival, 18-19 October
 - Essex Craft & Design Show, 22-23 Nov
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Group of 10+ £6.90pp. To book please call 0845 265 8071*

RHS Garden Rosemoor, Devon

- Spring Flower Show, 15-16 March
 - Spring Weekend Gardening, 12-13 April
 - Spring Craft & Design Fair, 3-5 May
 - Journeys into Middle Earth Art Exhibition, 24 May-25 August
 - Rose Weekend, 21-22 June
 - West Country Craft Fair, 5-7 September
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Groups of 10+ £6.90pp. To book please call 01805 626810*

RHS Garden Wisley, Surrey

- Spring Plant Fair, 21-23 March
 - Spring Gardening Weekend, 12-13 April
 - Contemporary Craft and Design Fair, 30 April-5 May
 - Arts Fest, 28-29 June
 - Wisley Flower Show, 2-7 September
 - Taste of Autumn Festival, 15-19 October
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Groups of 10+ £10pp. To book please call 01483 212307*

