

RHS It's Your Neighbourhood Information Pack

Welcome

RHS It's Your Neighbourhood Information Pack

Thank you for your request for information about the RHS It's Your Neighbourhood campaign. I am pleased to enclose a copy of the information pack with basic information about the campaign and how to get involved, in addition to the latest copy of *Growing Communities* – the RHS community gardening magazine.

Your next step to get started should be to contact your local Region/Nation in Bloom committee whose contact details should have been provided to you when you were sent this pack. If you do not have those details please contact at the address below and we will provide them to you.

If you have any general questions please do not hesitate to contact the RHS communities team by e-mail on communities@rhs.org.uk or by telephone on 020 7821 3651.

Best regards,



Stephanie Eynon
Community Horticulture Manager

What is RHS It's Your Neighbourhood?

The Royal Horticultural Society's *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* campaign provides an opportunity to smaller community groups to get involved in the wider Britain in Bloom initiative.

It's a unique scheme for volunteer-led community gardening projects/groups which are focused on cleaning up and greening up their local area, whether that's the estate where they live, or the back alley they share, or the local community centre's outdoor space.

RHS It's Your Neighbourhood is an inclusive, non-competitive scheme, which welcomes projects/groups of all kinds, as long as they fit the criteria outlined under "Who can enter?"

There is no charge to participate in *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood*.

RHS It's Your Neighbourhood is all about bringing members of the community together to make a positive change to the place they live, work or spend their leisure time. Groups participating in the campaign are asked to focus on its three core pillars of:

Community Participation

Environmental Responsibility

Gardening Achievement

While participating groups are not judged against each other, they are visited by environmental and horticultural 'in Bloom' experts (our assessors), who provide valuable feedback and helpful advice on how to develop current activities and encourage on-going improvements. Based on the visit, each community will receive an RHS certificate of achievement reflecting how well participants have met the *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* aims as included in the three core pillars. There are five levels of achievement in the campaign - Establishing, Improving, Developing, Thriving and Outstanding - and groups who have done consistently well over time may be nominated to receive the *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* National Certificate of Distinction.

Who can enter?

RHS It's Your Neighbourhood is open to groups of all sizes and with a variety of projects, as long as they are focused on cleaning up and greening their local area and as long as they are:

A group

Hands on

Involved in community gardening

Representative of the community and/or getting input from the community

Benefiting the community

Volunteer-led

Sustainable over time

Owned by the community and the community takes responsibility for the work.

Some examples of *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups are:

A residents' group/association

A park Friends group

A group of neighbours

A community allotment group

What kinds of projects do *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups do?

The projects that *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups do will be entirely decided by the local situation. The group will choose their project based on the local needs and environment and what might benefit their local community. These will be the most important considerations when deciding on a project.

Some examples of what *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups have done are:

Restoring a churchyard

Converting disused space into useable green space

Taking over the improvement and maintenance of green spaces on their estate

Transforming a back alley from a breeding ground for anti-social behaviour into a community gathering space and garden

Adopting a square, roundabout or brownfield space and renovating it

Redeveloping all the front gardens on (part of) a street using any number of schemes (hanging baskets, window boxes for growing herbs etc.)

Forming a Friends group to look after (part of) the local park

Uniting local retailers to transform the high street/shopping area

What are the benefits of participation?

By participating in *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* your community will benefit from:

Cleaner and greener surroundings

Developing a sense of community and creating positive interaction between community members

Safer environments for the enjoyment of local people

Reduction in anti-social behaviour

Increased civic pride as local people take ownership of the improvements to the area

Positive effects on the local economy, such as increased commercial enterprise

Helping the environment, through recycling, energy conservation, reducing litter, improving/adding green spaces and other sustainable practices

Greater community contact/building relationships with the local authority

If you would like to learn more about how participating communities have benefited from taking part, please visit www.rhs.org.uk/itsyourneighbourhood to read the case studies.

How does a group get started in *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood*?

Step 1 Establish a group.

Form a group and decide on a name for your group (eg Kingston Road Community Garden). This doesn't mean all potential volunteers and/or members are signed up but you should at least have some key players to get you started.

Step 2 Identify a project.

What is your group going to do? Please bear in mind that even though the final aim of your project may be quite ambitious (eg creating a community garden from a derelict, neglected plot of land) it is not an expectation that you complete the project in the first year or even the first three years. Assessors don't expect to see only finished projects; they also look to help guide you along the way and to help you to see how you might continue to develop even a mature project further.

Step 3 Register.

Contact your national/regional Britain in Bloom co-ordinator (see contact details included here) and get registered. There is no charge to participate or for the support outlined in this pack.

That's it! Getting started in *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* is as easy as 1, 2, 3!

What should an *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* group focus on when planning its project/work?

Everyone taking part in *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* should focus on the three core pillars of the campaign, which are:

Community Participation

Environmental Responsibility

Gardening Achievement

These core pillars are listed here in order of importance and form the basis for how each group's achievements will be assessed. Community Participation is worth 40% and Environmental Responsibility and Gardening Achievement are each worth 30% of the final score. There is a sample assessment form at the end of the next section but you will find below some practical guidance on ways you might incorporate the core pillars into your project.

When deciding your goals you should consider whether these are realistic and manageable and whether the work ties in with the core pillars. If you are a newly formed group, your first set of goals may relate to things such as forming a group, deciding on a project, consulting with the wider community and so on.

Then, as the work of the group progresses, so should the goals, with the focus changing from doing the jobs that move the project from initial ideas and planning, to delivering actual results. And please don't forget that *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups have access to a variety of resources to support them. We strongly recommend groups make use of these resources.

What support is available for registered groups?

All *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups receive the following support from the RHS:

Recognition for your achievements

A helpful campaign support pack (a guide for participants)

The opportunity to draw on the experiences of other local communities through a strong Britain in Bloom network

Access to a network of 3,000 local gardening clubs and horticultural societies which can offer their support and expertise

Product offers from selected suppliers

A quarterly community gardening review magazine

Special access to expert RHS advisors who offer individual advice

Plus the following resources are available on the RHS website:

RHS Plant Selector

Helps you to find appropriate plants for your area and needs Links to <http://www.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantselector>

RHS Plant Finder

Tells you everything you need to know about a particular plant <http://www.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantfinder>

RHS advice topics

Growing vegetables

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/growyourown>

Wildlife gardening

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/advicesearch>

OR have a look at our new site in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts:

<http://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk>

Soil and Composting

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/advicesearch>

Sustainable gardening

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Sustainable-gardening>

Gardening events

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/rhseventfinder/>

What to do in your garden this month

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/calendar>

In addition, *RHS It's Your Neighbourhood* groups have access to valuable support from their regional/national organisers (eg South West in Bloom, Beautiful Scotland etc.) such as:

Direct contact with national/regional co-ordinators

Access to seminars organised by your region/nation

Access to advice and guidance from your regional/national co-ordinators and assessors

A report with helpful feedback provided after the visit from your local assessor