



South & South East in Bloom & London in Bloom

Growing Greener Communities

May 2023



As we draw ever closer to this year's judges and assessors visits, the Trustees of both London & South & South East in Bloom thank you for your support. This has been a challenging year for many, not just the vagaries of the English weather but also the difficulties many find with the cost of living. However, our entries have held up well in both regions, and we are pleased to welcome first-time entries.

We look forward to visiting your Boroughs and Business Communities. Neighbourhoods, Villages, Town Centres and Green spaces and see how you continue to create and maintain these unique community and public spaces.

Gardening is a fantastic way to take exercise, free one's self from everyday issues and improve well-being. Never before has it been so important to have an outlet for everyday life and a place to be and commune with nature.

As you will read below in Derek Beers' article, working together and perhaps volunteering in a local community garden or enterprise is an excellent way of de-stressing and if your life is so busy with work, family, raising children or creating lasting relationships if you can find time to cultivate a few plants in the garden or on the balcony or windowsill this can bring significant benefits.

Our regions are working hard to find new ways of providing opportunities to engage with communities and individuals with gardening, working closely with our colleagues and friends at Britain in Bloom. Bloom has existed for 60 years, and given the challenges facing us all, we wish to ensure Bloom remains relevant and accessible for many years.

Many thanks to this month's contributors. Please let us know if you have an article, feature, or community project you wish to share.

Best wishes for the forthcoming season.

The Trustees, Ambassadors & Judges/Assessors

## The Italian Garden

On a recent visit to Verona, Italy, I was fortunate to visit the Giardino Giusti, a classic Italian Garden attached to a Palazzo ( Palace) hidden in a small out-of-town area. Visiting this authentic Italian Garden appealed in its simplicity yet considerable elegance. It appeals to gardeners with an eye for classic design and an interest in history. The hallmark of this Italian Garden is order, as expressed by symmetry and a manicured look. However, some characteristics and components can translate to the home garden if seeking Italian flair. Especially when considering how climate change might influence our future gardening





plans.

An Italian Garden is a formal garden design perfected in Renaissance Italy. A heavy reliance on hardscape features, manicured evergreens, and Mediterranean plants marks it.

The Italian Garden has its roots in ancient Rome. Wealthy Romans complemented their majestic villas with equally impressive outdoor rooms. These rooms were divided from each other by box hedges and walls, and the eye was further delighted by the use of topiaries. Pliny the Younger describes his Tuscan estate in such terms, speaking of trimmed box hedges and other boxes sculpted into topiaries depicting animals.

Such formal gardens returned to Italy during the Renaissance, giving us the Italian Garden as we know it today. Like their Roman ancestors, well-to-do Italians flaunted their wealth with imposing villas surrounded by outdoor living spaces that allowed them to enjoy the warm Italian climate fully. Water features such as fountains were installed to mitigate excessive warmth, along with shady pergolas. The Italian Garden would be terraced if the property rested on a hillside.

Medieval walled gardens, reflecting the relative poverty of the times, had been practical and kept for food production. Italian Renaissance gardens were ornamental.

The walls of the medieval garden had been built high to keep out animals and trespassers. No such concerns existed on the great Italian estates of the Renaissance. Shorter walls and hedges were employed to separate outdoor rooms for aesthetic reasons. People were supposed to be able to look into the Italian Garden to appreciate its beauty and look out from it to the broader landscape. Private nooks, however, could exist within one of the outdoor rooms, where one could rest on a bench in the shade of a pergola.

The Italian Garden focuses on evergreen shrubs and Mediterranean herbs, not flowers. While flowers are planted, their function is as an accent. One of the essential characteristics of this style is the use of evergreen shrubs meticulously sheared into short hedges. Such hedges typically line a walkway, serving as its edging.

Since the classic Italian Garden showcased wealth and the Mediterranean climate, today's homeowner is immediately confronted by two limitations in trying to recreate an Italian Garden: cost and climate.

Costs come in the form both of creating and maintaining the garden. Moreover, the classic style is suitable only for large properties. If you have a smaller garden, you could create a



courtyard with an Italian garden feel. If you wish to create your Italian garden, familiarise yourself with its three essential components: hardscape, evergreen shrubs, and Mediterranean plants.



Since hardscape refers to all of the non-living elements in a garden, the term covers sidewalks, fountains, classic Greco-Roman statuary, containers, and seating. Most gardens have a water feature and high-quality pots for container plants. Lemon trees or herbs arranged symmetrically in terracotta pots are characteristic of Italian gardens.

A classic component of the Italian garden is the hardscape walkway. On large properties, multiple walkways should connect the various outdoor rooms of your garden. A single walkway or patio can fit the garden for smaller properties where a courtyard style is sought. Install hedges around the perimeter to encase your courtyard.

Installing an arbour or a pergola suggests the look of an Italian garden. These structures also have two practical functions: to provide shade and support for a floral accent by growing climbing plants.

Evergreen shrubs and plants native to the Mediterranean are must-have components in an Italian garden. Evergreen shrubs create the hedges to edge walkways or surround the courtyard. Use

them in topiaries to create accents. Two classic choices are:

[Box](#) (*Buxus spp.*) The Box is used extensively, and in some areas, it is still a good bet if you want that classic look, but in the UK suffers from several pests and diseases, such as Box blight, Box rust, Volutella blight, Phytophthora root rot, Macrophoma leaf spot. Box hedges can also fall victim to the following pests: Box tree caterpillar, Box red spider mite and Mussel scale,

**Good alternatives are** *Ilex crenata*.

Undoubtedly, the closest look to the Box is *Ilex crenata*. It is a holly but doesn't look like your average holly.

It is small-leaved, evergreen and compact. It is very clippable and can be used as a hedge or topiary ball. The topiary balls seem prone to suddenly dying or losing all their leaves and not recovering well. The hedges seem better at coping, but as an expensive plant to buy, there are better alternatives.



## Pittosporum

*Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball' is my favourite alternative to a Box hedge. Although it wants to be ball-shaped, it clips well into a formal hedge. Pittosporum Golf Ball

The softer green colour and the reflective leaves of the Pittosporum. 'Golf Ball' also has a sister called 'Silver Ball', which, as the name suggests, has a subtle silver-coloured leaf. Although looser than a traditional Box ball, these Pittosporums can also fulfil that structural role.

## Sarcococca Confusa

Although commonly known as Christmas Box, it isn't any relation to *Buxus*, so it doesn't suffer from the same pests and diseases. Sarcococca has small dark green leaves and can be clipped. It has a looser habit than Box so it won't make as sharp edges, but it makes up for this with its amazing highly scented flowers in Winter.

## Euonymus

Euonymus are a group of shrubs that are well known for their ability to grow in the toughest of situations. *Euonymus* 'Green Spire', or 'Green Rocket', is a popular choice to replace a Box hedge. Like most of its family, it is incredibly hardy, drought tolerant and keeps its dark green leaves throughout the winter. A good choice if you don't want to do too much watering.

**Hedge Germander** *Teucrium x lucidrys*, an old-fashioned plant that is a hard-to-ignore and a proven and flexible bee magnet.

**Italian cypress shrub** (*Cupressus sempervirens*), a tall pencil-like conifer seen in the above images, is an excellent choice for a vertical accent. A good substitute is the tall, slim [arborvitae](#) (*Thuja Green Giant*)



**Italianate Gardens to visit:** *Hever Castle Gardens, Hever, Kent, Kensington Gardens & Hyde Park, London, Arundel Castle, Arundel, West Sussex & Chiswick Gardens, Hounslow, London*

Ed:



Little-known facts for Plantaholics! - Jean Griffin, S&SEiB Trustee, Deputy Chair & Judge.

**Orchids**

Most plants give out oxygen during the day and revert to carbon dioxide at night, but Orchids reverse that action, especially Dendrobiums and Phalaenopsis. Therefore to ensure a good night's sleep, these are good bedroom plants along with Christmas and Easter Cacti.

**Mother Laws Tongue**

Sansevieria trifasciata absorbs airborne toxins if given plenty of light but not too much water.

**Spider Plant**

Chlorophytum comosum removes formaldehyde, toluene and xylene from the air in your home.

**Peace Lily**

Spathyphyllum is very efficient at removing air pollutants.

**Ivy**

Yes, the good old English sort grows rapidly up trees and fences, but

it also filters airborne toxins and is said to reduce mould!



## Getting Volunteers - Derek Beer, S&SEiB Judge & Ambassador

One of the most common phrases we all hear, time and time again, from all manner of voluntary groups is “ We can’t get volunteers “ or “Nobody is coming forward. “



In an increasing volunteer lead society, this is something that we have to do something about boldly and bravely.

Let's take the average person, living a normal, whatever that is life, looking after the ones they love, getting up in the morning, going to work, getting home, sorting out the children, the dog and dinner. Their lives are content and innocently enjoying or taking all the things the volunteers provide for granted.

The list is endless: running the museums, improving neighbourhoods, planting, pruning, maintaining, clearing streams, and running the carnival.

It doesn't mean that the “ average person “ doesn't appreciate all that is happening; quite often, just the opposite; they probably respect it immensely and wouldn't dare to interfere in what has been happening in their locality by the mythical “they”.

“ They” look so competent, so organised that the average person wouldn't dare interfere for fear of offending, but probably have so much to offer.

From my own experience of 43 years of running volunteer groups and organisations, may I

offer some helpful advice?

After four years of living in our small rural town, I was approached by someone who asked me if I would join our Chamber of Trade.

I had never heard of it but took for granted all the things that went on, the window boxes appeared on the building by magic and disappeared in the autumn, and the carnival appeared as a spectacular display, but I didn't think about how it appeared.

“ I can't do that”, I replied, that's for posh people.

“But we need you,” said the person, shaking my hand.

So I joined, had a great time making a difference, and it started making a difference in my life and the local community.

It would have made no sense if I had seen a notice in a shop window about coming to an AGM; I would have just walked on by.

I have since then used that approach on hundreds of occasions, asking for help from the younger generation in practical schemes, plumbers, gardeners, clever people who know about IT, and photographers, shaking their hand and asking them to share their expertise and skills to improve the town they live in.

Some see it as a way of giving something back, others preparing the town for the enjoyment of their growing families, but people so often feel proud to be asked to be involved with successful groups that previously they had respected but never felt that they could be of any use to.

At the other end of the scale, many able-bodied, well-qualified older citizens may have moved from a large property to a small apartment, perhaps after losing a loved one, probably with little or no garden, really missing getting outdoors and pottering.

What a favour we could be doing by inviting this group to join in with what we do; great for alleviating social isolation and helping us make a difference by bringing their skills and experience along.

But they have to be asked, and once asked, made to feel useful, not just a spectator.

We all need an apprentice to carry on and even improve on the beautiful things we can do to improve our environment, communities, and planet, but they must be asked.

So let's pledge in the months ahead, and everyone invites someone to join in with what we do in person; you will be surprised how easy it is.





## The importance of creating a safe space for all - Molly White, S&SEiB Judge, Ambassador and Trustee

I guess my question is, can we ever truly create a space for everyone? As a human race, we are so different; our diverse characteristics make us unique in our needs.

When we strip back our characteristics; for instance, our gender, age, financial status, heritage, and health. We all have the ability to enjoy and thrive in a garden. The same garden, but there is a whole host of considerations to ensure all those minority groups are considered. When we look at individual groups of people, we can start to understand how a space can reach its full potential. It can be welcoming to everyone, and how everyone in a community can benefit from a garden.



Whilst a garden or green space has a huge potential on even the most basic of levels, if we can explore our local demographics, engage with our communities and develop plans alongside our user groups and residents, I believe we can create inclusive, engaging and vitally important spaces that can be a safe space for everyone.

Consider age; remember the little ones, the next generation we want to inspire. Use low planting and hidden things to find. Make the garden a game. Can you find '5 different homes for wildlife?' Let's make our gardens interactive and allow intergenerational work.

Hidden or visible disabilities; how can we all access a garden or parts of a garden if we are less mobile, have difficulty lifting our feet or need assistance to move around? Engage with our communities and find out the needs of those demographics. What would help them access and enjoy the space easier?

ASD; more than ever, there's a greater awareness of Autism Spectrum Disorder. This demographic benefits massively from a therapeutic space, so let's ensure we create a positive environment for them to experience. Consider the energy in the garden, the colour palette, and the foliage used for calming or sensory stimulation.

Heritage; we live in a diverse country and diverse communities. People have chosen to nurture a life here, but it can be vital that they remember their heritage, explore it, connect with others, and share it. Education is good for us all. Let's consider those communities and how we can represent them within our green spaces.

The lists are endless, making our world such a beautiful place. There is so much difference between celebrating and learning and experiencing. Yet when we come together in a garden, with a bit of thoughtfulness, we can welcome everyone into those green spaces and allow everyone to benefit from the healing effects of nature.

## Isn't Mother Nature Wonderful – Ruth Growney, S&SEiB & LiB Trustee & Judge

I have been delighted this month by two simple examples of Mother Nature at work.

Firstly, several years ago, I was on a visit to Great Dixter (it's my favourite garden to visit at any time of year!) when I stumbled across the most heavenly vanilla/honey scent that was coming from a shrub smothered with tiny fluffy yellow flowers.



I could not resist the scent and hunted down and duly purchased a small Azara Serrata from the on-site nursery.

It has sat at the bottom of my garden, growing from a small plant to one that is now about six feet high but stubbornly refusing to flower – until this year.

Now it looks and smells like the original plant I saw at Great Dixter – smothered with the most deliciously scented fluffy yellow flowers.

The second example I discovered whilst working this week on a garden that I manage in Pulborough.

A few years ago, we planted a Peach, hoping it would survive in open ground and provide fruit. It blossomed last year but came to nothing.

This year, however, the tree was covered with blossom, and now, fingers crossed, we will have our first peaches!

Unfortunately, I can't tell you the variety as the label has long gone.

I am so thrilled by these two small things – they have lifted my spirits and made my month!



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**Time for a break: Sit down, put your feet up and have a go at our puzzles:**

**Fragrant Word Search** – All the beautifully scented plants and flowers listed below can be found in the grid

Jasmine, Hamamelis, Wallflower, Dianthus, Lavender, Thyme,  
Viburnum, Stock, Rose, Wintersweet, Daphne,  
Magnolia, Honeysuckle, Nicotiana, Rosemary, Lilac, Lily, Hyacinth

**Wildflower Anagrams:** Can you unscramble these anagrams to make some well-known wildflower names? Answers are at the end of the newsletter.

MOB UNCLE  
SO RIPE, MR!  
CLONE CROCK  
CELLAR BINS

OWL PICS  
WRY OAR  
BERT CUT UP  
LABEL HER



## Garden waffling.....from 2021 --- Better late than never! Shaz Ottley Boswell Court Residents, Crawley

There's a tortoise in my garden, but he hasn't any legs,  
A little dog with missing ears who still sits up and begs,  
An elephant with a tip-less trunk who stands alone forlorn  
and a brightly coloured fishing gnome that bird poo has adorned.

I've rescued all these ornaments and given them a home,  
They all are very welcome, though they've all lost bits of stone,  
They guard my pond with a resident frog, albeit a washing-up bowl,  
and watch my to-ing and fro-ing with my tools as I gladly toil.

These creatures with their missing bits add a little magic,  
To the spot where I eat cake and chocs – yes, the diet's a little tragic!  
My garden is a haven for the wildlife who choose to visit,  
Fingers crossed, the birds will use the boxes in the privet.

My junk-filled greenhouse has been cleared and is used for a purpose much better,

The conservatory has come up trumps for heat-loving chilli and peppers,  
The vegetable planter my hubby made in his spare time since retiring,  
is lovingly beginning to come to life and keeps us both a-smiling.

The seeds I've sown are beginning to grow – beetroot, spring onion and radish,

The carrots are somehow still alive, and the spuds look set to flourish,  
There are salad leaves, chives and other stuff, and tomato shoots a-plenty,  
A joyous sight for a beginner, but my water butts are empty!

This new veggie plan in a very dry spell has filled some lockdown time,  
and I'm mighty impressed that some of these words have actually managed to rhyme!

## Down on the Plot May/June - Kevin Tait S&SEiB Judge & Trustee

With the weather improving, it is a busy time on the plot, weeding, planting, and sowing.

It should now be reasonably safe to plant out all those tender plants. Courgettes, french beans, runner beans, squashes, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, sweetcorn and others. If you have 2<sup>nd</sup> early and main crop potatoes growing well, don't forget to keep them earthed up. This is the process of raking soil over the foliage as it appears to make a mound of soil, and you will get more potatoes this way. I grow my runner beans up a wigwam of canes or sticks and plant ten plants at a time, sowing a batch every three weeks and ending up with 30 plants. I do this so that I don't get all my runner beans at the same time; there are only so many you can eat and give to family and friends. My French beans are a variety called Cobra, a climbing bean, meaning it is much easier to pick. I planted the plants I had raised about two weeks ago, and the weather was windy; I should have known better. The next visit to the plot was very interesting, with all the larger leaves blown off and all that was left was the stem and a bit of green at the top. Lesson learnt, and as it's not too late, I have sown some more. I raise most of my plants in trays, but if you do sow seeds like runner beans directly into the ground, keep a check on them because as they emerge, they are vulnerable to slug and snail attack, especially if it's wet.



One very important thing is to keep weeding. You don't want your vegetable plants competing with weeds for food and water. In a dry spell, it is good to keep the Dutch hoe going; you don't need to use the hoe as a spade; you just need to sever the roots of the weeds. Be careful around your plants as it is easy to cut off the plants and the weeds. If the weather is sunny, the weeds will soon dry up. Get the weeds before they set seeds; as the saying goes, one-year's seed is seven years of weeds.

With the weather warming up, pests can now become a problem. Aphids (blackflies and greenflies) can very quickly become a problem. Blackflies can be a problem on broad beans, but one thing you can do is to take the tops out of the plants when they are tall enough; doing this, will harden the stem and make it harder for them. Let's hope we get an invasion of hungry ladybirds!

Brassicas like cabbage, cauliflowers, Brussels sprouts etc., should be covered as soon as planted out to protect them from cabbage root flies and pigeons if they are a problem on your plot. How I cover my brassicas is to use cut lengths of blue water pipe to form a hoop and then use enviromesh to cover the area. This stops the small flies from reaching the plant's roots to lay their eggs. If you don't have a pigeon problem, you can use collars to put at the base of the plant to stop them from getting to the base. I use the same method on my carrots to stop the carrot root fly from getting to the young carrots. You can also just put a metre-high barrier around your carrots using something like fleece to stop them. Carrot root flies fly along the ground and don't fly any higher than a metre.

Watering is a critical practice. Once planted, water your seedlings, but try not to water for a while as you want the roots of the plants to search for water. By doing this, you will get a more vigorous plant, and it will withstand pest attacks better. If you need water, make sure you do it in the evening as the water will not evaporate as it would during the day.

If you have any hints or tips for other allotment holders, we would be happy to receive them and possibly use them in another edition of 'Down on the Plot'.





### John Bulford - Eynsford in Bloom 1928 – 2023 - Sadly Missed

John was a very respected resident of Eynsford since his arrival in 1970.

He was an important member of the village community, newly retired and helping to clear and tidy the village, taking two years following the hurricane in 1987.

In 1989 Eynsford entered the Kent Rural Community Council Best Kept Village event and received a Special Commendation. John was giving horticultural advice in Eynsford (West Kent) and was soon asked to be a judge for KRCC in East Kent. His knowledge of plants and all things horticultural could not be underestimated.

John was also a leading Eynsford Gardeners' Club member, exhibiting at all four shows every year.

The village is what it is with his input and influence. He will be sadly missed.

### Declan Gallagher - City of London Operations Manager Hampstead Heath

We are very sorry to hear of Declan's passing. An obituary will appear next month.

#### Anagram answers:

MOB UNCLE    Columbine

OWL PICS     Cowslip

SO RIPE, MR!    Primrose

WRY OAR        Yarrow

CLONE CROCK    Corncockle

BERT CUT UP    Buttercup

CELLAR BINS    Cranesbill

LABEL HER      Harebell

## Bloom Sponsors & Supporters - South & South East in Bloom



### Amberol Supports S&SEIB & London

Our business's heart is a desire to make a visual difference. This includes stunning floral arrangements in calm, peaceful villages and fast-paced city environments and keeping Britain tidy through our wide range of bin products. We believe that conversation and collaboration are essential to offer the best solutions for our customers. Collaborating closely with our customers, we offer tailored advice and free demonstrations to ensure they make the right decisions.

### John O'Connor Grounds Maintenance Contractor

John O'Connor Grounds Maintenance employs over five hundred staff and manages over 250 vehicles across the UK, providing complete landscape solutions to various sectors, including commercial and local authorities. The Company has always been mindful of its business's environmental impact.



### London in Bloom Donors and Associates



London in Bloom is grateful for the continuing support of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, which has provided a grant to London in Bloom for 2022. MPGA is a long-established Charity that has played a vital role in preserving and improving countless gardens, neglected sites, and green open spaces across London. We provide modest grants to those who share with us a desire to improve the environment and, thus, the quality of life for the local community. Our work brings us into contact with various groups, including local councils, schools, hospitals, hospices, museums, voluntary organisations, and community groups.

The Worshipful Company of Gardeners, first mentioned in City Corporation records in 1345, is a survivor of the medieval craft guilds which exercised control over the practice of their crafts and ensured proper training through the system of apprenticeship. The Company is a "living" guild, and the numbers of its members are both professionals and amateurs actively involved in the craft. A common bond of horticulture and gardens unites all.



The Royal Parks Guild is a voluntary Partner Organization of The Royal Parks responsible for managing and preserving over 5,000 acres of historic parkland across London. Our aim is a serious one – championing The Royal Parks by promoting their qualities, including horticultural excellence and historical significance, whilst offering practical support where appropriate. Allied to this is the service to its members through providing and developing a broad range of social activities and keeping members abreast of current and past news of The Royal Parks.

The Royal Parks has worked with London in Bloom since its inception in 1967.

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