



Britain in Bloom UK Finals 2026

FAQs for finalists

Last updated: 19 January 2026

General Logistics & Protocol

- **Q: Can we recommend or choose a hotel for the judges?**
- A: We ask for recommendations from you in our finalists' welcome survey. There are a few requirements to take into account when selecting hotels and there is no guarantee that we will book these suggestions (due to factors such as availability, cost, location etc.). Please note, the RHS has a policy to use Premier Inns where possible for consistency of standard and ease of making payment.
- **Q: Do we need to collect the judges from the train station or airport when they arrive?**
- A: It depends on the time of arrival and location. We will discuss the arrival time and location with you and will arrange for other means of transport for the judges if collection is not possible.
- **Q: Can we take the judges out for dinner the night before the judging?**
- A: This depends on the judges - some are happy to do this while others prefer a little quiet time while on tour. We will ask if you would like to extend this invitation to your judges that you do so directly, following the Finalists' Seminar. They will confirm directly with you before the tour. Please do not feel obliged to invite the judges out - there is no expectation that entrants would do this, and it will not impact your entry either way.
- **Q: Do we need to collect judges from their hotel on the morning of the tour?**
- A: This would be welcomed, as the tours can begin early in the day, and it would allow the group to take the judges straight to the start of the tour.
- **Q: Do we need to provide lunch and refreshments for the judges?**
- A: This is entirely up to you. This will not impact on your judging tour time. If you wish to have refreshments available at the end of the tour or during your presentation, we are sure the judges will be very grateful. Sufficient time for any refreshments will be planned into the judging tour itineraries.
- **Q: Can we be in touch with the judges or anyone else prior to the judging week to get particular advice?**
- A: The judges are very happy to answer your questions relating to the judging experience and we actively encourage you to contact them for advice. Support from judges is available until one month before your judging day, after which time judges will no longer be able to respond to queries. The RHS Communities team will of course still be available to help you with any questions you may have.



Judges can answer specific queries or give 'top tips' on:

- the marking sheet
- the judging guidelines
- organising your tour
- the portfolio and the presentation

Judges cannot answer queries on:

- the scheduling of your judging day
- their travel and accommodation arrangements
- changes to deadlines for submissions to the RHS (e.g. portfolio or images deadline)
- tickets for the awards ceremony

All these queries should be directed to the RHS by contacting communities@rhs.org.uk or calling 0207 821 3122.

- **Q: When do we find out when the awards are and how many people can come from our group?**
- A: The awards ceremony will take place in October (the actual date, time and location is TBC). It will be a daytime event. We will send you further details regarding timings and number of attendees nearer the time.
- **Q: Is there a Bloom theme for 2026?**
- A: No, there is not a specific theme for Bloom in 2026. Groups are asked to look across all the Bloom pillars of Horticulture, Environment and Community as indicated in the Bloom marking criteria.

The Judging Tour

- **Q: When will we find out our judging date?**
- A: You will be notified of your judging date by the end of April.
- **Q: Do judges start assessing the night before or the moment they arrive?**
- A: No, the judges only start assessing when the tour starts officially on the day of the judging.
- **Q: Can we provide a presentation to the judges on the day of the judging tour and what should be included?**
- A: Yes, all finalists are welcome to begin their tour with a presentation or include a presentation during the tour. What you include in the presentation is entirely up to you, but it could focus on providing an overview of year-round activity, especially anything that the judges won't be able to see during the judging tour such as community events, litter picks etc.



- **Q: Does it matter when we do the presentation (i.e. at the start, middle or end)?**
- A: This will depend on the purpose and format of the group's presentation and how it fits best with the route. A lot of groups do it at the start, but there's no preference from judges. It's entirely up to you to do it where it fits best.
- **Q: What format should the presentation take?**
- A: Presentations can be made using any visual or audio aids as you see fit such as printed handouts, photographs or playing videos on a screen or tablet. However, you should focus on providing focused content and highlighting your achievements and activities rather than the style of the presentation.
- **Q: How long should the presentation be and is the time for the presentation included within the judging tour allocation time for the category?**
- A: The maximum length for presentations is 15 minutes. These 15 minutes are not included within the judging tour allocation for each category but are planned into the tour itinerary on top of the allocated judging time.
- **Q: Is there a preferred sequence for the visit and the tour to follow?**
- A: How you decide to plan the route and tour is entirely up to you. It is never too early to start planning your route and you should think about the importance of setting out an itinerary. This could include where the judges will go, what they'll see, and who they'll meet at those locations and times. You should refer back to your Bloom category for the allocated tour timings. These can be found on the [Online Finalists' hub](#).
- **Q: How do we decide what to include in the tour?**
- A: It is your decision what to include in the tour. It is a good idea to look carefully at the different points of the marking criteria and consider what part of your tour ticks which box. Anything that cannot be fitted into the tour itself can be included in your portfolio.

We ask that the group provides each judge with an A4 paper handout (preferably one sided) containing a brief summary of the judging route and the names of key people and places. This will act as a useful memory aid for the judges when writing their reports.

- **Q: Does the judging time allocation include presentations and lunch or refreshments?**
- A: No, your judging time allocation is for your tour only. You will be allowed an additional 15 minutes for your presentation and 15 minutes for any press opportunities. If you choose to offer refreshments or lunch, and this is entirely optional, this would be outside of the allocated time. Some time for refreshments is built into the tour itinerary for those who wish to provide it.

You must ensure your judging tour can be completed in the allocated length of time; extra time will only be allowed if there are unforeseen circumstances and then only at the judges' discretion.



- **Q: How do we know what time the judges will need to leave?**
- A: You will be notified of the approximate time judges will need to leave when the planned tour is agreed and confirmed. It will be based on the allocated judging time for your Bloom category, as well as extra time allotted for your presentation, press and any refreshments.
- **Q: Should we invite important people, e.g. the mayor or other representatives to meet judges on the day of the tour?**
- A: This is entirely up to you and your entry. However, you should consider their relevance to your Bloom entry and the value they will bring to the process. It is not necessary to invite an important person to just greet our judges for example.
- **Q: How many people should lead the judges on tour?**
- A: We recommend that a maximum of three or four people lead the judges on the tour. Judges can and should meet other representatives from your community at different times in the day, but for the main route fewer people works best. This makes it easier to get across your key messages, and for the judges to ask questions. Please avoid having large groups of people walking around with the judges as this can be distracting for them.
- **Q: Why do judges take (so many) photographs on tour?**
- A: Judges use the photographs as an aide-memoir of what they have seen.
- **Q: What are some useful tips to help keep the tour running to time?**
- A: Planning and preparation is key. It is a good idea to practice the tour and to time each section before the day, so you know what to expect. You may also want to share a tour plan with each person involved, listing key times and locations. Remember to ensure that everyone has an up-to-date copy on the day.
- **Q: Will the Scottish entries be arranged later on the judging tour to allow for later flowering periods in Scotland?**
- A: We will endeavour to arrange for the judging tours in Scotland and the northern parts of the UK to take place at later dates. However, this will depend on a number of factors including judge availability and travel timings.
- **Q: What is the best way to communicate the involvement of young people from schools given that the judging may take place during school holidays?**
- A: You can share and highlight the involvement of children and young people in your presentation using photographs, quotes from teachers or through a video. You should also include these stories in your portfolio where possible and focus on how their taking part has positively impacted their learning, the environment or the community that they have worked with or provided for. If you are taking images of young people, the age of 16 or under you need to obtain written permission from their parent or guardian (if this is in a school setting please liaise with the school).



Judges' Highlights and Discretionary Awards

- **Q: How can a Bloom group be nominated for Judges' Highlights or Discretionary Awards?**
- A: Bloom groups may be nominated by their pair of judges for Judges' Highlights or Discretionary Awards. For more information about the Judges' Highlights and Discretionary Awards see the [Online Finalists' hub](#) under **Guidance about the Britain in Bloom Judges' Highlights and Discretionary Awards**.
- **Q: Are the Community Champions and Young Champions two separate discretionary awards?**
- A: Yes. The Community Champions and Young Champions are two separate awards presented to individuals who demonstrate exceptional commitment to Bloom in their community. Young Champions need to be 21 years or younger at the point of nomination.
- **Q: We would like to suggest a group leader be nominated for the Community Champion discretionary award discretely and without them knowing. How should we do this?**
- A: You can make a discrete suggestion by directly emailing the judges and the Communities team using the communities@rhs.org.uk email. You should make it clear why the person you would like to be recognised for the award deserves to be nominated by the judges. Please note, it is at the judges' discretion to whether or not the person will be nominated for an award.

Portfolios

- **Q: How long does the portfolio need to be?**
- A: The portfolio should be no more than 30 pages of A4 in total (not including an appendix if you choose to include this). There is no limit on file size.
- **Q: How do we submit our portfolio?**
- A: Portfolios need to be submitted electronically using the Award Force platform. Instructions on how to submit your portfolio can be found on the [Online Finalists' hub](#).
- **Q: Is there a limit on the size of appendices?**
- A: There is no set limit on the size of appendices. Please keep in mind that all key content should be within the main portfolio, which will be the judges' main focus. You should aim to create a portfolio that is easy for the judges to read and interpret, keeping it simple, relevant and informative. If you choose to include an appendix, please do your best to avoid repetition.
- **Q: Do we need to provide the judges with a paper copy of our portfolio at the start of the tour?**
- A: The RHS will provide judges with a copy of your portfolio at least a couple of weeks prior to judging. They will then either print this or have an electronic version of this with them on tour. You do not need to print out another copy of your portfolio for each of the judges,



unless this has drastically changed. Do remember the judges are travelling the length and breadth of the country and try to travel as light as possible. Please avoid giving judges additional literature on tour wherever possible.

We ask that each group provides each judge with an A4 paper handout (preferably one sided) containing a brief summary of the judging route and the names of key people and places. This will act as a memory aid for the judges when writing their reports.

Press Relations, Media, Photography & Promotion

- **Q: What forms of press and media will the judges take into account when making assessments?**
- A: Judges will take into account any form of press and media that you decide to present to them when making their assessments. This can include press cuttings, photographs, video and social media.
- **Q: Can we invite our own press to meet the judges?**
- A: Yes, but please ensure the judges are not disrupted during the tour. If you intend to have some kind of celebratory gathering at the end of your tour, this could be a good opportunity for a press call, but please advise the judges in advance and also check the itinerary with the RHS to ensure there is sufficient time. There is an additional allotted time of 15 minutes for meeting the press and media and this can be at any point during the tour.
- **Q: What permissions are needed for the photos we share with the RHS of our entry?**
- A: Photos bring your Bloom projects to life and help to inspire other community gardeners. All finalists are asked to submit a range of images that can be used by the RHS in a variety of ways to promote the Britain in Bloom campaign, including at the Awards ceremony on an AV presentation, on the RHS website, in RHS publications and on social media channels, and in the media.

Please ensure that anyone featured in a photo that will be sent in for use by the RHS has signed a consent form to ensure GDPR compliance. This applies for: any adult (over 16 years old) who is named, prominent or recognisable in the image/footage; any child aged 16 and under or vulnerable adults (consent forms should be completed by a parent/guardian); and property that is featured in the footage such as a government building, school or community centre.

For full image guidelines please visit the [Online Finalists' hub](#).

- **Q: Will the RHS arrange press and photographers to visit our entry?**
- A: The RHS may arrange for press or photographers to visit some entries at different times throughout the year, although we sadly cannot visit all entries. These images help us tell stories and raise the profile of the campaign. The RHS team will contact you in advance if they want to arrange a visit and ensure you have the right photo permissions in place. If you think you have a particularly interesting story to tell, please do share your ideas with the



team at communities@rhs.org.uk

- **Q: Can we use the Bloom Finalist 2026 logo on fundraising materials and merchandise such as tote bags?**
- A: Yes. You may use the Bloom Finalist 2026 logo on fundraising materials and merchandise. You must ensure that it is the Bloom Finalist 2026 logo that is used that includes the year. This is available to download through the [Online Finalists' hub](#).
- **Q: Will we receive new Bloom Finalist 2026 banners this year?**
- A: Yes. We will be sending Bloom Finalist 2026 banners to all finalists in March.