



Royal
Horticultural
Society

Sharing the best in Gardening

Grass Roots

The RHS Community Update

Issue 27 • Autumn 2016

rhs.org.uk/communities

Britain in Bloom UK Finals 2016: The results

Greening Grey Britain from
North West to South East

Gardening for resilience

Get involved with RHS Hampton Court
Palace Flower Show 2017

2 Welcome & Your Letters

3–4 News

5 Britain in Bloom

6–8 Britain in Bloom Awards 2016

9 Campaign for School Gardening Awards 2016

10–11 Communities gardening for health and happiness

12–13 RHS Advice: Gardening for Resilience

14 Interview: Blooming Communities – Bedminster Front Garden Awards

15 Affiliated Societies – meet the plot holders

Image (above right): Acer trees in autumn at RHS Garden Wisley. Image credit: RHS / Clive Nichols
Cover image: Volunteers at Compton Terrace, North London. Image credit: RHS / Julian Weigall

This magazine is printed on paper using 100 percent recycled fibre. Please pass it on or recycle it.

Grass Roots is published by RHS Community Horticulture
80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE
T: 020 7821 3122
E: communities@rhs.org.uk

©2016 The Royal Horticultural Society

Registered Charity no: 222879 / SC038262

The Royal Horticultural Society is the UK’s 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 autumn issue of *Grass Roots*, the magazine for all community gardening groups including Britain in Bloom, It’s Your Neighbourhood and RHS Affiliated Societies.

In this issue, we’re pleased to announce the results of the 2016 Britain in Bloom with the RHS UK Finals (see pages 6–8). Warmest congratulations to all the groups and communities that were selected to take part in the Finals. All of the results are available on one of the 17 Region / Nation in Bloom websites.

This issue focuses on competitions, campaigns and funding opportunities that you and your community group can get involved with, from creating a small flower bed at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2017, to meeting the gardeners of

the future in an article about the RHS Young School Gardener of the Year. There’s also expert advice on preventing waterlogging in the garden and choosing plants that are resistant to extreme weather (see pages 12–13).

Finally, do be sure to keep us informed about what you are doing by emailing communities@rhs.org.uk – it’s your magazine and we’d love to share your news.

Very best wishes and happy gardening.

Fiona Brown, Editor

Your Letters Gardening & Sport

We wanted to share our experience of bringing together gardening and sport in an effort to brighten up our local bowling green. Although a pristine green lawn is the most important part of a bowling club, we wanted to make the surrounding area more eye-catching and draw attention to the club. We also wanted to get young people interested in bowling. Many members of the Woodlands Community Bowling Club in Renfrewshire are keen gardeners, with a number involved in Linwood in Bloom. In this area the local schools have excellent community gardens, so gardening provided a logical common thread that linked us.

Working with pupils from local primary and secondary schools and with help from the RHS Community Outreach team, we created new beds and planted them with roses. Club members have donated plants to the garden, and we’re hoping to plant spring flowers for next year. Together we’ve transformed a dull corner by building a rockery garden. Our new beds have been much admired by people in the community.

In return for all the pupils’ hard work, members of the bowling club gave the students bowling lessons, which were thoroughly enjoyed. It has been great to see young people join forces with the older generation to share the pleasure of gardening and also to enjoy a great sport.

Jeanette & Gavin Anderson
Linwood in Bloom & Woodlands Community Bowling Club, Renfrewshire



Jeanette Anderson

Has your group brought members of the community together through gardening? Why not share your story? Please send your letters to communities@rhs.org.uk or RHS Community Horticulture, RHS, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE. Letters on all community gardening topics are welcomed, but may be edited for publication.

Go batty for bats in Wild About Gardens Week, 24–30 October

Wild About Gardens is a partnership between the Royal Horticultural Society and The Wildlife Trusts to encourage year-round gardening for wildlife. **Wild About Gardens Week 2016** is joining forces, this year, with the Bat Conservation Trust, to focus our attention on British bats through bat-related activities and events around the country, some of which are free of charge. Go online at wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk to see what’s happening near you.

There is much that you can do to make your garden or community green space a haven for bats, including growing insect-friendly plants, providing shelter such as

bat boxes and reducing outdoor lighting. There’s advice and inspiration in the free online booklet *Stars of the Night, Working together to create a ‘batty’ neighbourhood*, which can be downloaded from the wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk website.

At the **RHS Shades of Autumn Show 2016** (28–29 October) in London SW1, (rhs.org.uk/shades-of-autumn) come and learn from experts about British bats and how to identify them. Bats in the garden are a sign of a green and healthy environment and there is much you can do to provide shelter, food and water.

Enter our ‘plant a bat feast’ photo competition on the RHS Facebook page,



Hugh Clark

illustrating your best insect-friendly plant display, for the opportunity to win some fantastic prizes, including a bat detector, bat box and a visit to your garden from a bat enthusiast.

Rethinking the role of green space

The **RHS Green Plan It Challenge**, involving up to 900 of the UK’s secondary school pupils, launched this autumn in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Harrogate, London, Newcastle, Norwich and Salford. Supported by industry mentors, the Challenge encourages 12–13-year-old students to rethink the way in which a school or community green space is used. Working in small teams, over 10 weeks, students will focus on designing a new green space using a range of materials and media to bring their ideas to life. Through the process, they will learn about the importance of plants to people and places in real-world contexts. Students compete against local schools, present their designs, and will celebrate their achievements at events around the country in December to mark the end of the Challenge.

The Challenge has been designed to be student-led, allowing young people to explore their garden users’ needs as well as local and environmental issues, so it has broad curriculum relevance. The programme also aims to inspire young people to think about horticulture in different ways, develop skills and gain insight into a wide range of exciting careers, from plant science and landscape design to gardening, in an industry that is facing a skills shortage.



RHS / Guy Harrop

New team member



Meredith Arthur has recently joined the Community Outreach Team as **Community Operations Manager**. She is looking forward

to working on Britain in Bloom and It’s Your Neighbourhood and learning about the inspiring work of community groups around the country.

Funding opportunity for groups

The Greggs Foundation Local Community Projects Fund helps smaller not-for-profit organisations based in local communities to deliver projects supporting people in need. The funders are interested in projects that improve resilience within their community of interest and any projects funded would need to demonstrate improvement against at least one Key Performance Target. These can include sessional activities and related equipment, as well as innovative ideas and sustainable approaches.

Applications are encouraged from groups that provide activities with an environmental benefit, so this is a good opportunity for community-related gardening schemes to get help, for example, an allotment to bring together people suffering early stages of dementia, or the clearing of an area of wasteland to grow vegetables as part of a healthy growing and eating project for young homeless people.

Applications are considered throughout the year. Grant value: up to £2,000
See greggsfoundation.org.uk/grants/local-community-projects-fund

Crocsmia 'Lucifer'
was entered by
Jacky Parker

RHS Photographic Competition 2017: Share your passion for plants

Aspiring photographers and passionate gardeners are encouraged to get outdoors and record beautiful planting combinations, creative and colourful horticultural displays and inspiring gardens in photographic form and enter the RHS Photographic Competition, which runs until 28 February 2017.

There are nine categories to enter – including **Pure Plants**, **Welcoming Garden Wildlife**, **Young Photographer** (11–17 years), **Children's Photographer** (under 11s) and **Greening Grey Britain**. There's a host of great cash prizes and the winning photographs will form an exhibition that will go on tour to the four RHS Gardens next year. Go online for further details at rhs.org.uk/photocomp

Get involved with RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2017

Community gardening groups are invited to apply to exhibit at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2017. For the last two years, Flower and Vegetable Box planting displays have been created by a variety of community groups and in response to their popularity, the RHS is very keen to encourage greater participation in 2017.

Flower and Vegetable Boxes, which are typically 3m/10ft square, focus on planting and plantsmanship without the need for heavy construction. The RHS provides timber-framed beds filled with compost

allowing exhibitors to create a planting scheme that will engage the many visitors that come to the show. At the same time, the Boxes provide a platform to promote community campaigns and initiatives connected with horticulture.

For 2017, community groups applying to create Flower and Vegetable Boxes will also be able to apply for a grant of £250 to help with the costs of exhibiting at the show. For a factsheet, application forms and to find out more, visit rhs.org.uk/HamptonCourtGardenApplications – application deadline **20 January 2017**.



Hoses, Rakes and Ladders, created by London Fire Brigade, celebrated the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Brigade at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2016

RHS / Tim Sandell

RHS & Rotary: Planting 6 million crocus bulbs

Over the summer, RHS community gardening groups and Rotary clubs around the UK started planning their joint planting of *Crocus tommasinianus* to create a spectacular carpet of purple across community spaces next spring in support of Rotary's 'Purple4Polio' initiative and the RHS's Greening Grey Britain campaign. More than 6 million corms were ordered, smashing the 5 million target. Groups have been encouraged to upload their planting plans to the Rotary website www.rotarygbi.org/what-we-do/purple4polio/planting-form/ to create a map of crocus-planting activity this autumn.

Details of a photo competition that will focus on the community engagement aspects of the autumn planting, as well as the spring flowering, will be announced online soon. Generous garden centre vouchers will be offered as prizes.



RHS / Wendy Wesley



Birmingham welcomes Britain in Bloom 2016 with the RHS

Words and images: Birmingham City Council

Birmingham is very proud to host the 2016 RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals Award Ceremony on 14 October.

Perhaps better known for our rich industrial heritage, the make-up of the city has been defined by some key historical figures, not least being politician and statesman Joseph Chamberlain. He shaped the way Birmingham was managed and also helped to start the city's parks movement with other leaders such as Lord Calthorpe, Charles Bowyer Adderley and Louisa Ryland. Thanks to them, Birmingham has one of the largest parks portfolios in the UK and Birmingham City Council manages 591 parks, equating to 3714 hectares of open space. Birmingham has a lot to thank the Victorian visionaries from whom the majority of parks were donated and the legacy of

the parks champions of yesteryear is carried on today.

Birmingham's parks are well used today – clocking up around 17 million visits per year. Key to their success are the 16,000 days put in by our network of enthusiastic volunteers and the local communities who are involved in park management, direction and maintenance.

Parks come to life when they are used and we have worked hard to make our parks as productive as possible. Around 600 community events take place in our parks every year and more than 12,000 people benefit from environmental education at parks across the city too.

The importance of parks to people's physical and mental wellbeing is stronger than ever. Building on the success of the council's award-winning free Be Active scheme, Active Parks now operates in more

than 50 locations, offering free activities to more than 60,000 people a year. Across the city you'll see young and old regularly taking part in running, conservation work, Tai Chi, Zumba and walking. We also have new community-grown spaces and orchards. These are open to anyone and maintained by local residents.

Britain in Bloom is the initiative that brings all of this work together. With more than 466 people active in Britain in Bloom groups and many more communities involved in improving their local environment, we are growing from strength to strength.

If you visit, we hope you have time to enjoy our parks, as well as the 4,000 hanging baskets, floral features and wildflower corners in Birmingham's shopping centres, housing estates and hospitals.



Congratulations, Bloom 2016 finalists

This year 72 communities made it through to the UK Finals of RHS Britain in Bloom. Over 15 days in July and August, our team of 22 judges travelled up and down the country visiting the finalists and we reveal their results, category by category, with ‘CW’ denoting category winners.

VILLAGE		
Entry name	Region / Nation	Award
Bellingham	Northumbria	Gold
Castlecawfield	Ulster	Gold & Joint CW
Elswick	North West	Gold & Joint CW
Fordham	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Mathern with Pwllmeyric & Moun-ton	Wales	Silver Gilt
Middleton by Wirksworth	East Midlands	Silver Gilt

LARGE VILLAGE		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Barwick in Elmet	Yorkshire	Gold
Beer	South West	Silver Gilt
Dalston	Cumbria	Silver Gilt
Dufftown	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Hillsborough	Ulster	Gold & CW
Upton upon Severn	Heart of England	Silver Gilt



SMALL TOWN		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Corbridge	Northumbria	Gold
Freckleton	North West	Gold & CW
Studley	Heart of England	Silver Gilt
Whitehead	Ulster	Silver Gilt

TOWN		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Amersham	Thames & Chilterns	Silver Gilt
City of London	London	Silver Gilt
Haddington	Scotland	Gold & CW
Immingham	East Midlands	Gold
Midsomer Norton	South West	Silver Gilt
St Martin	Guernsey	Silver Gilt
St Saviour	Jersey	Silver Gilt

LARGE TOWN		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Coleraine	Ulster	Gold & CW
Colwyn Bay	Wales	Silver Gilt
Congleton	North West	Gold
Farnham	South & South East	Silver Gilt
Kendal	Cumbria	Silver Gilt
Market Harborough	East Midlands	Gold
Perth	Scotland	Gold
Portishead	South West	Gold
Ryde	South & South East	Silver Gilt
Wisbech	Anglia	Gold



SMALL CITY		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Canterbury	South & South East	Gold
Colchester	Anglia	Silver Gilt
Derry	Ulster	Gold
Exeter	South West	Silver Gilt
Harrogate	Yorkshire	Gold & CW
Loughborough	East Midlands	Gold
Rugby	Heart of England	Gold

CITY		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Aberdeen	Scotland	Gold & CW
London Borough of Havering	London	Silver Gilt
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	London	Silver Gilt
Oldham	North West	Gold

LARGE CITY		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Belfast	Ulster	Gold
London Borough of Ealing	London	Silver Gilt
Wigan	North West	Gold & CW

COASTAL – POPULATION UP TO 12K		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Bute	Scotland	Silver Gilt
Filey	Yorkshire	Gold
Mablethorpe	East Midlands	Silver
Newcastle	Ulster	Silver Gilt
St Brelade	Jersey	Gold & CW
Silloth on Solway	Cumbria	Silver Gilt
Tenby	Wales	Silver Gilt



COASTAL – POPULATION OVER 12K		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Bournemouth	South & South East	Gold
Deal	South & South East	Silver Gilt
Exmouth	South West	Silver Gilt
Great Yarmouth	Anglia	Silver Gilt
St Peter Port	Guernsey	Gold
Southport	North West	Gold & CW

URBAN COMMUNITY		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Evington	East Midlands	Silver
Gogarth (Llandudno)	Wales	Silver Gilt
Kippax	Yorkshire	Gold & CW
Mancroft, The Lanes	Anglia	Silver
St George	South West	Silver
Walthamstow Village	London	Silver Gilt



CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS		
Entry name	R / N	Award
Ahoghill	Ulster	Gold & CW
Birmingham	Heart of England	Gold
Cleethorpes	East Midlands	Silver Gilt
Durham	Northumbria	Gold
Lytham	North West	Gold
St Pierre du Bois	Guernsey	Gold

RHS Britain in Bloom Discretionary Awards 2016

These awards are presented to finalists who demonstrate genuine excellence in a particular area of judging.

RHS Britain in Bloom Young People’s Award	Kippax, Yorkshire
RHS Britain in Bloom Conservation and Wildlife Award	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
RHS Britain in Bloom Environment Award	Wigan, North West
RHS Britain in Bloom Heritage Award	Hillsborough, Ulster
RHS Britain in Bloom Public Park Award	Aberdeen, Scotland and Lytham, North West (joint winners)
RHS Britain in Bloom Community Champion Award	
Margaret Cox, Tower Hamlets Patricia Flag, Midsomer Norton Anne Fraser, Dufftown Pam Grant, Harrogate Paul Hayhurst, Elswick Bill Jefferson OBE, Silloth on Solway	Bernie McKenna, Castlecaulfield Pauline Morris, Southport Paul Myers, Midsomer Norton Andy Rush, Loughborough Jackie Surtees, Upton upon Severn Ken Windibank, Portishead



RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood National Certificates of Distinction

Every year, a selection of the very best RHS It’s Your Neighbourhood projects are recognised for their achievements and nominated by their Region/Nation to receive this award. NB: List correct at time of going to press.

Eton Avenue Growers Association, Newark East Midlands	Friends of Queens Park, Llandudno, Wales
Low Moor Community Kids’ Allotment, Yorkshire	South Hill Park, Bracknell, Thames & Chiltern
The Friends of Boscombe Chine Gardens, Bournemouth, South East	The Hidden Twitten, Rustington, South East
Transition Wokingham Community Garden, Thames & Chiltern	Winterton House Organic Garden, London

Full results are available at rhs.org.uk/britain-in-bloom



Guinea Gardens, Birmingham, after heavy flooding in June

RHS Britain in Bloom Award for Overcoming Adversity 2016

A new discretionary award for 2016 recognises the enormous efforts of those finalist communities that have faced extreme challenges, for example, the catastrophic flooding experienced in many areas of the UK earlier this year. The RHS Britain in Bloom Award for Overcoming Adversity celebrates the resilience of those who work year-round to put the Bloom back into their towns, villages and cities after such challenging circumstances. The judges were unanimous in commending the efforts of six communities that made it to the finals who each receive an award. Roger Burnett, Chair of the national judging team, said “the ingenuity and sheer resilience of these communities speaks volumes for the ethos of ‘In Bloom’, and the judges thought everyone involved should be recognised for their efforts.”

- **Aberdeen, Scotland:** for restoring Aberdeen after Storm Frank in January
- **Birmingham, Heart of England:** for transforming Guinea Gardens after two floods in the summer.
- **Castlecaulfield, Ulster:** for combating the effects of vandalism in the community
- **Corbridge, Northumbria:** for overcoming the worst floods on the Tyne since 1771
- **Kendal, Cumbria:** for brightening up the town after the December floods
- **Upton upon Severn, Heart of England:** for restoring planting after flooding had submerged the whole town



Guinea Gardens after the group’s hard work



Meet the school gardening stars of 2016

The winners of RHS School Gardeners of the Year have been announced ...

Each spring, schools across the UK are invited to nominate their gardening ‘superstars’ for three coveted awards: **RHS Young School Gardener of the Year**, **RHS School Gardening Team of the Year**, and **RHS School Gardening Champion of the Year**. Shortlisted nominees are asked to make a short video demonstrating their love of gardening, which is judged by an experienced panel led by horticulturist and television presenter Frances Tophill.

This year was no exception in attracting a huge number of passionate school gardeners, each keen to compete for a host of prizes including £500 in gardening vouchers for their school, tools, tickets to an RHS Flower Show and opportunities such as the chance to work alongside RHS gardeners for a day, or a school visit from Frances, to help make the most of their school garden. And once again the judges faced difficult decisions in selecting the most talented...

Fred Wilcox, a green-fingered six-year-old, is **RHS Young School Gardener of the Year 2016**. Fred, who attends Trafalgar Infant School in Twickenham, impressed the judges with his depth of knowledge and understanding of horticulture and was even described by one judge as ‘a young David Attenborough’. He was presented with his award by RHS student and Institute

of Horticulture ‘Young Horticulturist of the Year 2016’, Lawrence Wright, at an awards ceremony held at RHS Garden Wisley on 2 July. Sustainability Co-ordinator at Fred’s school, Rachel Hutchins, said: “Fred is a wonderful young lad and a key member of our school’s eco team. I have led our eco team for more than four years and have never come across a young person with so much enthusiasm. He has proved to be a talented gardener and eco warrior and in my opinion deserves credit for his efforts as an eco-champion.”

Sharon McMaster, a Lisburn parent-volunteer at Ballycarrickmaddy Primary School, is **RHS School Gardening Champion of the Year**. The Gardening Champion is awarded to an adult who inspires young people and shows a passion for encouraging gardening in their school.

Ballycarrickmaddy Principal, Colin Ford, said: “Sharon has established a fantastic garden at Ballycarrickmaddy Primary School on account of her enthusiasm, commitment and knowledge. All children participate in a highly structured, annual rolling programme of gardening activities that includes planting, harvesting and general maintenance of the garden.” Fred and Sharon have each won £500 of gardening vouchers for their schools plus

tools, seeds and opportunities to visit an RHS Garden and RHS Flower Show.

RHS School Gardening Team of the Year This year’s RHS School Gardening Team of the Year is a 15-strong group of pupils from **Stafford Manor High School** in Stafford.

The category, which recognises an outstanding gardening team that has made a difference to their school environment, was created for teams that share a passion for gardening and also display excellent teamwork. DT technician at Stafford Manor, Gordon Taylor, said: “Stafford Manor High School is a small school, at the heart of a tough, working-class community...engaging projects, such as this garden, are part of [our] transformational plan.”

The school was presented with its prize of a Classic ‘Eight’ cedar greenhouse, donated by Gabriel Ash at an event on 29 September. • To view all the winners and finalists, visit schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk.



Sharon McMaster (left) receives her award from Sarah Cathcart, RHS Head of Education

Communities gardening for health and happiness

In 2016, the RHS are supporting 40 community groups around the country who are using gardening as a tool to enhance wellbeing, aid stimulation and reduce isolation. Working with RHS Community Outreach Advisors, the projects have been delivering great outcomes for their communities and we have caught up with four of the groups as their projects come to fruition.

Stepping Stones, Norwich – It’s Your Neighbourhood Group

Stepping Stones is a small charity in Norwich that supports adults with learning disabilities. They aim to enrich lives through building skills including art and craft, cooking, IT and horticulture. Supported by RHS Greening Grey Britain and working with RHS East of England Community Outreach Advisor Alison Findlay, for the first time they are able to garden right outside their premises. The group has created a new green edge to their grey car park, using metal cattle drinking troughs reborn as attractive planters. Drought-tolerant and bee-friendly plants have been included to ensure that planting is attractive, sustainable and low maintenance. A semi-transparent hedge softens the building while achieving a dramatic impact from the street.

‘Before it looked plain and boring... now it looks colourful and it tells people we grow plants at our allotment’

Daniel Long, horticulture student, Stepping Stones

Tom Martin, Stepping Stones’ horticultural tutor, said: “We already have a plant stall to share the plants and produce we have grown at our allotment and now look forward to sharing our joy of gardening with passers-by. This planting provides an interface between our project and the community we are located in – a shop window to encourage and direct new people to take plots at our allotment site – as well as being a fantastic opportunity for our students to interact with the public, challenge preconceptions, grow in confidence, develop skills and build relationships and friendships.”



Stepping Stones, Norwich, greening the grey



Creating alpine planters at Craig Neuk Allotments



The gardening volunteer group at Centre 404



Martin’s Avenue residents inspect their planting



Produce at Craig Neuk Allotments, Airdrie

Centre 404 Garden, Camden & Islington – London in Bloom Group

London charity Centre 404 offers a range of services to assist people with learning disabilities as well as their families. Chaired by avid gardener Jean Willson, the charity recognises the benefits of gardening for wellbeing. The gardening volunteer group consists of enthusiastic adults from the local community who have a wide range of disabilities. Under the guidance of volunteer and communications co-ordinator Fiona Bevans, the group help to maintain Centre 404’s garden, and grow a range of ornamental and edible plants. They also help vulnerable residents in the surrounding community maintain their gardens.

‘...it has enabled me to form connections with others... it’s one of the best things in my life’

Chris Young, RHS Community Outreach Advisor for London, has enabled staff and volunteers at Centre 404 to widen their skills and get more from the garden by holding informal workshops on cuttings, seed-sowing, hanging baskets and dry-shade planting. The group has developed a great passion for gardening, from sowing seeds to eventually eating some of the produce. They derive a huge amount of enjoyment from their weekly sessions, as well as great physical and emotional benefits, including increased exercise, developing friendships and avoiding social isolation.

Centre 404 gardening volunteer Ian said: “I enjoy volunteering with the gardening group because it has enabled me to form connections with others. I am constantly learning, I enjoy teaching others about the garden and building friendships. I look forward to being here each week – it’s one of the best things in my life!”

Martin’s Avenue Senior Citizens Club, Merseyside – It’s Your Neighbourhood Group

Residents in Newton Le Willows, Merseyside, has come together to create a sustainable kitchen garden, growing food to use and share in the community café of their retirement and sheltered social housing complex. Following a consultation with RHS North West Community Outreach Advisor Anne Gunning, a core group of Martin’s Avenue residents – aged 55–94 and with a range of physical disabilities and mental health issues – met weekly to plant and tend a range of vegetables including potatoes, carrots, leeks, beetroot, peas and tomatoes. Anne has been visiting monthly to review progress and help develop horticultural skills such as thinning, weeding, pest control and building a seed store. The vegetables will be used to bring the community together with a shared ‘Celebration Soup’ in the autumn.

‘We didn’t know anything and now look at it all: blooming!’

The group also planted a lavender hedge, providing food for bees, a pleasant scented area and the contents for ‘bath-time treat’ lavender bags. The communal development of the outdoor space promoted physical activity, increased confidence and was a focus for social interaction and information sharing. “It gets you out meeting people and getting exercise,” said one resident. “You made it easier for us because we didn’t know anything and now look at it all: blooming!”

Craig Neuk Allotments, Airdrie – It’s Your Neighbourhood Group

Craig Neuk Allotments is a wonderful green oasis in Airdrie, tucked behind council housing and barely visible from the road, but opening into an incredible, productive space. This group is a key part of the local community and brings all ages together, either as growers or simply to enjoy the community garden as a place to relax and socialise.

The Greening Grey Britain campaign has helped the Craig Neuk group to create a new, quiet area for children with autism from the local primary school, as well as others who need a tranquil space. They have built raised beds, seating and screened areas, with sensory planting for the children to touch, smell and taste. They have created wind chimes, musical instruments and mobiles from a weird and wonderful range of recycled materials.

The RHS Community Outreach team took part in the Craig Neuk family fun day, ‘happiness day’, as participants called it and, in the spirit of recycling, Development Officer Angela Smith helped transform polystyrene fish boxes into alpine planters, creating ‘dinosaur habitats’, which were a huge hit with the children.

‘...it has sparked a real interest in gardening with a younger generation’

Craig Neuk’s Sharon Craig said: “It has been fantastic to engage young families in fun gardening activities – they especially like making healthy herb planters to take home. We now have so much to offer all ages in our community – it has sparked a real interest in gardening with a younger generation.”

Gardening for resilience

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 communities@rhs.org.uk / 0207 821 3118

Guy Barter, RHS Chief Horticulturist, looks at the challenges of gardening on sites that are waterlogged and prone to flooding and recommends planting choices for these challenging locations

Waterlogging and flooding

Flooding occurs when water flows from higher ground and from roofs when there is insufficient opportunity for it to drain away. Unfortunately, in urban areas there is little that individuals can do if their garden and home are prone to flooding. However, there is a strong case for community action to effect local drainage enhancements, ideally with the support of relevant authorities. On the flood plains of rivers only large-scale flood prevention measures are likely to have any effect.

RHS climate change scientist, Dr Eleanor Webster, says that we should expect more flooding under climate change. The total rainfall is expected to increase slightly over the UK with more heavy rain episodes all year in the north. In the south, heavy rain episodes are expected to increase in the winter, with more occasional extreme rain events in summer.

Waterlogging occurs when water accumulates in soil faster than it drains. In the UK, many clay-rich soils will be waterlogged for much of the winter. Plant roots are dormant in cold winter soils, but at other seasons plant roots are active and require oxygen from the air. Waterlogged soils lack air as their pores are filled with water. Few plants can survive when warm soils are waterlogged. Under climate change, soils are expected to be warmer and chances of damage may increase.

Gardening for waterlogging and flood Lawns and hedges help water soak away but they may not prosper in wet soils.

Laying lawns on 8cm / 3in of sharp sand and growing hedges on ridged soil can help.

Raised beds greatly enhance drainage and are especially valuable where the soil



A lawn flooded in summer

GAP Photos / Howard Rice

is wet and poorly drained. If containers are stood in water then plant losses are likely.

Autumn digging can enhance water infiltration during winter and in wet regions it is traditional to dig the soil into ridges to speed up drying out in spring. Nutrient losses are high in wet winters and additions of organic matter are best made in spring. Where no-dig regimes are practised, cover-crops such as rye grass or vetch protect the soil, use up some of the water,



Standing on a board to turn the soil avoids damage to soil structure

RHS / Tim Sandall



Lay 8cm / 3in of sand on top of the soil before turfing to help your lawn to prosper

RHS / Tim Sandall

prevent nutrients being washed away and enhance drying out in spring.

Wet soil is highly susceptible to damage if trampled. Damaged soil seldom supports healthy roots. **Installing stepping stones and paths** and gardening from planks or sheets of plywood avoids damage in wet periods.

Porous paving options such as gravel or special pavers will enhance rain absorption, although impermeable



Ligularia przewalskii

RHS / Graham Hitchmarsh

Right: *Amelanchier lamarckii* AGM in the Top Garden at RHS Garden Hyde Hall



RHS / Jenny Harper



Above left: *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Kleine Fontäne'
Above right: *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'

RHS / Herbarium

RHS / Mike Slagh

sub-soils may require special attention first for these to work optimally.

Resilient plants

Bog plants, of course, are excellent in permanently wet soils, but unfortunately it is more common for soils to have periods of dryness and periods of wet conditions. These can stress plants, particularly ones adapted to dry soil conditions. Happily there are some robust plants that can cope

with these trying conditions. *Amelanchier lamarckii* AGM is an outstanding small tree with spring flowers, summer fruits and autumn colour. For a native tree, consider mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*). For acid soils *Nyssa sylvatica* AGM is a fine choice and for conifers the deciduous *Taxodium distichum* is recommended. Remember that trees become hard to replace and an informed choice at the outset prevents disappointment a few years later.

Dogwoods (*Cornus alba*, *C. florida* and *C. sericea*) and elders (*Sambucus*) are shrubs that reliably endure floods. Where nothing else thrives consider snowberry (*Symphoricarpos*) and *Kerria japonica*.

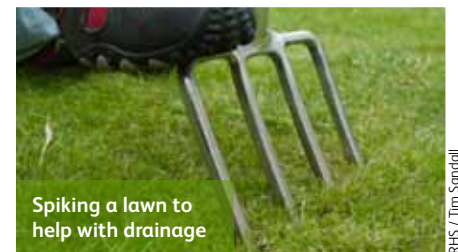
Of the herbaceous perennials, astrantia, hardy geraniums, geum, hosta, *Iris siberica*, *Ligularia przewalskii*, *Monarda* and *Verbena bonariensis* are reported to be resilient too.

Sedges are good choices and for grasses *Calamagrostis brachytricha* AGM and *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Kleine Fontäne' AGM are reported to be especially robust.

When plants are in poor health after waterlogged periods, applying foliar feed (fertiliser absorbed through the leaves) can help them acquire sufficient nutrients to grow new roots.

Tips to help prevent flood damage

1. Intercept rain with green roofs and water butts
2. Dig a soakaway in areas that may be susceptible to flooding, bearing in mind safety when deep holes are excavated
3. Avoid bare soil, which can become compacted and impermeable, by covering with mulch or plants
4. Cultivate any compacted bare soils to allow infiltration
5. Add organic matter, manure or compost to improve soil structure, increasing air spaces and also drainage pores
6. Spike lawns in early autumn to allow winter rain to soak in rapidly



Spike a lawn to help with drainage

RHS / Tim Sandall

7. Keep sloping ground covered with permanent planting. Terrace slopes where permanent planting is not possible or desirable
8. Plant in raised beds or on ridges in ill-drained gardens
9. Divert water from paved areas to ditches, ponds, soil or soakaways
10. Choose permeable paving for parking, paths and patios
11. Use hedges rather than fences and walls. The bases of hedges impede water flow and rain evaporates from the stems and leaves
12. Recruit neighbours to enhance local drainage, petitioning local elected representatives, to benefit all residents in flood-prone areas

For more information

- Visit rhs.org.uk/advice and search for 'Flooding and waterlogging' and 'Plants for wet soils'.
- The Met Office Climate Change briefing can be found on the Met Office website metoffice.gov.uk and search for **our changing climate – the current science**
- The RHS 'Climate Change and Gardening Report' is scheduled to be released in early 2017

Blooming Communities: Bedminster Front Garden Awards



Bedminster's 'Front Garden Awards' Scheme was initiated 12 years ago by **Matthew Symonds**, a local community development association volunteer and trustee, and the scheme continues to go from strength to strength. **Fiona Brown** spoke to him about the recipe for success.

What inspired the Bedminster Front Garden Awards scheme?

"Its origins lie in a transport-related scheme to encourage people to walk and cycle more through Bedminster – a district on the south side of Bristol – by making the streets greener and more pleasant through planting more trees. Very soon it was recognised that private front gardens also made a very positive contribution to the local street scene, and the idea of the Front Garden Awards was born. Just 50 streets were included in the first year as a way of thanking residents for the effort they put into making their front gardens attractive. The Awards met with an overwhelmingly favourable reaction," said Matthew, "and they have become a much anticipated fixture in the Blooming Bedminster Growing Community calendar, and now more than 250 streets take part."

How does it work?

"It's really very simple – it's a 'thank you' scheme rather than a competition," says Matthew. "Residents don't have to enter and everyone receives an award for the effort they're making, from an attractively planted front garden to a beautiful window box, balcony or hanging basket. What's key is their positive impact on making our

streets greener and more attractive. More than 40 volunteer judges are recruited each year to walk around the streets over several weeks in the summer. They are taught to recognise any green and pleasant contributions to the neighbourhood and present attractive 'Front Garden Award' certificates. These are designed by a different volunteer each year, and local business sponsors cover the printing costs."

What difference has it made?

"Everyone really appreciates it when their gardening contributions are noticed and acknowledged," says Matthew. "It's something that involves the whole community – it creates a shared interest and has really encouraged social interaction. Shops and street traders get involved and receive Awards as well. There has been great feedback too. A recent survey showed that 85 percent of respondents thought it had improved local front gardens overall and receiving an Award had also encouraged them to care more for their own. People love receiving the Awards – with many displayed in windows, in fact some keep them up all year. The idea has now spread to other areas of Bristol and the advice to anyone thinking of borrowing the concept is: keep it

simple, non-competitive and a 'thank you' to all who contribute to greening their neighbourhood."

bloomingbedminster.org.uk

Bedminster's Front Garden Award judges' guidance includes:

- Does the front garden or frontage make a positive impact on the street scene?
- Has this gardener made good use of their different circumstances and limitations?
- Would the garden make you smile, or is there a 'wow factor'?
- Does the garden exhibit a good use of colour, plant texture and shape?
- Is there variety and good design, perhaps with sensitive use of non-plant materials?
- Is the garden likely to be attractive to wildlife?

Answered 'yes' to any one of these? A 'Good Garden Award' is probably well deserved.

Meet the plot holders

RHS fruit and vegetable experts continue their allotment visit initiative

In response to the *Grass Roots* article 'Enjoy a free RHS advisory visit for allotment associations' (Spring 2015), members of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable and Herb Committee shared their knowledge and expertise with allotment holders from Devon, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and South London last summer. Based on the fantastic feedback received, the same dynamic crew took off this summer to the Midlands. Each visit followed a similar structure with a stroll around the allotments talking to plot holders, with a Q&A session in the evening.

The visits included Greenmoor Community Allotment Association, Nuneaton, as well as Allotment Associations at Ashby de La Zouch and Oadby &



Members of the RHS Fruit, Vegetable & Herb Committee enjoying an introduction to St Ann's Allotment Association, Nottingham

Wigston, Leicester. In each location our team met the Allotment Committee and

some plot holders – a number of whom were competition growers – who were keen to ask lots of probing questions (see below), but nothing stumped our team.

In July, the team visited a very special and unique allotment site: St Ann's Allotments, Nottingham – the oldest and largest area of Victorian detached town gardens in the world, listed Grade II* by English Heritage. The site covers an incredible 75 acres at the heart of the city. The team spent two days walking, talking and sharing advice with numerous interested plot holders.

We are hoping to run similar visits next summer – look out for further details early next year.

ALLOTMENT Q&A

How do you grow courgettes in containers?
Grow courgettes vertically up a stake and tie in very gently. They need to be non-breaking (branching) cultivars such as 'Ambassador', 'Defender' or 'Venus'.

How do you prune blueberries?
For good blueberries, you need pH4–5.5. Leave them to grow on to a good size and prune a little like blackcurrants; cut back a few of the older stems each year to keep them producing new shoots. If you prune in March you can then see where the fruit buds are.

Our apples are super looking but are brown in the centre.
Bitter pit can be a problem if there is calcium deficiency. If there are no punctures to the flesh it probably is bitter pit. If it has been pruned too hard then it induces a chemical imbalance. Prune slightly less and don't thin the apples.

All that glitters ...

Susie Corr, RHS Affiliated Societies Co-ordinator, looks at the history and popularity of the RHS medals awarded for horticultural achievement

Banksian and Grenfell medals have always been very popular with our Affiliated Societies as a wonderful way to congratulate someone who has proved themselves to be a top gardener or, in the case of the Grenfell, a top floral arranger. But what do you know of their history?

In 1820, the **Banksian** Medal was instituted in honour of Sir Joseph Banks, one of the founders of the RHS, who died that year. It was 'exclusively confined to rewarding the exhibitors of objects transmitted or brought to the general meetings'. In 1877



The Banksian (top) and Grenfell (bottom) medals

it was agreed that the RHS should 'receive into association Provincial Horticultural and Floral Societies upon an annual subscription of 5 guineas (£5.25)*'. These societies would, in return, receive RHS medals for distribution at their local exhibitions. This was the start of the Affiliated Societies, and from 1888 onwards the Banksian Medal was their sole award.

The **Grenfell** Medal was struck in honour of Francis Wallace Grenfell, President of the RHS 1913–1919, and was first awarded in 1922 for exhibits of scientific interest. Later, it was

awarded at RHS Chelsea Flower Show for flower arranging, and is now awarded at local shows for floral arrangements.

Affiliated Society, Barham & District Horticultural Society recently wrote: 'We award the Banksian Medal each year to the most successful exhibitor of our summer and autumn shows. It's a good way of encouraging participation and recognises a successful all-round gardener.'

Changes to medal dispatch dates are planned from 2017 – look out for your Affiliated Society renewal letter in November for further information.

* The Royal Horticultural Society: a History 1804–2004 (2004), by Dr Brent Elliott

DON'T MISS OUT. Do we have the best email address for you? Email affiliated@rhs.org.uk to advise us of any changes



WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU INJURE SOMEONE OR DAMAGE THEIR PROPERTY?

NFU Mutual, in partnership with the RHS, offers a range of insurance packages to suit the needs of Britain in Bloom with the RHS, Affiliated Societies, and Community groups. The annual scheme renewal date begins on 1 February 2017. Now is the time to plan for next year.

EMPLOYERS & PUBLIC LIABILITY

From £70.00 (including IPT and administration costs)

SHEDS, EQUIPMENT, CUPS AND TROPHIES

From £65.00 (including IPT and administration costs)

For Britain in Bloom and community groups, please find further details on rhs.org.uk/communitiesinsurance or call 0207 821 3122

For Affiliated Societies, please find further details on rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocietiesinsurance or call 01483 226 554

Cover can be purchased at any time throughout the year, although the full premium will be charged.



NFU Mutual
INSURANCE | PENSIONS | INVESTMENTS

It's about time®