

Growing Communities



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The RHS Community update

A photograph of four children in a garden. A boy in a light blue t-shirt stands on the left, smiling. A boy in a pink polo shirt is leaning over, working in the plants. A girl in a white top is in the background, and a girl in a green top is on the right. They are surrounded by large green leaves and a yellow flower.

Digging Together!

RHS Dig Together Day turns two

UK strikes double gold at Entente Florale

Official: Gardening makes children happier

The Alys Fowler interview

A green, scalloped-edged badge with white text.

**Inside:
RHS Britain
in Bloom
2010
RESULTS**



Your magazine

Welcome to the autumn issue of *Growing Communities*, the magazine for all RHS “in Bloom” and It’s Your Neighbourhood participants and RHS Affiliated Societies.

It’s been a busy few months for all our groups – we bring you the results of this year’s RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals (pages 6-8) and a summary of 2010’s national *Dig Together Day* (pages 4-5).

We’ve got a particular focus on working with young people in this issue, with advice from the *RHS Campaign for School Gardening* (pages 10-11) and insights into some award-winning work with young people (page 13).

As you know, we’re always looking for stories to publish in the magazine. Whether you’re finding new ways to work with the local community, developing an interesting environmental project, or doing innovative and exciting things with horticulture, please send your news and ideas to Sophie Dawson, sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk or phone her on 020 7821 3118.

Many thanks, The Editors

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Cover: Mickleton Young Gardeners, Cover and above image: James Pussell

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Goodbye and thank you to three RHS Britain in Bloom judges

The RHS Britain in Bloom team is sad to lose three outstanding members of the UK judging panel at the end of this year. Jim Buttress, Susan Smith and Mark Wasilewski step down after a combined service of more than 50 years.

Jim Buttress first joined Bloom in 1986 and has been at the heart of the campaign ever since, chairing the judges’ panel from 2004 – 2008 and presenting many an enjoyable Britain in Bloom awards evening. Jim’s horticultural background is unrivalled: he’s one of only 63 horticulturalists worldwide who currently hold the coveted Victoria Medal of Honour.

Susan Smith’s involvement with Britain in Bloom also began in 1986, in Bournemouth, where she had considerable experience as a competitor. She joined the UK national judging panel in 2001 and has judged the Champion of Champions category for the last three years. She is also trustee and judge for South and South East in Bloom.

Mark Wasilewski has been a member of the panel since 2004, and Vice-Chair since 2008. A leading light within the campaign, Mark will be sorely missed when he steps down in October. As Parks Manager for St James’s Park and The Green Park, he will be focusing on the Olympics for the next couple of years, after which we very much hope he will return to Bloom.

Both personally, and from the whole team at RHS Britain in Bloom, I would like to thank Jim, Susan and Mark for their enormous contribution to the campaign over the years and wish them the very best of luck for the future.

Roger Burnett,
Chair of the UK Judges Panel



Birmingham welcomes RHS Britain in Bloom

Above: Canal Bridge at Water's Edge, Brindleyplace, used by thousands of people every day and links the commercial areas of Broad Street to the International Convention Centre and civic squares. Below: Spitfire, Victoria Square, a popular feature of the 2010 City Centre Floral Trail.

Over 500 gardening enthusiasts enjoyed the RHS Britain in Bloom awards dinner at the Centennial Centre in Birmingham on 29 September, generously hosted by Birmingham City Centre Partnership.

Birmingham city centre has a long “in Bloom” history of its own: it first entered the Urban Regeneration category in 2003, since when its City Centre Floral Trail has achieved remarkable success, winning Gold at a national level in 2005, 2007 and 2009, as well as numerous awards in Heart of England in Bloom.

Hilary Hall, a founding member of Birmingham City Centre Partnership and an “in Bloom” Champion since 2008, said, “The City Centre Floral Trail is always enthusiastically embraced by residents, businesses and visitors. This year we felt that it was time for the whole of Birmingham to get behind the campaign, which can make a real difference to people’s perceptions and enjoyment of an area. The 2010 Awards mark the end of an era for the Partnership – and the start of a new one for the City of Birmingham, with their entry into the Large City category”.

The Floral Trail has featured some unusual displays celebrating Birmingham’s success: the giant floral hat and shoes in the city centre are bold statements of Birmingham’s position as the best shopping destination in England, outside London’s West End. The city’s industrial heritage is reflected in features such as the spitfire and canal

boat, and even the hoarding around the new Library of Birmingham construction site includes a living wall.

The City Council’s Parks and Nurseries staff take care of over 3,300 hectares of parks and open spaces, 29 million square metres of grass, 4,600 baskets and planters, in addition to growing and planting 2.5 million plants each year. The city has eight Green Flag parks, with the Lickey Hills Country Park maintaining the standard for 11 years. There’s also a strong interest in community gardening and volunteering, with over 7,000 allotment plots and waiting lists for most of the 115 sites.

Close to the city centre is the world-renowned Botanical Gardens. These beautiful gardens are the oldest independent botanical gardens with glasshouses in the UK. Set in 15 acres of stunning landscape, the collection of over 7,500 plants is the most diverse in the Midlands.

Hilary continues, “Our City Centre Floral Trail receives massive support from residents and local businesses, including our three City Centre Business Improvement Districts, which collectively contribute over £100,000 towards additional planting and features.

“We are very grateful to them and to our principle sponsors of the 2010 Awards,

Redcliffe Catering and Urban Stone, in addition to the City Council’s Parks and Nurseries team who have helped us to make all this happen”.



The City Centre Floral Trail is always enthusiastically embraced by residents, businesses and visitors.

Hilary Hall, Birmingham City Centre Partnership





Dig Together celebrates two years

Gardening clubs and horticultural societies around the UK were out in force on the weekend of 4 – 5 September to enjoy the second annual Dig Together Day – held to celebrate the work societies do and encourage more people to get involved. Honorary President of Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society, Jonathan Ross, supported this year's event.

He said, "Gardening clubs are great for getting together, getting outdoors and exchanging gardening know-how. You can go along and learn about anything from how to grow your own veg to how to prune a bonsai tree – I've learnt so much from my own society."

The annual 'dig' encourages groups to share their gardening knowledge and expertise with the local community, providing fun activities which are open to all.

Over 100 RHS Affiliated Societies got involved, offering everything from willow weaving to winter tub planting demonstrations, community garden restoration to wild orchid seed sowing.

Many thanks to all involved for their efforts. There was a good deal of press coverage about this year's event, which we will be sharing with participating groups shortly. Plans are already underway for next year's event and we'll be using groups' feedback to make sure that DTD 2011 is an even greater success. More details to follow in the January issue.



Gardening clubs are great for getting together, getting outdoors and exchanging gardening know-how. You can go along and learn about anything...


Jonathan Ross 

Image: Katie Robinson enjoyed a workshop making insect houses at Walthamstow's community day



Image: James Pursell

Left: Blunston Village Garden Club

Highlights of Dig Together Day 2010

Restoring Great Dixter's traditional wildflower meadows

In East Sussex, **Northiam Horticultural Society** invited the local community to help the group reinstate one of several traditional meadows around Great Dixter House and Gardens. Led by head gardener, Fergus Garrett, the group scattered hay bundles full of native wild flower seeds from Dixter's diverse flower meadows around fields pre-prepared with a spike harrow. Summarising the day, Fergus said, "With so many meadows being lost to agriculture over the years, it's wonderful that we can help to spread a bit of diversity back into the local landscape."

"The group was fantastic. We dispersed a broad mix of native wildflower seeds, including orchids, and we hope that everyone will come back in a few years time to see the results of their work."



Above: Walthamstow's community day



Image: Carol Casselden

Above: Northiam Horticultural Society



Image: James Pursell

Above: Mickleton Young Gardeners

'Brilliant' young gardeners lead the way

Mickleton Young Gardeners (MYG) in Gloucestershire showed off the fruits of their labours at an open allotment 'Dig Together Day' event. Young members were on hand to show visitors around and explain the work they'd been doing on their plot.

Barry Metcalfe, of MYG, said, "It's been a fantastic day and we had almost 300 people turn up – many more than we expected. The children were brilliant – it was their day and they really enjoyed showing visitors around. Everyone was very impressed with their efforts, including the other plot holders, and it was a great chance for different sections of the community to meet and enjoy an afternoon together."

New 'gateway' to village

Blunston Village Garden Club in Wiltshire gave something back to the community with their Dig Together Day, planting a new gravel border around three large stones at the gateway to the village. The 16-strong team gallantly braved the rain to dig in a selection of plants chosen for the site, rewarded at the end of the day with free chips from the local pub!

"Our members were joined by parish councillors and fellow villagers to plant up our new 'Gateway'" said Lou Johnson, Chair of Blunston Village Garden Club. "We had a very rewarding day; the weather cleared up and we enjoyed planting out 45 herbaceous plants and about 3000 seasonal bulbs together as a team. Next year we'd like to brighten up another area in our village as part of this scheme."

Walthamstow's community day

In London, **Walthamstow Village Residents' Association (WVRA)** celebrated Dig Together Day with a community plant, produce and seed swap. Children enjoyed a workshop making insect houses out of reclaimed wood, bamboo and straw, while parents found inspiration for the garden with new plants and seeds. Horticultural experts from the

society were on-hand to answer questions and offer advice.

"It was a wonderful event and a great opportunity to get people together and spread some enthusiasm for gardening" said Helen Lerner, of WVRA. "We have a strong sense of community in this area and it's great to encourage people to get involved in caring for their local environment."

New bee border for Market Weston village hall

In Suffolk, **P.O.T.S. Hopton & District Gardening Club** enjoyed a day of digging as part of their activities, with the preparation of a new bee border in front of the village hall.

The area had been completely overgrown before the group decided to take it under their wing and create a community garden for wildlife, stocked with pollinating insect friendly plants, such as lavender, foxgloves, *Rudbeckia sp* and *Verbena bonariensis*.

Anita Dawkins, P.O.T.S. Secretary, said, "We had a really enjoyable time – and many hands made light work of the digging! Ten willing volunteers gathered in the misty hour after dawn to begin creating the garden. We've prepared the bed and now look forward to completing the planting and enticing the fauna in with lots of seductive flora."



Above: P.O.T.S. Hopton & District Gardening Club

Congratulations RHS Britain in Bloom Awards 2010!

We bring you the results of this year's RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals, listed by category.



Above: Sunderland

Small Village		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Stanghow	Northumbria	Gold & Joint Category Winner
Wolfscastle	Wales	Gold & Joint Category Winner

Village		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bulphan	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Muthill	Scotland	Silver
Norton in Hales	Heart of England	Gold & Category Winner
Scarva	Northern Ireland	Silver Gilt

Large Village		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Cayton	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Comrie	Scotland	Gold & Category Winner
Market Bosworth	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
St. Pierre du Bois	Guernsey	Gold
Tatsfield	South East	Gold
Wedmore	South West	Gold
Woolton	North West	Gold

Small Town		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Ahoghill	Northern Ireland	Silver
Cricklade	South West	Gold
Garstang	North West	Gold & Category Winner
Hunmanby	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Keswick	Cumbria	Silver
Long Sutton	East Midlands	Silver
Sedgefield	Northumbria	Silver

Town		
Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
City of London	London	Gold & Category Winner
Cupar	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Douglas	Isle of Man	Silver Gilt
Halstead	Anglia	Silver Gilt
St Saviour	Jersey	Silver Gilt
Wetherby	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt



Left: City of London
Below: Hunstanton

Large Town / Small City (12-35k)

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bicester	Thames and Chilterns	Silver Gilt
Bury St Edmunds	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Coleraine	Northern Ireland	Silver Gilt
Colwyn Bay	Wales	Silver Gilt
Durham	Northumbria	Silver
Perth	Scotland	Gold & Category Winner
Whitehaven	Cumbria	Silver Gilt

Large Town / Small City (35-100k)

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bedford	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Crawley	South East	Silver Gilt & Category Winner
Derry City	Northern Ireland	Silver
Fareham	South	Silver Gilt

City

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Aberdeen	Scotland	Bronze
London Borough of Islington	London	Silver Gilt
Northampton	East Midlands	Silver
Solihull	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
Tameside	North West	Gold & Category Winner

Large City

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bristol	South West	Silver Gilt
Leeds	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Sunderland	Northumbria	Silver Gilt & Category Winner

Coastal (12k and below)

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Hunstanton	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Lytham	North West	Gold
Mablethorpe	East Midlands	Silver
North Berwick	Scotland	Gold & Category Winner
St Ives & Carbis Bay	South West	Silver Gilt
Tenby	Wales	Silver Gilt



Coastal (12k and above)

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Bangor	Northern Ireland	Silver Gilt
Scarborough	Yorkshire	Gold & Category Winner

Urban Community

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Beighton (Sheffield)	Yorkshire	Gold & Category Winner
Didsbury (Manchester)	North West	Silver Gilt
Dyce (Aberdeen)	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Eston (Middlesbrough)	Northumbria	Silver Gilt
Moor (Oxmoor)	Anglia	Silver
Moseley (Birmingham)	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
Port Marine & Village Quarter (Portishead)	South West	Silver Gilt
Spondon (Derby)	East Midlands	Silver
Walthamstow Village (London)	London	Silver Gilt

Champion of Champions

Entry Name	Region / Nation	Medal
Falkland	Scotland	Gold & Category Winner
Grouville	Jersey	Silver
Harrogate	Yorkshire	Silver Gilt
Pitlochry	Scotland	Gold

RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards 2010

The RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards are special awards presented to finalists that demonstrate genuine excellence in a particular area of the judging criteria. As discretionary awards they are only presented when there is a deserving recipient, so not all of the awards are presented every year.

Discretionary Awards
RHS Britain in Bloom Floral Award
Coleraine in Colour, Northern Ireland
RHS Britain in Bloom Sustainable Landscaping Award
City of London, London
RHS Britain in Bloom Commercial Award
Bicester Village, Bicester, Thames and Chilterns Crystal Peaks Shopping Centre, Beighton (Sheffield), Yorkshire
RHS Britain in Bloom Young People's Award
Douglas, Isle of Man
RHS Britain in Bloom School Award
Portchester Northern Community School, Fareham, South
RHS Britain in Bloom Conservation & Wildlife Award
Blythe Valley Park, Solihull, Heart of England
RHS Britain in Bloom Environmental Quality Award
Tameside, North West
RHS Britain in Bloom Tourism Award
Harrogate, Yorkshire
RHS Britain in Bloom Public Park Award (Given in memory of David Welch)
Bristol Zoo, Bristol, South West
RHS Britain in Bloom Local Roots Award
Halstead, Anglia
RHS Britain in Bloom Community Award
Crawley, South East



Above: Crawley

RHS Britain in Bloom Community Champion Awards
Danny McCartney, Derry City
Eileen Piper, Hunmanby
Geoff Humble, Wetherby
Graham Langlois, St Saviour
Jim Pope, Aberdeen
Julia Rackowe, Bury St Edmunds
Kate Stevenson, Perth
Mary and Ronnie Law, Cupar
Norah Hoyles, Garstang
Reverend Geoffrey Eynon, Wolfcastle
Ron Womack, Scarborough
Matt Wakefield, Fareham
RHS Britain in Bloom Outstanding Contribution Award
Ken Powles, Chairman, Translink Ulster in Bloom
Susan Smith, RHS Britain in Bloom UK Judge



Above: Hartburn Scout Group, Stockton-on-Tees



Above: St Aubin, Jersey

Entente Florale 2010

UK strikes Double Gold!

At the Entente Florale annual awards ceremony, held this year in Cervia, Italy, both UK entrants achieved the highest accolade – a Gold Award!

Entente Florale is the largest environmental competition in Europe, with 12 countries taking part. This year the UK's two representatives were Stockton-on-Tees, in Northumbria, and the parish of St Brelade on the island of Jersey.

Clive Addison, the UK lead Jury member and Chair

of the International Jury of Entente Florale said, "This is a fantastic achievement and I want to congratulate everyone involved. It shows that whether the entrant is led by a large municipal authority or a local bloom group of volunteers, the UK can reach the highest standards at European level."

Two entrants are selected each year from the UK Finalists in RHS Britain in Bloom. The Entente Florale competition focuses on horticulture, landscape planning and management, environmental activity, and local involvement and tourism, all aiming to improve the quality of life for both residents and visitors.

News from...

Welcome to our news section where we post announcements and news-in-brief from the RHS, the regions and nations, Affiliated Societies, “in Bloom” and Neighbourhood groups. This 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.

It's official: Gardening makes children happier



Image: Fiona Secrett

New RHS report says school gardening boosts child development, teaches life skills and makes kids healthier and happier.

New research shows for the first time the enormous impact gardening plays in a child's wellbeing, learning and development.

Based on independent research from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), the RHS report highlights how schools which actively use a garden develop 'resilient,' 'ready to learn' and 'responsible' children – attributes that

make well-balanced, happier, healthier, and well-rounded individuals.

The NFER surveyed a selection of 1,300 school teachers and studied in-depth 10 schools belonging to the RHS Campaign for School Gardening, from a large urban London primary to a small village school in Yorkshire. To read the full report online visit: www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/research

To find out more about how your group can work with local schools, turn to pages 10-11.

Bloom in the news

BBC Gardeners' World were in Pitlochry, Scotland, capturing judges Jim Buttress and Susan Smith on their walkabout tour for a short film on the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign. We expect the footage will be shown in two parts, on 24 September and 8 October, so keep an eye out!

Gardener and broadcaster Sarah Raven is filming a gardening programme for BBC 2, which is to feature RHS Britain in Bloom finalist, Harrogate, in Yorkshire.

The three-part series, which has the working title 'River of Flowers', will be looking at ways of introducing nectar-rich flowers into urban environments.

Bloom judges Jim Buttress and Susan Smith were interviewed as they judged Harrogate's Bloom entry and spoke about biodiversity and the importance of the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign.

The series is scheduled for autumn 2011.

Volunteering opportunities for individuals and groups in London & Scotland

The Wave of Friendship project is a volunteer programme that encourages and supports volunteering between Scotland and London. Volunteers can apply for bursaries of up to £500 per person to cover travel, accommodation and other costs.

Any volunteering opportunity will qualify as long as it reflects one of these values: Friendship, Respect, Courage, Determination, Equality and Inspiration. The scheme is also open to applications from groups, so why not take your Bloom or IYN group to visit counterparts in London or Scotland, and see what they're up to. You could pick up some new tips and find inspiration and ideas for your own activities.

To apply, visit: www.peoplemakingwaves.org.uk/thewaveoffriendship

If you would like more information or would like to chat through any ideas you have, email wof@peoplemakingwaves.org.uk or phone Rebecca Dadge on 01786 479593.

Improved Affiliated Societies information pack now available!

Summarising every aspect of the RHS Affiliated Societies scheme the information pack provides a useful reference guide for all registered clubs and societies.

The improved pack contains a new support section on generating local publicity and PR, in addition to full details and FAQs about the Affiliated Societies insurance scheme and other benefits.

To receive a copy of the new information pack contact us on **020 7821 3651** / communities@rhs.org.uk. Please specify whether you'd like a printed or electronic copy (*we will aim to dispatch this to you within four weeks*).



Image: ©RHS Fiona Secrett



Building relationships with Schools

Above: Kingsway Primary

Whether you are a **Britain in Bloom** or **It's Your Neighbourhood** group, or an **Affiliated Society**, developing links with your local school can bring significant benefits. We catch up with the managers of the **RHS Campaign for School Gardening** for some top tips on how to get involved.

Why should children garden at school?

In 2009 the RHS commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research to look at the impact of gardening in schools. In a survey conducted as part of this research, 72% of Primary School teachers felt that children should have 'the right to garden at school'. The research showed that school gardening has many benefits for children – encouraging them to be successful learners, resilient individuals and responsible citizens of tomorrow.

To date 12,500 schools have joined the RHS Campaign for School Gardening – that's almost one in every two schools in the UK. The Campaign is helping the RHS in its mission to bring the joy of gardening to a significant number of UK children by 2012.



Building a relationship with your local school will enable you to share your knowledge and skills with an extremely enthusiastic audience...



We need your help

School gardening is not just about teachers and children – it's about the whole community getting involved. Schools are busy places and families and local groups play a vital role in extending opportunities for children to learn and in taking garden developments forward.

The benefits of getting involved

Building a relationship with your local school will enable you to share your knowledge and skills with an extremely enthusiastic audience, as well as helping children to understand more about their local area and its environment. Children relish the opportunity to meet 'real life experts' who can convey their passion for a particular topic, and teachers – who are not necessarily experienced gardeners themselves – welcome professional advice. For your group, club or society it's an opportunity to publicise your activities, gain new recruits and perhaps enjoy time together as a team – all whilst inspiring a new generation of gardeners. If you are an "in Bloom" or IYN group, broadening the participation of the local community in this way will also increase your chances of success in the campaign.

What to do next

Have a look at the top tips on the opposite page and get to know your Campaign for School Gardening Regional Advisor. Regional Advisors currently operate in the East of England, Yorkshire & the Humber, London, and the North West. The RHS is implementing a programme which will ultimately see a Regional Advisor in each of the nine regions in England and in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Regional Advisors support schools in developing their growing areas and help bring people together with gardening skills to share. The National Campaign encourages each and every 'gardening' school to develop links with their local community, so if you are in a region where there is no Regional Advisor at present, then please do contact your local school directly. To find participating schools in your area visit www.rhs.org.uk/schoolmap

To find out more about our advisors and how to contact them, please visit www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening/teachershome/aboutthescheme/default.aspx

Community involvement at Thurston Primary School

Thurston Primary School in Suffolk had a very small garden area until a parent governor took the initiative to create a larger one after attending a training session run by the East of England Regional Advisor, Alison Findlay.



The gardening club is now a great success, run at lunchtimes by parent and village volunteers.



Top: Thurston Primary School. Below: St Leonard's Primary School, Streatham

After a successful Lottery 'Awards for All' application, a community 'Big Dig' day was organised. Over 91 volunteers, from parents, grandparents and local villagers, came along and built a series of wooden raised beds for each class at the school. A large potting shed was set up for the 'Little Diggers' gardening club to use and water butts were installed. The group also improved access to a wildlife area and built a bug hotel.

The gardening club is now a great success, run at lunchtimes by parent and village volunteers. Each class grows its own crops and uses their bed for science and literacy.

Our Top Tips for working with schools:

- Weigh up what time you have available
- Talk to other members of your group and see what sort of topics or activities you could support
- Decide whether your group has resources, such as land, that could be shared with a local school
- Contact the Head Teacher to discuss ideas
- Meet the lead member of staff running the school garden and arrange a trial session
- Encourage schools to join the RHS Campaign for School Gardening.

Ideas for Activities



Above: Kingsway Primary

- Tell a story about your life as a gardener
- Bring in plants, fruit and vegetables that you have grown to tie in with seasonal events (Harvest Festival, Apple Day)
- Offer surplus plants, pots and seeds for the school garden
- Offer to professionally judge school plots and plant & produce shows (and encourage schools to get involved with any regional "in Bloom" school activities or your club/society's local show)
- Help schools turn their produce into profit with enterprise ideas, such as taking cuttings and making chutney
- Assist with watering and maintenance during the school holidays
- Invite schools to visit their local allotment or community garden, or participate in planting days in the community.

For more information about the campaign, visit: www.rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening



Falkland, a Grand Champion of Bloom

The Champion of Champions category was first created in 2004 to recognise consistently excellent entrants, sustained Gold award achievers, chosen by the national judges as representing the very best of Bloom.

Winning the RHS Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions category is by no means an easy feat; doing it two years in a row is an outstanding achievement.

From modest beginnings, Falkland in Bloom has achieved incredible heights. The group started out in 1987 as a small band of volunteers who wanted to improve the local area. With a grant from Fife council, they began with the purchase of a few planters and baskets to display around the town. Twenty four years later they're growing 60,000 flowering plants annually, which appear across Falkland, and investing over 3,000 volunteer hours a year.

Led by just 13 dedicated volunteers – but with a far broader base of seasonal helpers – Falkland in Bloom's impact is far reaching. Locals and visitors alike are full of praise for the displays, and the flowers are credited with increasing tourist numbers to the area, boosting the local economy.

The group's work stretches across the whole community, encompassing businesses, local schools and community groups. Sugar Acre nursery, the nerve centre of Falkland in Bloom with its polytunnels, beds, borders, vegetable plots and wildlife garden, is shared with several local charities and environmental partners, and school children are regular visitors.

"We run activity days where the children come and learn about how to grow plants" says Bert Allan, the group's Secretary. "They're involved every step of the way; they help us sow the seeds, watch the plants grow, and then help us plant everything out when it's ready."

The group has recently enlisted the support of schoolchildren to create a new wildflower meadow, sowing seeds and creating plugs for young plants. Their efforts to engage youngsters have not gone unnoticed: the group picked up last year's RHS Britain in Bloom Young People's Discretionary Award.

Fundraising is done largely through selling surplus plants raised at Sugar Acre; in excess of £6,000 was generated in 2010, along with significant sponsorship of hanging baskets.

RHS Britain in Bloom national judge, Susan Smith, was full of praise. "You get used to some pretty high standards when judging this category" she said, "but what I saw in Falkland just blew me away. The excellent quality of the hanging baskets and containers and the well chosen

variety of colour themes, coupled with a heart-stopping floral display in Horse Market Street was fantastic and Falkland is truly deserving of this award."

In future, the group hopes to increase the numbers of people that are able to get involved in volunteering by developing partnerships with external organisations and social enterprises. Let's see if they can continue their success in next year's competition.



Above: Falkland in Bloom volunteers hang baskets



You get used to some pretty high standards when judging this category... but what I saw in Falkland just blew me away.

Susan Smith,
RHS Britain in Bloom judge



Award-winning young Bloomers

Two RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards recognise specific excellence amongst “in Bloom” communities for their work with schools and young people – we bring you the best of 2010.

RHS Britain in Bloom Young People’s Award: Douglas, Isle of Man



...this is an impressive commitment by young people to environmental and horticultural programmes...

Mark Wasilewski,
RHS Britain in Bloom judge



Above: 1st Oncan Brownies, Douglas

The community of Douglas has put the involvement of young people at the forefront of its “in Bloom” campaign.

No less than six schools have been involved in environmental campaigns during the year, including their participation in the Big Douglas Tidy up in October 2009. Enrichment Week at Ballakameen High School saw 100 pupils enhance their school grounds by creating new flower borders, with more planned. Tree planting at Douglas Municipal Golf Course last winter was carried out by pupils from Manor Park School.

Teenagers have taken ownership of an open space – the Snake Pit – and are creating an area for free-running with assistance from the Isle of Man Youth Service, while students from Isle of Man College are designing the tiles to be used in the Hutchinson Square refurbishment. RHS Britain in Bloom judge, Mark Wasilewski, said, “All in all, this is an impressive commitment by young people to environmental and horticultural programmes within their own community”.

The judges were delighted to meet the 1st Oncan Brownies, who planted and tended their own floral boat on the promenade, and the 7th Douglas Guides, who celebrated the Centenary of the Guiding Movement by designing and planting an excellent carpet bed in the sunken gardens, without professional help.

RHS Britain in Bloom School Award: Portchester Northern Community School, Fareham, Hampshire

The extensive garden at Portchester was created under the guidance of local Bloom volunteer, Heather Scott. Wildlife areas, recycled greenhouses and solar energy panels help the children to learn about sustainability, while the allotment gives youngsters the opportunity to grow their own. All the children’s vegetables are served up in the school cafeteria.

“We have up to 300 children using the garden every week – from after school Brownie clubs to children taking part in outdoor lessons” said Heather. “We’ve just helped to create a beach in one section of the pond garden, so that year-5 can use it to study the geography of coastal regions.

“The children really love working in the garden and we’ve had lots of positive feedback. I’ve even had a few children ask if we can set up another garden in the local secondary school, so that they have a garden to enjoy when they move on! We’re hoping to look at this as a project in the future.”

RHS Britain in Bloom judge Andrew Jackson was full of praise. “Many schools have areas where plants are grown and children can take an interest in their cultivation” he said. “However at Portchester Northern Community, horticultural and environmental features are integral to the whole ethos of the school.

“From the attractive landscaping, perennial and herbaceous planting, annual baskets and children’s pots at the entrance, you’re led through vegetable, flower, environmental and biodiversity ‘gardens’, all with explanatory notices and name labelling on the plants. Rainwater is collected, electricity generated, birds and insects housed, and green waste composted; nothing is missing. The results are truly inspirational and the children have an unparalleled opportunity to absorb their surroundings. We congratulate the school for their fantastic achievement.”

Alys Fowler, takes time out

Image: Simon Wheeler

Community gardens enthusiast, Alys Fowler, takes some time out to talk to *Growing Communities* about all things community gardening. Alys joined this year's RHS Britain in Bloom awards ceremony in Birmingham on 29 September as special guest presenter.

Your first book, *The Thrifty Gardener*, focused on ways to reuse and recycle in the garden, while not compromising on style. What would be your top thrift tips for community gardening groups, who often need to deliver big results on small budgets?

Make friends with local business. There's a lot of waste that you can make use of. Cardboard boxes make excellent biodegradable mulching mats; many restaurants will have large food containers that can be turned into planting pots or water butts; bigger businesses often have employee volunteer schemes where they'll let their employee do volunteer work for a day a year – very helpful when you need lots of hands.

As our cities inevitably continue to expand, what role do you think urban gardens will play?

Urban gardens are hugely important in terms of habitats for wildlife. They make a huge extended patchwork quilt for all sorts of nature. They also offer a chance to grow food right at the source, no food miles when you walk your supper home. They offer a place to play (for everyone, wildlife included). I think that's really important, in terms of doing

something rewarding, fun and low cost. We need more of that in our lives.

You must have seen a fair share of wonderful community projects throughout your career – which would you pick as your favourite?

I recently went to see **Offshoot Permaculture Project** at Towneley Park in Burnely (www.offshoots.org.uk). I was blown away by how good it is. It links local business, people and food, whilst providing a beautiful habitat for people to relax in. It's also very progressive in terms of how it runs itself financially – it sells vegetables to a local restaurant, then composts the food scraps on a very large scale and sells this on as green waste.

This year's *The Edible Garden* series and accompanying book saw you investigating the possibilities and limitations of growing your own for self-sustainability in an urban environment. Many people struggle with a lack of time when managing their plots, what would be your top ideas for time saving without sacrificing the results?

Get a box scheme. No seriously, it's about little and often. Ten minutes on the allotment

every other day actually goes a lot further than one whole weekend a month and it's much easier to manage. Don't water crops growing in the ground too much, the more you water, the more often you have to do it. Choose to grow perennial crops such as globe artichokes, rhubarb and perennial kales as you get more buck for your time.

Time's a funny one. Gardening is a wonderful thing to do, don't rush through it and see it this way, you saved on a shrink, a gym membership, the weekly shop and some vitamin pills!

And for all our veg growers out there, would you share your top vegetable growing tip with us?

One, that's impossible, no-one can have one tip. **Join the RHS, the advice line is amazing.** And if you're a community garden then most of the big seed companies have a discount club for allotments/community gardening groups for bulk buying, which can save you a fortune.

Spotlight on Affiliated Societies

Purbrook Horticultural Society



Above: Winner of the insect lodge class: St Alban's C of E Primary School, with 'Buglins'

Set up in 1940, as part of the wartime Dig For Victory campaign, today the society has over 500 members and has recently introduced several new schemes to boost membership.

In the last few years Purbrook has focused on encouraging younger membership, working with schools across the region. The society's annual Inter Schools Trophy Competition works with over 60 schools, inviting children and their teachers to submit entries to one of five classes.

Lynda Piddington, Publicity Officer at Purbrook, is full of praise for the entrants. "Although the competition is only three years old, we're encouraged by the consistently high standard of entries and the enthusiasm with which the schools undertake the various classes" she said.

"One of the classes in this year's competition was to design, build and decorate an insect lodge or bird house. We hope it will help the children to learn about the bugs in the garden and why they are so important. The winning school, St Alban's C of E Primary, tells us their bug house is already full of new residents!"

The group also sends 'ambassador' members to schools to speak to the children about gardening and help them to get the best out of their school veg plots. "The aim is to help children learn about gardening and biodiversity, and also to explain where the food on their plate comes from. It's also been a wonderful way to forge links between the schools and the wider community", said Lynda.

www.purbrookhorticulturalsociety.org.uk

Aldbourn Allotment Association & Gardening Club



Above: Aldbourn Allotment Association & Gardening Club (and friends)

The village of Aldbourn had always had a large number of clubs and societies – though never an allotment association or a gardening club, until eighteen months ago.

"The allotment association grew out of a number of us wishing to grow our own fruit and veg", said gardening Club Chairman, Mary Cowan. "We joined the national association of allotment holders and formed a gardening club to run alongside the allotment group, as neither had existed in the village before."

In September 2008 Alison Edmonds – today the group's Membership Secretary – called an open meeting at which residents registered their interest in forming a group. In March 2009, she agreed the lease of some land at a peppercorn rent with local landowner, Brian Kingham.

The first year saw the group growing copious amounts of potatoes, to rid the land of couch grass. Today the allotment has seventeen plot holders and the group has just taken on a new strip of land. All the allotments have been boarded, with paths laid between each plot, and a successful lottery bid brought a communal shed and native hedging along the perimeter.

Thanks to funding from Wiltshire Community Foundation, the group's most recent venture has been into bee-keeping, with two members undergoing training to establish two bee colonies on-site.

The club also has a well established programme of events, with garden visits and social activities. A recent 'Gardener's Question Time' supper to raise funds attracted over 64 people. In 2009 they entered the Aldbourn Carnival, and won not only 'Best in Category' but also 'Best in Show'. This year the group are preparing to enter again, taking 'Dig For Victory' as their theme.

All in all, not bad for eighteen months work!

www.aldbournallotmentassociation.org.uk

A Blooming Good Idea



The RHS, in partnership with NFU Mutual, offers a range of affordable insurance packages to suit the needs of all Affiliated Societies, Britain in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups.

With the scheme renewal date starting on 1st September, now is the time to take out a policy to ensure that you get the benefit of the full year's cover.

To find out more about a package to suit your needs, call **020 7821 3651** or email lucyreid@rhs.org.uk.

Registered Britain in Bloom and IYN participants can also find information and forms online: www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom

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