

Britain in Bloom Marking Criteria - FAQ

Although this question and answer sheet is not exhaustive, it is intended to answer those questions most frequently asked.

What Has Changed and Why:	
Q1.	Why have the Britain in Bloom marking criteria been updated?
Q1A.	<p>The marking criteria have been updated in response to feedback from hundreds of Bloom groups as well as numerous Bloom judges and reflects the changing nature of Bloom.</p> <p>Increased Emphasis on Community:</p> <p>The programme is being increasingly supported by entirely voluntary communities, with very few councils still able to support their local Bloom projects. People are being motivated to bring their community together and make it a better place through the power of plants.</p> <p>We know that Bloom is so much more than just flowers and people with the broadest range of skills can contribute to the success of their local Bloom group.</p> <p>To remain relevant to these hard working communities the programme needs to recognise their efforts and a simple way to do this is to reward them with additional marks for community involvement.</p> <p>Increased Emphasis on Environment:</p> <p>Bloom groups are working in an increasingly challenging environment and the programme should reflect this. While topics like climate change and pollution are frequently highlighted in the news, for people working in Bloom these issues are an everyday reality. The 2018 drought only emphasised the important frontline work Bloom groups are doing to mitigate these challenges.</p> <p>Environment is also a motivating factor for people, particularly young people, to volunteer for Bloom. To reflect the importance of the environment to Bloom supporters and the important positive impact Bloom has on the environment - it makes perfect sense to increase how environment is represented in the overall marks.</p> <p>Simplification of the Marking Structure:</p> <p>The newly simplified marking structure is designed to enable new entrants to easily join the programme with a clear understanding of what they are being assessed against. The simplified structure also aims to help new judges employ the criteria more easily and to ensure that all judges' assessments are as consistent as possible.</p>
Q2.	What has changed about the allocation of marks?
Q2A.	<p>The marks are now allocated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40% for horticulture, • 30% for environment, and • 30% for community.

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	(In the old marking criteria marks were awarded 50% for horticulture, 25% for environment and 25% for community).															
Q3.	Will the new marking criteria change our overall score or medal level?															
Q3A.	<p>When tested against the old system, the new marking criteria made very small changes to the scores in line with redistribution of marks which places greater emphasis on environment and community.</p> <p>For the most part these changes made no difference to the overall medal levels awarded – i.e. Bronze, Silver, Silver-Gilt or Gold.</p>															
Q4.	Does the redistribution of marks dumb down the horticultural aspect of Bloom?															
Q4A.	<p>The redistribution of marks does not dumb down horticulture; it does however celebrate the amazing community spirit that is at the heart of Bloom.</p> <p>Horticulture remains the most important aspect of Bloom and this is reflected by the fact that 40% of all marks are awarded for horticulture. There is no intention to reduce this 40%.</p>															
Q5.	Why is there a separate Urban Marking Sheet? And what are the key differences between the Urban and Standard Marking Sheets?															
Q5A.	<p>A separate Urban Marking Sheet has been created to assess entries to the 'BID/ Town Centre/ City Centre' category and the 'Urban Communities' category to reflect their specifically urban nature.</p> <p>The key differences between the Urban Marking Sheet and the Standard Marking Sheet are:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="438 1198 1284 1635"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sections:</th> <th>Urban Marking Sheet</th> <th>Standard Marking Sheet</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>• A3</td> <td>Seasonal Displays</td> <td>Plant Selection</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• A4</td> <td>Plant Selection and Quality</td> <td>Plant Quality</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• B2</td> <td>Built Environment</td> <td>Natural Environment</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• B3</td> <td>Hard Surfaces</td> <td>Hard Surfaces and Open Grass Areas</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>There are some other minor text differences between the two marking sheets.</p>	Sections:	Urban Marking Sheet	Standard Marking Sheet	• A3	Seasonal Displays	Plant Selection	• A4	Plant Selection and Quality	Plant Quality	• B2	Built Environment	Natural Environment	• B3	Hard Surfaces	Hard Surfaces and Open Grass Areas
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Q6.	Will all the Regions and Nations be using the new marking criteria?															
Q6A.	<p>Each Region and Nation is approaching the new marking criteria differently.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some adopted it straight away in 2019, others will be using it for the first time in 2020. • All the Regions and Nations are intending to use the new marking criteria in 2020. 															

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	<p>If you are uncertain about your area please do contact your local Regional or National coordinator. A full list of contact details is available here: https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/britain-in-bloom/register</p>
Using the New Marking Sheets:	
Q7.	What has changed about the marking sheet itself?
Q7A.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each sub section is scored out of 10 points instead of the previous 20. • The overall score for each entry is out of 100 instead of the previous 200. • Descriptions of what the judges expect to see for each score are included in the marking sheet. • The language is designed to be clear and simple to reduce subjectivity and help judges assess consistently.
Q8.	Will entrants find it difficult to change over from the old to the new marking sheet?
Q8A.	<p>We do not anticipate any specific challenges for entrants moving from the old to the new marking sheet.</p> <p>Those who have done so previously (e.g. The 2018 UK Finalist 'BID/ Town Centre/ City Centre' category entrants and regional Bloom entrants in Yorkshire) have not encountered any specific challenges when moving to the new criteria.</p> <p>Training will be offered at most regional seminars and the UK Finals seminar in 2019.</p> <p>If you do have any concerns please do contact either the RHS Communities Team or your local regional coordinator. See point 12A below for contact details.</p>
Q9.	Should we try assessing ourselves against the new marking criteria?
Q9A.	<p>Self-assessment can be a really brilliant tool to help you improve your entry. By working through the marking criteria in an honest and impartial way you can identify your strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>By concentrating on your lower scoring areas you can look to improve your overall marks. You can repeat the exercise several times to track your progression.</p>
Q10.	Why does the marking sheet show the medal levels for Horticulture (Section A), Environment (Section B) and Community Section C)?
Q10A.	<p>In the UK Finals the RHS does not share the entrants' scores, only the medal levels awarded. We have found that by showing the medal level achieved for each of the sections (Horticulture, Environment and Community) it helps entrants understand where they have excelled and where they might need to focus their efforts in order to improve in the future.</p> <p>Each Region and Nation handles the sharing of scores or medal levels differently, and this will be reflected in each entrant's reports. For more information about your local Bloom regions please contact them directly, a full list of contact details is available here: https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/britain-in-bloom/register</p>

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Q11.	How will judges share their feedback?
Q11A.	<p>The form has expandable sections allowing the judges to provide comprehensive and meaningful comments as much as they deem necessary.</p> <p>They will provide an Overall Impression as well as specific feedback on each entrant's performance in Horticulture, Environment and Community.</p> <p>Please note at the UK Finals the judges also provide face to face feedback to groups at the judges' surgeries. Some Regions and Nations also provide local judges surgeries, this varies between regions.</p>
Q12.	What happens if an entry scores less than 50 marks?
Q12A.	<p>If an entry scores less than 50 marks, they will be given a certificate of participation. In their comments the judges will provide the entry with encouraging feedback, highlighting how they could improve their score in the future.</p>
Q13.	Will the judges assess everything they see?
Q13A.	<p>Your entire tour route is subject to judging; that means what the judges see on the way from one feature stop to another, as well as what they see at all the stops. The judges will expect that your campaign has considered your entire community and not just the high street or the village square and that, where you have "problem" areas (e.g. vacant premises/plots, eyesores etc.), you have plans in place to address these.</p>
Further Information	
Q14.	How can I find out more information?
Q14A.	<p>Please direct any queries to the RHS Communities Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email: communities@rhs.org.uk, or • Telephone: 0207 8213122 <p>Or to the coordinator of your local Bloom Region or Nation. A full list of contact details is available here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/britain-in-bloom/register