



Royal
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Sharing the best in Gardening

GRASS ROOTS

The RHS Community Update

Issue 20 • Winter 2014/15 rhs.org.uk/communities

GREEN STREETS: BETTER LIVES

*The new three year
campaign*

WINTER PRUNING

Top tips

FIND FUNDING FOR YOUR SCHOOL

Interview

Adam Frost



Cover image: Edible planting at London's Barbican. Credit: Stephen Leaman

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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



Patrick Taylor / RHS, Lindsey Library

To the winter issue of *Grass Roots*, the magazine for all community gardening groups, including Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood and RHS Affiliated Societies.

And a Happy New Year! We're looking forward to another year crammed full of inspiring and fun community gardening, and sharing your stories.

We hope you will get involved in this year's new campaign **Green Streets: Better Lives**, which will launch 2015's RHS Britain in Bloom. Kicking off in April, Green Streets: Better Lives will run for the next three years, aiming to help people transform unloved grey spaces into great green places. This is in a bid to tackle the steady loss of green space in many of our towns, cities and villages, which has serious consequences for us all. Many of you are already doing wonderful work to make your neighbourhoods greener and healthier places to be. We've included some fantastic

examples from communities across the UK on pages 6 - 9.

Whatever you decide you'd like to try in your community, make sure you share your news with us as we may be able to publish it in *Grass Roots*.

Also new in this issue is the 'My Bloom' column, which will feature volunteers from across the Bloom network sharing their experiences. If you'd like to appear in this column in a future issue, please contact me: sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118

Best wishes, and happy gardening,

Sophie Dawson, Editor

YOUR LETTERS 150th celebration ideas?

Our society will be 150 years old in 2018 and we are in the early stages of planning a year of events and celebrations.

We wondered if other societies had any ideas that may help us, such as how they have commemorated similar anniversaries. We look forward to hearing any suggestions.

Best wishes,
Pam Robbins,
Secretary, Battle Floral and Horticultural Society, Email: pams.lodge@btinternet.com

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



Would you like to receive *Grass Roots* by email?

If you or any members of your group would like to receive an electronic copy of *Grass Roots* sent direct to your email every quarter, please sign up to the communities e-newsletter (which includes the magazine) on the RHS website. E-newsletters are sent out in January, April, July and October and are a great way to keep abreast of RHS community gardening activities. Sign up today at: rhs.org.uk/grassroots



Paul David Ditchfield

Time to get creative

The RHS Flower Show Tatton Park is once again on the hunt for communities to take part in some of the features at the show next July (22-26). There are competitions for large and small flower beds, offering parks, Bloom groups and communities the chance to showcase their area by putting on a display. If fruit and vegetables are more your thing there are the Great British Allotment Plots. For more information, please contact Isobel Coulter, Assistant Show Manager: 020 7821 3189 or isobelcoulter@rhs.org.uk

National Pollinator Strategy

Defra launched a 10-year national strategy in November setting out measures being taken to protect pollinators. It includes countryside stewardship schemes, worth a total of £900m, to provide financial incentives for farmers to plant pollinator-friendly crops and let meadows grow. It also sets out actions that government, homeowners and land managers can take to help bees in urban areas. To read the strategy, follow the links from: wildlifetrusts.org/Bees-needs

Soil is richer on allotments

Gardening practices followed on allotments could hold the key to help reverse falling productivity on farmland. University of Sheffield research has found that land used for growing food on allotments is markedly richer and less compacted than that of agricultural fields, producing yields up to 11 times higher than conventional farmland. To read more, search 'Allotments' at sheffield.ac.uk

Date for the diary!

Next year's Wild About Gardens Week will take place between 26 October - 1 November 2015 and will focus on gardening for hedgehogs. To find out more, visit: wildaboutgardensweek.org.uk

Opportunity for volunteers

Big Lunch Extras is a three-year programme to help individuals across the UK create positive change within their communities. They are offering 900 people the chance to attend free events to meet others, boost creative thinking and pick up skills to start making a difference where they live. The next free training weekends take place in February and April 2015. biglunchextras.com

Insurance for communities

NFU Mutual, in partnership with the RHS, offers a range of affordable insurance packages to suit the needs of RHS Affiliated Societies, Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups. The annual scheme renewal begins on 1 February so now is the time to take out a policy. To find out more, visit:

- For Bloom and IYN groups: rhs.org.uk/communitiesinsurance
- For RHS Affiliated Societies: rhs.org.uk/affiliatedsocietiesinsurance



Barton in Bloom

Remembering villagers lost in WW1

Barton's WW1 commemorations have been recognised by East Midlands in Bloom with a special award. The villagers honoured the seven local servicemen who lost their lives by researching the men's histories for display in the local history hub phone box. Seven trees were planted at the entrance to the village with a nearby plaque explaining their significance and poppies were also sown. [facebook.com/BartonInBloom](https://www.facebook.com/BartonInBloom)

Los Angeles Gardener Champions Bloom

In September, 'urban' gardener Ron Finley from South Central Los Angeles, California met with volunteers from Sheffield's Firth Park Community Allotments to mark Bloom's 50th anniversary. The group discussed how gardening can regenerate urban areas. Ron rose to fame after he gave an inspirational TED speech about gardening in the streets of his neighbourhood, "home of the drive-thru and the drive-by". Finley's vision for a healthy, accessible "food forest" started with the curbside veggie garden he planted in the strip of dirt in front of his own house. When the city tried to shut it down, Finley's fight gave voice to a larger movement for change. To watch the talk, visit: ted.com/speakers/ron_finley

Enjoy special offers to visit inspirational gardens

For a second year, RHS Affiliated Societies, Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups can enjoy great offers at some of the RHS Partner Gardens. These specially selected gardens around the UK offer visitors a real horticultural treat. To find out which gardens are participating, visit: rhs.org.uk/groups



Green Streets: Better Lives

Even small areas can be made into wonderful green spaces, like this tiny garden in the Berkshire village of Bray

This year’s Bloom launch will form part of a new three-year campaign **Green Streets: Better Lives**. We hope that Bloom and It’s Your Neighbourhood groups, RHS Affiliated Societies, schools, community and youth groups will get involved in transforming grey spaces into green places for people and wildlife.

What’s the idea?

We all know that gardens and green spaces can cheer us up. They also boost our health and wellbeing and provide important environmental benefits. But we are losing green spaces in the competition for space: gardens are being paved over to make room for an increasing number of cars; high density housing is replacing lower density housing in many areas and parks face a funding crisis and are at risk of deterioration and future loss. The trend for grey replacing green can be linked to mental and physical health problems: depression, heart disease and obesity have all been shown to be lower amongst those with access to quality green spaces. It also has dire consequences for wildlife, and degrades the living environment, increasing flood risk and reducing air quality.

This is why the RHS has launched a three-year campaign to tackle the growing number of grey spaces spreading across the country and turn them into beautiful green places. By the end of 2017, we want to work together with Bloomers, community groups, schools, councils and homeowners to see 9,000 grey spaces transformed into great green places for people and wildlife. You could do anything from putting a pot on a balcony to taking on a larger project, for example turning a grot spot into a community garden. Whatever works for your neighbourhood and follows the three Green Streets: Better Lives principles on the opposite page.

What support is available?

There’s lots of information available on the RHS website to help you. And to kick-start your project we are offering all groups taking part free nasturtium seeds. You might use these on their own in a small space, or add them to a larger selection of plants to create a bigger display. Groups are encouraged to launch their transformation projects during National Gardening Week, 13 – 19 April 2015, as part of the nationwide launch of Bloom and Green Streets: Better Lives.

Spread the word

Once you’ve transformed your space, pass on the challenge to others on Twitter with the hashtag **#GreenStreets** and share your photos at: [facebook.com/rhscommunitygardening](https://www.facebook.com/rhscommunitygardening). We’d like as many people as possible to get involved.

NEXT STEPS

- 1/ Bloom and IYN groups will automatically be sent free nasturtium seeds in early April - so there’s no need to fill in a form this year. Schools, affiliated societies and other groups that would like to receive seeds should complete the form at: [rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom](https://www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom) (for those without internet access please call 020 7821 3122).
- 2/ Identify a suitable spot to transform (and ensure you have permission from the landowner!). Please also consider the existing flora or fauna that may be found in a site, and whether this should be protected. If you are unsure, consult your local Wildlife Trust for advice.
- 3/ Download ideas and online resources: [rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom](https://www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom)

Green Streets: Better Lives guiding principles

Any transformation will make a difference, but bear these three principles in mind as you plan your project.

1/ Green is better than Grey

When it comes to offering environmental and health benefits for people and wildlife, plants are better than paving. Plants cool the air through shading and transpiration, which keeps temperatures down in summer (and provides wind breaks which keep houses warmer in winter). They also decrease surface-water run off which reduces flash flooding. Without plants to absorb pollutants, areas with lots of hard surfaces (i.e. pavements, roads, driveways, walls) suffer from worse air quality than greener areas. And for wildlife, hard surfaces are a barren desert without the food or shelter it needs to survive. Always try to keep as much of your space as possible green and consider the permeability to rain water of any hardstanding you create. Where an area is already paved, are there options for improving it with plants - could raised beds or planters be added to grow fruit and vegetables, climbers added to cover a wall or a green roof installed to capture rainfall and create wildlife habitat?

2/ More is more! (and bigger is better!)

Choose as wide a diversity of plants as you can for your projects. Wildlife will benefit from year-round food sources, with different

plants in flower at different times of the year, and trees, shrubs and perennials all offer different kinds of habitat. Bigger trees (and bigger green spaces) also provide more environmental benefits than smaller ones, so where you can - upsize! Large tree canopies help to reduce flooding by intercepting rainfall before it heads down the drains. They also provide bigger wildlife habitat as well as psychological benefits for people. Ultimately green spaces are about quality *and* quantity.

3/ Connectivity is important

Think about how the green spaces in your neighbourhood connect to each other - and where there might be the biggest grey gaps to breach! Connecting green spaces provides the habitat, food and shelter needed by wildlife. It’s also important for people to have access to public green spaces across different areas. If there’s a built up area near you, could you create a new greening project in the middle of it to help link together two adjacent green areas? For wildlife, green spaces can include railway lines and gardens as well as public parks and community sites such as allotments. As always, green is better than grey and more is more when it comes to diversity and size!

Eight Green Streets: Better Lives ideas

- 1. Green is better than grey Create a raised-bed vegetable garden in a paved area. You could use recycled pallets, donated wood or builders’ rubble sacks filled with soil.



- 2. More is more! Plant up old oil tins, coffee pots, boots, yoghurt pots, whatever you have to hand, to add a bit of colour to an unloved spot.



- 3. Green is better than grey Add a green roof to your community shed or storage unit (above). For advice about how to do this: [rhs.org.uk/advice](https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice)

- 4. Connectivity is important Invite local businesses to get involved by greening their premises.



- 5. Connectivity is important Cover a wall with a climber, or create a vertical planting system for trailing plants - for example with a recycled pallet lined and filled with soil as Eaglely Infants school in Bolton did (below)



- 6. Connectivity is important Railway lines are great for connecting greens space for wildlife. Could you help to make these spaces better by working with Network Rail to plant wildflowers in appropriate areas of trackside land?

- 7. More is more! Help your local school to transform an unloved corner of its grounds into a green oasis full of flowers (below).



- 8. More is more! Keep pollinators in mind with everything you do and try to keep the diversity of planting as wide as possible – use the RHS Perfect for Pollinators list for inspiration: [rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators](https://www.rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators)

Green Streets: Better Lives

Ideas & Inspiration

Hundreds of groups around the country are already making green transformations that bring benefits for people and wildlife, following the principles of Green Streets: Better Lives. Here are just a few examples to help inspire your own projects.



Wildflowers and a planted boat now grace the bottom of the park, previously home to concrete hardstanding, patchy grass and rusty railings (indent, shows the site from the opposite side)



Drab concrete bollards were cloaked in greenery, becoming a well-loved feature of the communal area between houses. Today the space attracts wildlife and brings neighbours together.

Transformation of unwanted concrete bollards into new garden

When: 2011 - 2014

Funding: £100 grant from a local councillor plus small donations from residents

After several unsuccessful attempts to get four unsightly concrete bollards removed from an area between their houses, neighbours in Wroxham took matters into their own hands. The group sought permission to remove the bollards independently, but was refused by the housing association on health and safety grounds and due to there being insufficient funds to provide a skip for the rubble.

"Nine of the residents then agreed we had no alternative but to disguise the structures," says lead coordinator of the group, Eileen Mann. "So my husband Jeff designed and built planters for positioning on and around them."

Each of the nine residents donated a small amount of money towards plants and a local councillor provided a grant to cover the cost of materials.

The group has now taken on caring for more areas of the communal space, planting a mimosa tree, installing a birdbath, dovecot and insect shelter and planting up mixed flower beds. Cowslips, primroses, buttercups and knapweed have been added to the lawn and honeysuckle and wild flowers are grown to attract pollinators. "We were always a friendly group of neighbours,"

says Eileen. "Working on this project has brought us even closer together. What more could anyone wish for."

Top tips:

The group installed a large water butt near the garden to help them keep on top of the summer watering. This is used communally to care for the many pots.

Eileen also recommends planning and implementing one area at a time. "Don't be afraid to adapt your plan if the original one doesn't work or costs too much," she says.

"Talk to your friends about what you hope to achieve, you'll be surprised how many offer cuttings of plants or unwanted decorative plots. And try to incorporate something for all age groups too, leave a space for the very young.

Volunteers create a horticultural haven in Ross-on-Wye

When: 2010 - 2014

Funding: £1000 funding from the government's Active at 60 programme; £150 grant from the town council; plus support in kind from the local garden centre

In 2010 a group of volunteers approached Herefordshire County Council with a view to improving a small public garden that had gone unloved for a number of years. Blake Memorial Garden links the Wye riverside to the town centre at the top of the hill. Volunteers saw the potential for something

better than its tired shrub beds and rusty railings. They set themselves the challenge of improving the space in time for the 2012 Diamond Jubilee.

With permissions in place, the group started work at the bottom of the site. The concrete foundation of a long-gone cottage was removed to make way for a flower garden.

Volunteers planted wildflowers in an old boat and created a pathway around it. Seating was improved throughout the garden and a mural painted on the wall. Overgrown shrubs were cut back to make way for new herbaceous planting.

Today Blake Memorial Garden is a well-loved entrance route to the town. Five volunteers still work in the garden every Sunday to keep it looking its best. "It's really lifted the area," says group co-ordinator Caroline Utting. "People are quite amazed when they come down and see what's there."

Blake Memorial Garden is an RHS It's Your Neighbourhood group (Level 5, Outstanding).

Key challenges

Watering was a challenge before the group's rainwater butt was installed, with watering cans needing to be carried a great distance. The group has also established additional access to a nearby resident's outside tap.

Edible Campus at Lancaster University

When: 2012 onwards

Funding: £130,000 in total from two NUS funding schemes

The 'Edible Campus' project at Lancaster University aims to inspire a culture for sustainable food through practical volunteering and awareness-raising events. Co-ordinated by Green Lancaster - the student union's environmental campaign - over 100 students and staff regularly volunteer in a range of growing sites across the campus. The 'Ecohub' is the centre of operations, transformed since 2012 from a little-used area of grass into a productive growing area with raised beds, chickens, a pond, polytunnel and pizza oven. Maintaining the gardens throughout holiday periods has been possible thanks to the support of university staff. In 2014 the group achieved a Level 5 (Outstanding) RHS It's Your Neighbourhood award.

Niyati Burde, LUSU Student-Staff Team Member, says one of the main challenges has been engaging people in food sustainability issues. "Most people are living on a budget here, so it's been a challenge talking about where they are sourcing their food from while they're so focused on the cost," she says.

However the project offers a solution: volunteer gardeners take home free fruit and vegetables from the plots and the growers are also helping on-campus businesses get involved. "We've planted a Mediterranean herb garden



next to one of the cafes on campus, so the chef takes care of the garden and uses the herbs in his cooking," says Niyati.

Top tips:

To help spread the word and attract new volunteers the group has set up a Vimeo channel to publish weekly vlogs documenting their progress:

vimeo.com/channels/greenlancaster



The 'Edible Hub' before and after its transformation by students and staff. Left: eggs are another benefit of the scheme



Shevington Parish Council car park transformed with re-cycled materials

When: 2012 and continually maintained
Funding: £80 to lay the re-cycled flagstones.

The flower beds around Shevington Parish Council’s car park had previously suffered from heavy footfall and as a result, plants did not survive long. “The photo to the right shows the bed a few days after the parish



Volunteers re-create park’s central flowerbed

When: 2009 - 2014
Funding: £4750 (for planting)

Whitworth Park is the closest sizable green space to Manchester City Centre and is well used by local workers and residents. Following cuts in the 1980s the park had fallen into decline and the Friends of Whitworth Park (FOWP) was set up in 2005 to reverse this trend. Together with the council the group drew up a management plan for the space, helping to secure funding to repair pathways and re-build the central flowerbed.
With allocated funds restricted to infrastructure, FOWP successfully applied for a second grant to plant up the central bed. A Piet Oudolf-inspired design by one of the members was chosen, which provides strong form and texture and year-round interest. Several FOWP volunteers work throughout the year to maintain the

council paid £400 to plant some bushes there,” said Margaret Carter, Shevington in Bloom Co-ordinator. “As you can see this did not work as members of the public trampled over them without even noticing they were there.”
Shevington in Bloom approached the council to suggest putting small flagstones as passing points for pedestrians close to the driver and passenger sides of parked cars. They re-used old stones supplied by the council and replanted the beds with plants re-cycled from council planters before they could be thrown away. The only cost for the project was laying the flagstones; planting was carried out by volunteers from Shevington in Bloom.
“We are very proud of the fact that every plant in this area is re-cycled,” says Margaret. “We’ve kept costs down while providing a simple and effective solution that looks fantastic.”
2014 RHS Britain in Bloom Judges said, “The effective, cost-efficient new landscaping at the parish council car park, with the use of slabs between grasses and fragrant herbs, solved a major area of heavy foot traffic damage, showing a thought process that is refreshing.”

display, weeding, pruning and dividing the perennials when needed.
With these efforts, the once-neglected spot has become a favourite for many park users. Dr Carolyn Jones, who works in the nearby hospital, said, “Occasionally I take



The Bloom group’s low cost transformation of the flower bed has provided an attractive feature while solving the problem of people stepping on the beds and compacting the soil

Top tips:
Margaret advises groups to do their homework before approaching the council. “I got the quote for the flagging before I approached them,” she said. “I also took the before photograph and a drawing that I did of what I thought it would look like afterwards. It was also a very ‘common sense’ approach to the solution.”

time to stroll through the park on my way to work, and this morning I was struck once again by the beauty of the island on the central walkway, blooming with purple flowers and grasses which were humming with bees and other insects.”
The group now wants to establish secondary walks around the park through the wilder sections where the grass is left long, enhancing these areas with sensitive meadow planting. It is working with neighbouring Whitworth Art Gallery on a joint scheme for a community garden and continues to search for funding.



Roadside shrub bed re-born as Dunstable’s community veg growing hub

When: 2013 - 2014
Funding: Almost everything required for the project was donated – materials and labour.

Led by local resident and gardener Sahira Ward, Incredible Edible Dunstable transformed a non-descript shrub bed close to a neighbourhood shopping parade into a community vegetable, fruit and herb garden.

With the council’s support the group successfully applied to the Highway Authority for permission to develop the site. A fellow voluntary group, Promoting Dunstable purchased public liability insurance for the project and 2013’s Britain in Bloom vegetable and herb seeds were shared out for people to start growing in greenhouses and on windowsills.

To generate further interest Sahira invited local residents to a drop-in session at a local restaurant, where they could learn more about the project and pledge their support. She also encouraged shops in the area to display posters and set up an Incredible Edible Dunstable Facebook page to let people know what was going on.

The town council kick started work by providing funding for five raised beds and clearing half the site of top growth and roots. Between them, local businesses donated funds to install two water butts and cover the cost of volunteer workers’ lunches. With the help of multiple vehicles, eight tonnes of topsoil and 40 bags of manure were delivered to the site.

Work was completed in summer 2013 and the garden now hosts regular community growing days,

as well as school groups who come to learn about food growing. The growers follow an organic, no dig approach, to help the soil’s natural structure develop. They also seek to be as low impact as possible, gathering rainwater in butts and using locally sourced, recycled materials. In 2014 the garden won Best Community Project in Anglia in Bloom.



Sahira says, “When you find your team and you work together on a common goal, no matter what that may be, there is a companionship that will never be broken, and this is where the amazing feeling of pride and happiness overflows into other people’s lives.”

Top tips:
Sahira’s advice for other groups wanting to do something similar is to look at Incredible Edible Todmorden. “See what they have achieved in their town and then find their template for success on the Incredible Edible Network,” she says. “Every single thing is there to help anyone to do this. Their motto is: Don’t talk about it, just do it. Grow food, cook food, share food and do it in public spaces.”



My Bloom: Alice Alexander, Waveney Court Gardening Group

Why do you volunteer with Bloom?
I originally became involved in the local ‘Bloom’ project to meet like-minded people with a shared passion for gardening. I enjoy the many challenges gardening can bring and volunteering seemed a natural thing to do.

What’s the best thing that happened in 2014?
At 64-years-old, I had been single for many years and never thought I’d ever meet anyone new until Steve from the neighbouring housing scheme came along to help with our gardening project. We immediately became friends and soon found that we had lots in common.
We worked tirelessly to develop a new pond area and prepare the garden in readiness for the ‘Bloom’ campaign. Being the younger members, we soon became the driving force of the group and our friendship became stronger.
Steve proposed in April 2014 and as you can imagine I was over the moon. We married in August 2014 at the local registry office and held a reception at Waveney Court for our family and friends. It truly was the happiest day of our lives.

What are you planning for this year’s Bloom?
The group hopes to repeat its success of last year and has already started making plans to update the pond area and develop a silver-themed garden to mark the anniversary of Newcastle-under-Lyme’s 25th year of participating in Britain in Bloom.
I thoroughly recommend volunteering as it’s a chance to give something back to the community and provides a real sense of pride and belonging. It has turned my life around, giving me the opportunity to meet Steve and make my life complete.

If you’d like to share your volunteering news in the new My Bloom column, please contact: 020 7821 3118/ sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk

RHS ADVICE

Gardening the ungreen

Help for your community with regular news and tips from RHS scientists and advisors. To suggest a topic for this section of the magazine, contact sophiedawson@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3118

Winter pruning

Pruning is a valuable skill, used to rejuvenate, shape and control plants. Many plants will require no intervention at all; however others will benefit from being pruned. For detailed advice about what to prune when, consult a pruning book or visit the RHS website and search by plant.

Why do we prune in winter?

In autumn, deciduous trees, shrubs and climbers relocate their resources from the falling leaves to their roots, where they remain until bud burst next spring. Therefore winter pruning will not reduce their resources, as these are safely locked away in the roots, but it will upset the balance between root and shoot. Plants respond to this by attempting to restore the balance by putting on vigorous growth the following spring using the stored resources from the roots. Evergreen plants on the other hand retain their resources in their foliage so are best pruned as growth starts in spring, so they do not ‘starve’ in winter and suffer root loss.

In landscapes (as opposed to gardens) winter pruning is very valuable. Willow and hazel plantings are cut to ground level every five to ten years, a practice called coppicing. This yields valuable timber to the garden or for basket and hurdle making, and rejuvenates the plants prolonging the life of the trees or shrubs.

The idea of cutting back plants to extend their life is strange, but it relies on a property of plants called juvenility. Like other organisms, seedlings start out as non-reproducing (i.e. non-flowering) vigorously growing plants. Once flowering



Pruning to just above a bud to coppice *Cornus* ‘Midwinter fire’



Coppicing *Acer negundo* ‘Winter Lightning’ at RHS Garden Wisley, removing growth back to the first node

begins growth slows markedly as plants put resources into reproduction instead of growth. *Magnolia* can take 10-20 years to flower; other plants such as willows produce catkins in just a few years. If cut back very hard, flowering is inhibited and juvenility partially restored so the plant remains young, if not forever, but for many years.

Pollarded trees are similar. Here trees are severely pruned at head height or above. Old pollarded trees are quite common, where the tree was once pruned at frequent intervals at a height for timber, animal feed or bark for tanning leather, while allowing grazing animals to live beneath the foliage. Pollarding to restrict trees, as with street trees, is an effective way to manage trees in towns. Trees are extremely valuable for wildlife and preserving older ones is a high priority in preserving urban biodiversity.

Although we may often have the time to prune in winter, it can be completely the wrong timing for some plants, causing overly

vigorous growth and lack of flowering. If you need to control an excessively large shrub (and coppicing and pollarding are not suitable), it can be effective to prune in summer when the plant’s resources are reduced because they are in the boughs and not in the roots. An example of the curtailment of vigour by summer pruning is seen in dwarf fruit (cordons and espaliers) - these would be sizeable bushes were their resources not severely reduced by annual summer pruning.

Winter can be a good time to clear overgrown areas, removing self-sown brambles, buddleja and birch or willow trees. But unless roots can be grubbed out or herbicide applied to freshly-cut stumps regrowth may be vigorous in summer. However the plants will have been weakened more than is apparent and further cutting or herbicide in summer will ultimately lead to clear ground that can be planted.

What tools will I need?

- Secateurs
- Pruning saw
- Loppers
- String to tie in stems of climbers and wall shrubs
- Bin for green waste

Secateurs can be used for smaller prunings



Cuts should be angled away from the trunk to help rainwater easily run off and reduce the chance of decay



Top tips for pruning

- When cutting a stem, cut just above a healthy bud, pair of buds or side shoot. Where possible, cut to an outward facing bud or branch to avoid congestion and rubbing of branches
- Make your cut 0.5cm (1/4in) above the bud. Cutting too close can induce death of the bud and cutting too far from the bud can result in dieback of the stub and entry of rots and other infections
- Angle the cut away from the trunk to produce a slope that the rain will run off
- For advice about pruning larger branches and trees, visit the RHS website.



Cornus in winter



Rubus cockburnianus

Plants that can be winter pruned

- Dogwoods (*Cornus*) grown for their colourful stems. Cut to ground level in late winter and they respond with the amazing thickets of red, black or white shoots that can be enjoyed the following winter.
- *Spirea japonica* ‘Goldflame’ fresh new growth is bright yellow, fading to green in late summer. By winter pruning a small, vivid yellow bush results.
- *Rubus cockburnianus* has amazing white stems. Annual late winter pruning to ground level promotes vigorous showy stems in the following year.
- *Paulownia* will bounce back after a winter prune with exceptionally large and ornamental leaves the following summer.
- Elders (*Sambucus*) and *Cotinus* can be winter pruned to ensure bold foliage the following year (although you will sacrifice flowers for one year).
- Any over-size shrub that can stand hard pruning – it won’t flower for a year or two, but it will be totally renovated with little likelihood of trouble: *Deutzia*, *Kolkwitsia* and *Philadelphus* for example.

Planting in winter

As long as the ground is dry enough, planting in winter can be viable, and plants put down roots early so should need less summer care. Planting can be a costly and time consuming business but consider three economical ways of covering the ground:

Cuttings, layers and truncheons: A few plants, willows and poplars for example, root well from a stout stick or truncheon pushed into the soil. The truncheon will grow fast in spring and out-compete weeds. These trees relish wet, poorly-drained soil and can be an excellent way of making an easily cared for and ultimately coppiced planting of considerable wildlife value.

Whips: Two to three year old trees can be very affordable and survive well (in the absence of rabbits, deer and other nibblers). They are however vulnerable to

weeds in the first two years, after which they fend for themselves. Being small they also offer little ‘reward’ to vandals. They are best planted in large groups so any losses make little difference and of course surplus plants can always be transplanted elsewhere up to five years old.



Willow sticks can be pushed into the ground in winter to make a planting of considerable value to wildlife, offering early spring nectar

Overgrown garden centre stock: Trees, shrubs and climbers that have outgrown their pots seldom thrive, but perennials thick in their pots can be cut into sections so one pot might make three to five viable plants for the price, perhaps cut-price, of one plant. Garden centres discard these when fresh stock arrives the spring. However, check the root ball of each one before buying in case vine weevil grubs are resident.

For more advice on any gardening topic, visit: rhs.org.uk/advice

Finding funding for school projects

Getting the most out of your outside space can be costly but the RHS Campaign for School Gardening has lots of tips and ideas which can help schools and community groups find the resources they need.

Perfect planning

At the planning stage it's worth having two or three options for what you want to do first in your garden, depending on the amount of funding you can secure. Although cash is the most flexible resource, offers of materials and labour can be just as valuable, so be imaginative about who you approach, and open to all suggestions.

Local support

Hold regular community events, inviting local adults to attend gardening sessions that can result in a lot of work done in a short space of time, and potentially recruit new regular volunteers. The RHS Get Your Grown Ups Growing scheme every autumn is good for this. It is worth bearing in mind that it's easier to find funds to start a project than to maintain and develop it, so on-going commitments are particularly valuable.

Raising and securing funds

Raise additional funds by holding plant sales, produce sales or bake sales for the local community. Traditional fundraising techniques from sponsored silences to boot fairs can also generate useful amounts of cash. They are even more valuable in helping to spread the word and generate enthusiasm for your gardening projects.

Enter competitions and apply for grants both locally and nationally. Make sure you tailor your application to the scheme's aims to better your chances. Your local borough or county council may also provide funds or advice; it is always worth seeing if they have a horticultural or environmental specialist who can help.



As part of Get Your Grown-ups Growing Ballycraigy Primary School in County Antrim benefited from extra help to get its allotment in shape

Forging partnerships

Educational establishments in the area may be able to lend support e.g. a secondary school might provide labour as a community service project, an art college could provide garden sculptures and a horticultural college spare plants.

Many large businesses and organisations have community service programmes so make sure your local branches know you would value their contribution. Local businesses, especially with horticultural or environmental interests, may provide finance or resources in kind.

There are also a number of bodies, large and small, that you can approach for funding. Your local councils should be able to provide lists of local funders, and a selection of national funders is listed on the RHS Campaign for School Gardening website.

Head to rhs.org.uk/schoolgardening to find additional information on how to set up a successful school garden, as well as practical gardening guides and fun activity ideas for groups.

Does your school get involved in community gardening? If so we'd love to hear from you and we may be able to feature your story in *Grass Roots*. Please contact Alana Tapsell, RHS Schools' Communications Officer, with the details: alanatapsell@rhs.org.uk or call 01483 212 387



David Domoney joins children and parents at Derbyshire's Northfield Junior School for their Get Your Grown-ups Growing event.



Looking to the future

Adam Frost is a multi-award-winning garden designer, an RHS Ambassador for Education and Co-Founder of the Homebase Garden Academy. He is currently campaigning for school gardening to be given greater recognition in UK secondary schools. In October, he presented the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals Awards in Bristol.

RHS: How did you get into gardening?

When I was young I spent a lot of time on my grandparents' allotment, where I was lucky enough to have my own patch. So a lot of weekends were spent learning how to grow veg and that feeling of popping a seed in the ground and seeing something grow really got a spark going for me. My nan was keen on growing cacti and also coleus too, which I used to sell on Old Nasing Road - my first horticultural entrepreneurial experience!

RHS: Why are you so focused on secondary schools?

We are great at engaging children with gardening through primary education, particularly with the RHS Campaign for School Gardening. However, they then go off to secondary school and the wheels come off. I think it's especially important for young people to connect with nature

Horticulture Matters is an industry wide initiative to fill the growing skills gap to secure the future of the horticulture industry: rhs.org.uk/horticulturermatters

up close. If they understand what's outside their back door, hopefully they will understand the bigger picture.

RHS: What do you think would increase young people's interest?

One of the biggest issues with encouraging young people into a career in horticulture is the image. Too often it's viewed as a last resort for those who aren't academic, with low wages, when in fact horticulture is a vast subject and there are a range of career opportunities from the Arts to the Sciences. We need to make gardening seem cool to young people. Celebrity chefs have managed to do it for cooking and we need to do the same for our industry.

I was fortunate enough to start on an apprenticeship, before the government stopped them. Apprenticeships are a great way to train and it's really encouraging to see key organisations such as Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and the RHS introducing apprenticeships at their gardens but we need so much more.

Horticulture Matters is an industry wide initiative to raise the profile of horticultural careers to save this £9 billion industry. We

need secondary schools on board but know it can be difficult for schools because of other priorities so we need to demonstrate the value. Perhaps we should promote the health benefits as well.

RHS: Could schools be working more closely with horticultural businesses?

Yes, I think it's the simplest solution. If teachers can see how businesses can support learning it would help to encourage secondary schools to take up horticulture on their curriculum.

I'm delighted to be involved with the Homebase Garden Academy, which has been a huge success since being set up in September 2013. We had over 1,000 applications for the 24 available places on this year's intake. The Academy shows the benefits of introducing young students to horticulture businesses. The students spend 12 days over a year meeting horticulture suppliers across the board and it really opens their eyes to the career opportunities.

For me, horticulture really did change my life and it's been a fascinating journey from apprentice gardener in a parks department to landscaper to designer to here.

Inspiring a healthy love of food

How one frustrated mother's fussy eater inspired her to set up a charity to engage children with gardening and food.



Left: Children are involved in the gardens throughout the year. Everything they grow is sent to the Inspero kitchens for the children to cook in their chef-led cookery lessons (above)

the charity. "I used to work in international development and spent time in Cameroon, but I started thinking why am I over here working with all these kids when we've got so many problems on our own doorstep. You might think that Hampshire's quite well off, but there are so many pockets of deprivation here. Lots of parents here can't afford to buy the things that we grow, so for the children it's a chance to learn and try new things."

The UK's looming health crisis is also reason to act: "There are very few cookery classes in schools these days, so what we do is essential," she explains. "We have so much obesity now. It's important that our children understand food and how to prepare it. We hope to give children a better education and also manners, so that when they grow up they can mix with all sorts of people, and have the skills they need to be healthy."

Keeping interest and reinventing things is important, especially for teenagers, says Catherine. "We've set up a woodwork project for our 14 and 15 year olds, building bird boxes, bug houses and raised bed

frames, which they love. At a certain age kids just seem to want to give up everything they do and you've got to work hard to keep them engaged. That's why some of the parents send their children here, to get them off the PS3!"

inspero.org.uk
[facebook.com/love2grow](https://www.facebook.com/love2grow)

Inspero is an RHS Affiliated Society and a South & South East in Bloom prize-winner

50 Years of Bloom: A golden autumn show

Crowhurst and District Horticultural Society, an RHS Affiliated Society in East Sussex, encouraged people to grow on and photograph the special 50th anniversary sunflower seeds provided by the RHS last year. The winning photos were chosen for the adult and child categories at the society's Autumn Flower Show.



Prize winner Tim Knaggs, with society Chair, Mary Boorman

Catherine Waters-Clark used to work in IT and then in International Development. Now she runs Inspero, a charity that helps over 150 children a year learn how to grow edibles and cook with them.

"Essentially we're about the link between growing and cookery," she explains. "Children join growing sessions in one of our two community gardens, where they help produce food for our chef-led cookery lessons." These lessons cost just £2 and see the children prepare a two-course meal and then sit down together at the end to eat and chat. They are so popular there is usually a waiting list for places.

Catherine set up the charity after one of her own children drove her mad with his fussy eating. "We just didn't know what to do, but getting him involved in our garden was a help," she says. "Children are more open to trying new foods after growing them. At Inspero we grow lots of foods that you can't find in the supermarkets, like cucamelons, tomatillos, yellow courgettes and different coloured radishes – and the kids just love them."

Inspero's growing sites are based in an area of Basingstoke with high social deprivation. With support from Sovereign Housing Association, Catherine was able to lease an overgrown pocket of land tucked

away between houses on one of its estates. "It was covered in brambles and rubble, but it's in a perfect spot as it's so accessible for all the local families," she says.

A second, larger growing space was set up in a field just down the road so children can walk between sites. "The field is wonderful as it's full of wildlife, with the nearby hedgerows, and it gives us more space. We do lots of energisers and icebreakers so it's great to have space for the children to run around in."

The housing association has been highly supportive of the group and provides its community centre kitchen at a peppercorn rent for the charity's cookery classes.

Inspero also uses Aldworth School and Ridgeway Community Centre kitchens for classes after school.

After voluntarily running a pilot project on an allotment for a year, Catherine was ready to set up Inspero in 2012. Since then, the charity has secured £10,000 from BIG Lottery and £8,000 from Comic Relief. They subsidise their activities with a series of small local grants, keeping the cost of the classes down as low as possible "so it's not a barrier to children coming".

Catherine is clearly energised by her work. She's trained as a horticulturist so that she can run the gardens and is constantly developing new partnerships to support

Special offers for groups

Community groups can access great rates to visit RHS Shows and Gardens in 2015. Book your ticket today and enjoy a fantastic day out.



Group rates for RHS Shows

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

Find out more shows information at rhs.org.uk/shows

RHS Flower Show Cardiff, 17-19 Apr

Bute Park, Cardiff Castle
Set against the stunning backdrop of Cardiff Castle, RHS Flower Show Cardiff is the first showcase of the year for all that's best in gardening.

Advance full day prices: Groups of 10+ £8pp; Individual £8.50pp.

RHS Chelsea Flower Show, 19-23 May

Royal Hospital, Chelsea
Marvel at the vast array of show gardens on offer and lose yourself in the Great Pavilion, or seek inspiration from the wonderful Artisan Retreats..

Advance full day prices: No group rates available; Individual £59pp.

RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, 30 Jun-5 Jul

East Molesey, Surrey
Enjoy the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show as we celebrate its 25th anniversary in spectacular fashion.

*Advance full day prices:
Groups of 10+ £25.50pp; 40+ £21.50pp;
Individual £30.50pp.*

RHS Flower Show Tatton Park, 22-26 Jul

Knutsford, Cheshire
Join us for an unforgettable day out at the RHS Flower Show Tatton Park, featuring stunning Show Gardens, the Schools Flowerbed competition and the legendary Floral Marquee.

Advance full day prices: Groups of 10+ £21.50pp; 40+ £18pp; Individual £25pp.

Group rates for RHS Gardens

Here is just a selection of the many events taking place at each of the four RHS Gardens. To book your next group visit to an RHS garden please call 0207 821 3170*. For information please visit rhs.org.uk/gardens

*Affiliated societies should quote their affiliation number to claim their one free annual garden visit for up to 55 members. RHS members plus one accompanying family guest go free to the gardens.

RHS Garden Harlow Carr, Yorkshire

- Spring Gardening Weekend, 18-19 Apr
- Spring Plant Fair, 3 May
- National Sweet Pea Show, 11-12 Jul
- The Orchid Show, 8-9 Aug
- Autumn Plant Fair, 6 Sept
- Real Ale & Cider Festival, 19-20 Sept
- Autumn Food & Woodfest, 10-11 Oct

Minimum group size 10 adults. Groups of 10+ £7.95pp.

RHS Garden Hyde Hall, Essex

- Spring Gardening & Wildlife Weekend 18-19 Apr
 - Essex Craft & Design Show, 2-4 May
 - RHS Hyde Hall Flower Show, 30 Jul-2 Aug
 - Contemporary Craft & Design Fair, 28-31 Aug
 - Woodfest & Ale Weekend, 10-11 Oct
 - Christmas Gift Fair & Market, 5-6 Dec
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Group of 10+ £7.95pp.*

RHS Garden Rosemoor, Devon

- Spring Flower Show, 14-15 Mar
 - RHS National Rhododendron Show 25-26 Apr
 - Spring Craft & Design Fair, 2-4 May
 - Devon Chilli Fiesta, 9-10 May
 - Rose Weekend, 20-21 Jun
 - Vintage Weekend, 25-26 Jul
 - West Country Craft Fair, 4-6 Sept
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Groups of 10+ £7.95pp.*

RHS Garden Wisley, Surrey

- Butterflies in the Glasshouse, 17 Jan-8 Mar
 - Spring Plant Fair, 27-29 Mar
 - Spring Gardening Weekend, 18-19 Apr
 - Contemporary Craft & Design Fair, 30 Apr-4 May
 - All About Plants, 20-21 Jun
 - Surrey Sculpture Society Trail, 22 Aug-27 Sept
 - Wisley Flower Show 8-13 Sept
 - Autumn Woodfest, 3-4 Oct
- Minimum group size 10 adults. Groups of 10+ £10.80pp.*

