



London & South & South East in Bloom
Green Lines June 2021



After what seems an eternity, we have started visiting the amazing Communities, Bloom Groups, Villages, Towns and Cities across our two regions. The weather is a “little” wet but that has helped freshen up the gardens and its plants, but sadly the weeds too. Despite the Country not opening up as we had hoped we are still visiting your communities nearly as normal and as long as we are all careful it should all work well, and we can get back to recognising the brilliant work you all do.

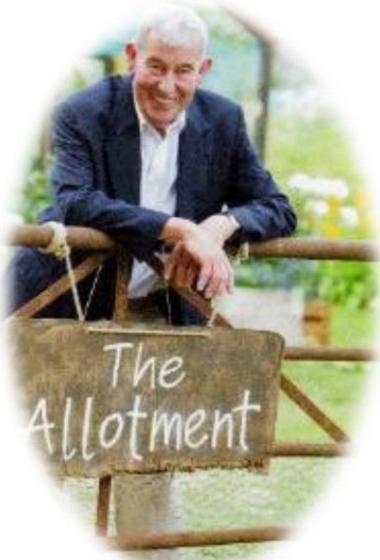
Most of you managed to attend one of our various Virtual Seminars, but for those who did not or are new to the Bloom here are a few final tips to help you get the very best from the judges or assessors visits.

- Assume the visiting judges or assessor knows little of your community even if they have visited before.
- Tell and show them all that you have done to enhance your entry and how that fits into the criteria for the category you have entered.
- Try to make sure you have covered as much of the criteria as possible and while interesting don't waste time on features or issues unrelated to the criteria.
- Introduce judges and assessors to key members of your community and especially your volunteers who know doubt are the reason for your preparations and/or entry.
- Let them tell their story as to why they are involved and what has been the benefit to them for being involved.
- If you are a main entry (Village, Town, Town Centre, City) provide the judges with background information via judges briefing notes (to be sent pre-judging). If possible, give a short (15 minute) presentation as this will give context to your entry and although not judged it will give relevance and support to what they see and hear which will lead to additional points.
- Try to cover as much of the criteria as possible and please make sure that you can deliver a visit within the time allowed.
- Many entries such as Parks, Green Spaces, Churchyards etc do not need the amount of time allocated, so please make sure you show all of the points likely to increase the award level without repeating the same thing too many times. Once a judge has considered a score seeing more of the same thing is of no additional value.

So we very much look forward to visiting the 600 + entries across both regions and wish you all the very best of luck and let's hope this will be despite all of the setbacks a Golden Year.

Best wishes from the Trustees and Campaign Managers

Jim Buttress VMH – Patron



Finally, after 21 months, I had a Flower Show to judge and like London Buses followed up with a second show the next day.

The first show was a spring fair organised by Gardeners World in the grounds of the Transport Museum at Beaulieu.

This was the first time they had staged a show at Beaulieu and the reason why they chose this venue was that following research they discovered more copies of the Gardeners World Magazine were purchased in Hampshire than any other County. The show took place between the 28th May – 31st May. The organisers were advised the event should take place outside and the celebrity theatre was to be open-sided. Following Government Guidelines and the local Health Authority, the organisers were allotted 5,000 each day. It was decided that each exhibitor would have their Gazebo and provide a display on a wooden pallet. Unfortunately, the organisers did not issue the exhibitors any criteria regarding the display!!

There were 19 exhibitors and on this occasion, thankfully I was only to find 1st, 2nd or 3rd. This outdoor format is proving popular with exhibitors. It was encouraging to see the numbers of people who got involved in Gardening, particularly growing vegetables during the restrictions. It was therefore not surprising that the most popular display over the four days was staged by the National Vegetable Society. It consisted of four raised beds with a fantastic range of vegetables which were originally being grown for a display at the Chelsea Flower Show which would normally have taken place at the same time. The original grower gave his vegetables and put the display together with the help of the society members who provided all the sales plants and had sold out after just two days. I understand that in 2022 the show will be earlier in May and following my suggestion stricter criteria will be applied for creating displays.

The second show took place on Saturday at the Kent County Show Ground at Detling nr Maidstone. There were over 200 stands outside which included many selling the same range of Trees, Shrubs, Climbers, Bedding Plants and Vegetables. I thought the prices were high.

A lot of the plants on offer didn't appear to have been "hardened off" and as a result, were already showing the effects. The exhibitors were not required to provide a display. I had to judge 10 exhibits in an enclosed building where it was necessary to wear a face mask. When I handed out the awards some of the regular exhibitors queried whether wearing my mask was over my eyes when I judged their stands!!! It was interesting to find out from the organisers that Government Guidelines and the local Health Authority were only allowed 4,000 per day, but customers did not have to pre-book.

Since the two shows, I have time to reflect and personally believe the type of format used at Beaulieu is the way forward, particularly at County Shows where the marquee is always the biggest expense. Visitors have more space to look at the exhibits and can walk around the show at leisure. However, the overriding problems with these open-air events are the ENGLISH weather!! I understand that for the first time the Malvern Autumn Show will be without the large Floral Marquee.

Keep Safe, Keep Smiling, Keep Gardening.

Jim

GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR JUNE Reg Leach, Judge and former Parks Manager

PLANNING TO GO ON HOLIDAY? -Covid rules permitting of course!

If you are going to be away this summer for some time, even for a few days, there are several things you can do to minimise plant loss through lack of water whilst away. Firstly ask a friend, neighbour or relative to look after your garden. If you can't do this, plants that are most vulnerable to dry conditions in beds and borders, should be well watered and their base then mulched to trap in moisture around their roots; Move containers and pots if possible, to a shadier spot while you're away. Dunk planted pots into the water for a few minutes so the roots at the centre of the pot become well wetted – giving the maximum period before they dry out and sit pots in saucers to catch any rain to help them last until your return.



If you have tender pot plants such as Coleus, ornamental/zonal Geraniums (the old-fashioned ones that are grown for their leaf colour more than their flowers) and Chlorophytum, plunge them (still in their pots), into any gaps in the borders you may have, always watering in well. They will survive better while you are away on holiday, as their roots can expand out of the bottom of the pot into the soil beneath. These plants can then be lifted at

the end of the season and put back into the greenhouse and if required potting on into bigger pots. While you're at it, take cuttings of them to overwinter too, to maintain your stock.

Another option is to set up an irrigation system – a hosepipe that trails around the garden with holes in the pipe that can direct water by drip feed into individual pots or around nominated plants. You can also automate the system with a battery-operated timer.



BEDS & BORDERS:

Regularly check herbaceous plants, summer flowering bulbs and standard bedding plants for staking and trying to avoid wind damage. Deadhead regularly to keep them flowering and take out old flowering stems of Delphinium and Lupin, as they can often have a second flush. If you have lavender, harvest and dry for bagging up and using indoors. If your herbaceous plants are becoming too large for their space, make a note to lift and divide later in the year.

ROSES AND SHRUBS:

Cut out rose suckers coming from the base, as they will weaken the plant. Regularly deadhead all roses to keep them flowering throughout the summer. Feed regularly to help encourage repeat flowering and to maintain strong, healthy plants which will be more resistant to pest and disease.

Cut out the more vigorous green shoots from variegated shrubs that are reverting, e.g. Spiraea; Elaeagnus; Euonymus. Prune back shrubs after flowering to encourage new growth for next year's flowers and this will also keep the shrub's size in check. Always check large shrubs for bird nesting and if in evidence leave until the young have fledged.



LAWNS:

Regularly feed to keep a green sward and water well afterwards. If we are experiencing hot dry weather this month, hold off feeding as the lawn may get scorched, just water well at dusk.

If you are struggling with a mossy lawn, it's likely to be compacted and therefore not draining well, or the lawn is in too much heavy shade. Make a note to de-compact in the autumn using a hand fork to allow air in and lightly dress with a good fine loam brushed in. Alternatively, reduce the area of the lawn that is in the shade where the worst of the moss is and create or extend the patio, or plant shade-tolerant plants that survive well without too much sun – a collection of Hostas for example.

HEDGES:

For the best hedges trim lightly and regularly and not too hard, to avoid the older brown wood showing through. Check underneath for weeds and litter. As with large shrubs check for birds nesting and leave until the young have fledged.

FEEDING:

It is very important to regularly feed plants, particularly those in baskets, pots, and containers. As the season progresses, containers will become increasingly pot bound and the plants will starve themselves if not fed regularly. Re-pot into larger pots if possible, to give their roots more room to grow.

WINTER SPRING BEDDING:

If you sowed Polyanthus, Bellis, and Wallflowers earlier in the season, they would need thinning out now to allow them to grow to a good size, before planting out after the summer bedding has been removed, usually around early October.

If you didn't do a review last spring, now is also a good time to start thinking about the winter/spring display - looking back at the best and the not so good of last spring and adjusting accordingly.

FUTURE PLANNING:

While it's looking its best, this month is a good time to review your garden. Look to see what is doing well and not so well and consider what improvements you can make for next year. For example, you may find you have some taller plants in front of smaller ones that are lost at the back of the border; you may have colour clashes that do not work; there may be a dominating shrub that swamps everything else out, or you may have a tree that casts a heavy shadow over plants beneath that need full sun so are struggling.

Draw up a list of improvements that can be tackled this autumn/winter and also review your summer bedding scheme and consider changes and improvements for next year.

Take photos of your garden to use as a reminder later in the year when finalising next year's scheme for your garden.

Don't forget:

Maintain regular hoeing of beds and borders to prevent emerging weeds from flowering. Leave on the surface to dry off if the weather is hot.

Take cuttings of tender plants for overwintering indoors.

Continue topping up bird feeders and water bowls for birds during the summer months.

Check those tucked away corners of the garden for dead leaves and clear away.

Inspect plants for aphids and blackfly and on your roses - black spot and mildew and treat, as necessary.

Continue searching out slugs and snails.

Keep paths clear of weeds, moss, and algae.

With any chemicals, use sparingly (if at all) and always read the label before applying. Never apply in windy weather.

Remember to find time to enjoy your garden, making the most of the summer weather.

Next month I'll provide a list of drought-tolerant plants that you can consider as part of your garden review, which will save on water once they are established.

Keep well and keep safe.

Awards 2021

The Trustees have decided that this year our awards for both regions will be virtual, due to the uncertainty of organising large gatherings at venues and the financial risk to the Charities.

We look forward to recognising your efforts via a different sort of awards. In each region the Awards will be on two days. It's Your Neighbourhood, Our Community, Parish & Individual Awards will be on the first day and the Main Categories and Parks & Green Spaces on the second day.

South & South East in Bloom Awards - 16th & 17th September.

London in Bloom Awards - 5th & 6th October

We will keep you posted.

What is a Gardener?

"The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always looking optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before".

Vita Sackville-West 1892-1962

"I have found, through years of practice, that people garden in order to make something grow; to interact with nature, to find sanctuary, to heal, to honour the earth, to leave a mark. Through gardening, we feel whole as we make our personal work of art upon the land".

Julie Messervy – The Inward Garden

"When gardeners garden, it is not just plants that grow, but the gardeners themselves".

Ken Druse

The History of the English Cottage Garden Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager

If I were to ask you to describe an English cottage garden, I suspect we would all describe something similar. Cottage gardens, to me, have somewhat of a romantic and maybe even whimsical feel. Tightly packed, simple, traditional English plants, tall hollyhocks, scented roses and lavenders, butterflies floating by, the air alive with the hum of bees. My garden contains many plants synonymous with the English cottage garden.



In reality, cottage gardens have a far more humble and practical origin. Cottage gardens, in their original form towards the end of medieval times, contained herbs, vegetables, fruit, and sometimes livestock. Any flowers were grown there for their practical uses, attracting bees that would in turn pollinate crops. These small plots were packed full, making use of every available space.

Herbs used for their various culinary and household uses

included sage, thyme, feverfew, hyssop and many more. Fruit such as apples and pears (often used to make cider), alongside gooseberries, raspberries and sometimes crabapples and hazels. Foxgloves, Sweet William's, Primroses, Marigolds, Lavender and Roses just a few of the traditional flowers seen in early cottage gardens.

The Elizabethan era, more prosperous than the years past, allowed for flowers to be grown by some for their beauty alone, others were still grown for their practical uses. Violets are a great example, allowed to creep over the ground as their smell helped to deter rodents.

Cottage gardens started to resemble those we are familiar with today in the late 19th century. The Victorian middle class loved the style, perfect for small houses with small gardens. Plants were swapped with neighbours, plants shared, perennial plants returning each year allowed for low cost, beautiful gardens.

We define cottage gardens today as having informal planting with abundantly filled borders, a beautiful mixture of flowers, herbs and often fruit and veg. What started as a practical English solution born out of poverty and necessity is converted and often copied the world over. But for me, nothing will ever really match the original.

I will leave you with this beautiful poem by Virginia Wauchope Bass.

Little Cottage



I know a little cottage, Where everything's just right;
The windows bloom with tulips –
At dusk there's candlelight.
The knotted oak beside it,
Is webbed with ivy leaves,
And honeysuckle tangles,
In clusters round the eaves.
The friendly gate swings open,
Against a low stone wall,
Where quaint old fashioned blossoms,
Design a paisley shawl;
And up the winding pathway,
The stone with moss are grown –
I love that little cottage,
Because it is my own.

Name that Plant





Chris Collins DHE. MSc dip. MI Hort.

This month has been mainly consumed by two things, the first has been planting up the balcony and allotment garden, the second, is, of course, the weather. I estimate due to the colder conditions, we are around 4 to 6 weeks behind how things were last year. Looking at old social media posts from last June my balcony was already in flower, this year however my young plants have been reluctant to put on much growth. I feel they have been playing the waiting game. At last, though my young green army of young plants have been planted in their final positions for this season. Yes, the allotment is now full of Tomatoes, Peppers, Courgettes, every kind of Bean, Squash, Chillies, all now sitting alongside the earlier plantings.

My humble balcony has gone through what a call the change-over-time when the spring display of bulbs finally fizzles out and it's time to plant up space with my summer displays. The Balcony sits on the 3rd floor and is in the crown of surrounding trees and adjoins London's New River, which dates back to the 16th century. Alexandra Palace Park is visible on the hill so the whole area is incredibly green.

The Balcony acts as a corridor to the surrounding flora and has the bonus of having excellent wildlife. I've had Woodpeckers this year and there are plenty of bats at dusk and currently, I have a large flock of House martins, which swoop and feed on the wing as the day comes to an end. The whole place is a real treat, and it is hard to believe I'm only a kilometre from the busy London north circular.

This year my Containers and baskets have once again been planted up with colourful bedding combined with heritage crops and herbs. I have heritage Tomato's, Chilli's, and Peppers, along with Lettuce and salad leaves, I've also turned my hand to surprisingly delicious micro-greens. It is important however to ask how this set-up can be organic? As it is a fairly unnatural place to have a garden I must look to as many measures as I can to aspire to my organic principles. Firstly my containers are mainly recycled and, rescued from the many gardens I've built over the years. The soil is all bought organic and although it's not the cheapest it is the least sacrifice I can make. Most of the plants are produced from seed so hopefully and raised in situ. As with all containers grown plants, fertilisers are essential and organic seaweed and Comfrey pellet are my preferred choice I get fantastic results with these two feeds, starting in the spring with the Seaweed extract in the spring

/ early summer months and then switching to Bocking 14 in mid-summer.

(Bocking 14 is a variety of Comfrey developed by Lawrence D Hills at the Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA) and does not spread except via root cuttings).

I have tried to get a wormery going but the balcony is South facing and gets extremely hot, and this does not suit the worms. I'll keep working on it and in the meantime, I'll be carting my green waste down to the allotment.



Meanwhile, life on the allotment has been a tad tough mainly because of the prolonged cool weather, cold winds, and the incredibly dry April, now fully planted up a set of new challenges appear, weeds being one of them but the other is the appearance of the dreaded Mollusc.



Of course, now there is moisture in the soil there are new things to contend with. Ravenous slugs and snails have awoken, and they mean business. This is a challenge for the organic gardener, not having the option of just poisoning our foes, we need to approach the problem with a mixture of techniques. My biggest observation is when to plant out the young plants I've spent so much time nurturing. Placing out small, soft growth planting is picked off straight away. I planted some small Peppers that were immediately eaten, as opposed to my Courgettes, which were much bigger plants and remained untouched.

Correct hardening off and allowing a plant to be more mature at its final planting does pay dividends. Opening my cold frames, even on the chilly days in May, just for a few hours means my plants are climatising to their surroundings and will add more growth, toughing those leaves and providing a tougher challenge for the dreaded slugs and snails that seek out their foliage. Traps also seem to work effectively, especially half cups of beer which they seem to love. Hand-picking off snails with tongs and walking them down to the nearest stretch of trees is also good to practise and removes nothing from the food chain. The overall point though is using a mixture of methods, and this will reduce any problems from the molluscs and if we lose a few Peppers along the way, well the world will not end, and the soil will not be poisoned.

Exciting times ahead though as the jeopardy of May is now behind us and I'm looking forward to all that tasty fresh food and balcony colour.

Until next time, happy gardening.

Chris Collins.

June 2021



The origins of the Allotment Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager



Allotments are often used as a respite from the real world, a calm and tranquil environment where we can lose ourselves and forget our troubles. But like many things we take for granted today, these spaces were born of necessity. The origin of the modern allotment dates far back into our history.

During Saxon times, vast areas of woodland would be cleared and held as common land, used by many to grow crops and raise livestock. Following the Norman Conquest, the land became concentrated into the hands of Monasteries, Church's and Manorial Lords, though some common land remained.

In the late 1500s, under Elizabeth 1st, common land used by the poor for growing food and keeping animals began to be enclosed, displacing the poor. The process of enclosure meant previously common land held in open field systems would be divided, marked by hedging, with the use restricted to the landowners. In compensation for this, small plots of land were often attached to tenant cottages.

The 17th and 18th centuries saw more people move out of rural areas. During this period, we were moving away from a subsistence economy towards a more industrial one. As a result, the volume of poor was rising rapidly. With no social care system in place, those unable to grow their food for themselves and their families could easily starve to death.

Various acts of parliament were passed over the years allowing landowners to enclose their land and displace the poor, though these were less formal than what would follow. In 1773 the Enclosure Act was passed, enabling the act of enclosure of land, removing the rights of commoners, though usually compensation in the form of a smaller and poorer quality plot of land was given.

Of the many acts passed during the 1900s on this subject, The Enclosure Act of 1845 was the most beneficial for the poor, likely born out of the fear of civil unrest and revolt. The Act allowed for the forming of 'field gardens', limited in size to a quarter of an acre for the landless poor and were the beginning of what we today class as allotments.

For the Victorians, allotments served to keep the poor in check, keeping them away from drink and in turn provided a way for those living in tenements and highly dense terraced housing with no gardens with a space to grow wholesome food for themselves and their families.

With the onset of WW1 came food shortages, which lead to an increase in the demand for allotments. During this time parcels of land were often allocated to railway employees, which is why we often see allotments following railway lines.

WW2's Dig for Victory is well known and encouraged the production of home-grown food in a bid to ease the strain of food shortages greater than those seen in WW1.



Allotment demand decreased after the end of the war, however increased in the 1970s after the airing of 'The Good Life. For those who are not familiar with the sitcom, Tom and Barbara were a middle-class couple trying to create a self-sufficient farm in their garden. Those keen to recreate this lifestyle looked to allotments to provide the space to do so.

Not all of us are lucky enough to have huge gardens and some of us by choice or by situation do not have access to a garden of our own.

Allotments provide a little space to call our own, often rich in wildlife, with a friendly community of like-minded people. Chances are, if you were to enquire about a local allotment today you would find yourself on a long waiting list, so if you have an allotment of your own, count yourself extremely lucky.