



**South & South East & London in Bloom  
Green Lines July 2021**



It feels right that the introduction to this month's newsletter should be a celebration of the hard work, enthusiasm and downright determination of our amazing bloom community. Like every person in every industry, in every corner of the World, Bloom and its participants have been affected by the pandemic. How can it not have been?

It was with trepidation for some and full-blown excitement for others that our judges and assessors were once again able to visit. It has been extremely clear from the feedback we have received from both entrants and judges that it has been a most enjoyable experience, that had been sorely missed.

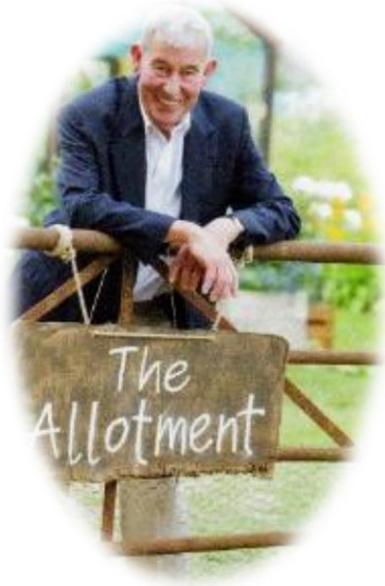
A huge thank you needs to go to our wonderful, hard-working and understanding judges. Without them, we would not be able to do what we do. They are a pivotal part of Bloom and give their free time up to visit you guys. They can be cooking in the extreme heat like we have experienced this year, with sun cream and sun hats aplenty or be calling for wellie boots, rain macs and umbrellas the next day. All without a word of complaint!

But what shines out to us at Bloom HQ most of all, is the sheer resilience of this amazing community we have built together and one that continues to grow with each passing year. Let's call it what it is, we are a Blooming family and next year, with a bit of luck, hope and a prayer we will be able to celebrate our successes together at the Awards, as a family celebration should be.

Best Wishes

Kate & Anne – London & South & South East in Bloom Campaign Managers

## Jim Buttress VMH – Patron South & South East in Bloom



I have now completed assessing all the entries I was given for the London in Bloom “Its Your Neighbourhood” category. I was slightly apprehensive as to how all the volunteers would manage with all the lockdown restrictions. I was amazed and full of admiration as to how the different entries had overcome this problem.

Everyone was encouraged that as a result of the restrictions imposed during the pandemic they had received more favourable comments and a considerable increase of appreciation from the public who did not realise all the improvements and general maintenance was carried out by volunteers. It was obvious that before COVID people were either preoccupied with their own lives or did not visit local green spaces. Most of Its Your Neighborhood schemes rely on donations or fundraising schemes to be able to continue. One of the IYN's I visited decided that as the local council was not able to hold their Annual Plant Fair, which used to raise sufficient funds to continue, as an alternative way was to advertise on their website that as volunteers who grew the plants would hold a plant sale from their front gardens. The purchasers could either donate with cash without change or via Just Giving – a page set up for the occasion.

Pre-covid they would collect £600 which was sufficient for the project to survive. Unbelievably in 2020, they raised £1600 and a slightly smaller amount this year which was mainly due to the weather on the day of sale.

This far exceeded their needs and so decided to donate to the local food bank. They have decided to continue with this system for future plant sales. Three times a year the same volunteers hold family learning events mainly to encourage young people. Unfortunately, these had to be cancelled. Once again they found an alternative way. They produced Takeaway Bags that included plants and growing materials, games, puzzles etc., which could be ordered in advance and collected at a pre-arranged time. They had more people take advantage of this offer than would have been seen at open days.

The Its Your Neighbourhood Scheme has been running since 2006 with many responding to local situations in their Local Authority or developing groups with common interests or deciding to improve their local neighbourhood and improve the quality of life. Working in partnership with local organisations is often key and undoubtedly the success is normally achieved by a strong-minded volunteer or a well organised and determined committee who refuses to be ignored. Two examples that impressed me were achieved by this approach.

A major railway franchise was offering funding by way of compensation to stations users for service disruption during engineering works over the past few years. Following discussion with the Station Manager and the Project Manager, the Volunteers submitted proposals for improvements to the station gardens they maintained which I am pleased to say were approved and they received £2,000.

The second partnership involved a National Housing Association, the appointed Grounds Maintenance Contractor and the residents. The result was some very colourful estates and the Managers had more people relaxing on the grounds since the gardens have been improved, it was also very noticeable that the resident's visitors were donating plants. The maintenance Contractor provided a Hints & Tips bulletin for each estate.

It is also so encouraging to see successful schemes. I hope it encourages other volunteer groups who seem to face little support, not to give up. As a result of COVID, more people are aware of these initiatives which I believe is a brilliant opportunity to gain additional support and tackle more neglected places.

Keep Safe, Keep Smiling, Keep Gardening. Jim

## GARDENING TIPS & TASKS FOR AUGUST

### Reg Leach, Judge and former Parks Manager, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

August should be about spending time in the garden relaxing and enjoying it with friends and neighbours. The Covid pandemic has of course hindered us from getting together with family and friends for so long, but the future looks brighter.

In between relaxing and socializing safely, if like me though you find it hard to sit still in the garden - as you notice a weed here, or some dead-heading to do there, try not to succumb. However, a garden always needs to be kept fed and watered to keep it at its best, but this can be left until the evening!



#### **Lawns:**

If you've been away the lawn may well have grown lengthy, if so, reduce the height of cut gradually as you did at the start of the year.

The spring vigour of the lawn tends to slow down at this time of year, so you'll probably need to mow it less often, however you may well need to keep mowing to remove the 'bents' (grass flower heads) and the weeds will still be growing even if the grass is not! Before any mowing, check the lawn, if there is clover flowering, there will be bees pollinating them, so leave unmown if you can.

#### **Deadheading:**

Keep on top of deadheading, not just your roses and bedding plants, but also perennials too, to keep them flowering well and for longer into the autumn.

#### **Weeding:**

Continue checking for weeds in beds and borders. By this time in the season, most annual weeds may well be smothered as your bedding plants and perennials will have grown well and covered the ground, but perennial weeds may still be lurking so remove them by digging them out, trying not to break their taproots such as with dandelions which will come back with even more shots and flowers!

#### **Feeding:**

Keep up with regular feeding of bedding plants, particularly those in pots, containers and hanging baskets, which are likely to be pot-bound by now, so the plants will rely heavily on any extra nutrients you can give them.

### **Pests & Diseases:**

Keep checking roses for black-spot and mildew and keep a lookout for aphids. Treat as appropriate.

### **Pruning:**

Now is a good time to cut back Lavender, Hebe and other shrubs that have flowered - don't cut back Lavender too hard into the old wood, as they are not good at regenerating. Cutting back after flowering will help keep the size of your plants in check and encourage new growth that will flower next year.

Cut new straggly growth of Wisteria back to about 2 or 3 buds of the main framework, or tie in some of the new wispy growths to extend the framework.

### **Drought resistant plants:**

Following on from last month's tips (looking after your plants when you are away on holiday), I have listed some drought-resistant plants that once established, are good at withstanding short drought conditions. Remember that most drought-tolerant plants like to be in full sun – as they come from temperate regions, such as the Mediterranean, they prefer well-drained soil and will not thrive in shade.

Some drought-tolerant plants are of course well known as Lavender, Rosemary, and Buddleia, but there are many more that need little water during the summer months - once they are established. Here is a small selection of shrubs and perennials for your consideration:

- *Acanthus mollis* or *A. spinosus*: Good at the back of the border, having statuesque white & purple flower spikes.
- *Agapanthus*: particularly blue varieties, such as 'Headbourne Hybrids
- *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle': grown for its fern-like leaves.
- *Bergenia*: Good for groundcover in a range of flower colours.
- *Caryopteris x clandonensis*: 'Heavenly Blue' with grey/green leaves and delicate blue flowers.
- *Catananche caerulea*: Papery blue flowers, which can self-seed.
- *Ceanothus*: evergreen with blue flowers.
- *Ceratostigma*: Blue flowers.
- *Cistus* (Rock Rose): Can be found in many colours and heights.
- *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer'
- *Cytisus*: Broom, with yellow flowers.
- *Escallonia*: evergreen, good for hedging and red/pink flowers. There are white flowering varieties too, but I don't think they are as showy.
- *Iris germanica* (Bearded Iris): which come in a great range of colours.
- *Nepeta*: Catmint, with blue flowers and good ground cover.
- *Perovskia atriplicifolia* 'Blue Spire': with its sage-like scented leaves and pale blue flowers.
- *Phlomis fruticosa*: Jerusalem sage, with yellow flowers.
- *Phormium*: as an architectural and statement plant.
- *Potentilla fruticosa*: yellow flowers and red and orange varieties.
- *Santolina chamaeyparissus* or *S. nana*: (Cotton Lavender) with its grey aromatic leaves and yellow flowers.
- *Stachys lanata*: Lambs Ears with soft leaves and purplish flowers.
- *Tamarix*: with its feathery leaves and pale pink flowers, grown as a shrub, as a hedge or as a small tree - good coastal plant, resistant to salt winds.
- *Teucrium*: good for ground cover with its pale blue flowers and great for bees.
- *Yucca*: Another statement plant.

Many herbs such as Sage and Thyme are reasonably drought tolerant and as with most herbs, the flowers are great for bees too.

Some other plants worth considering but may need a little protection during a hard winter are Callistemon (Bottle Brush), Olive, Eucalyptus and Acacia dealbata with feathery leaves and pompom yellow flowers. Both the Eucalyptus and the Acacia can romp away once established so select where you want to plant them very carefully, i.e. not too near buildings!

If you have a south or west-facing wall the above plants and many more will survive the colder winter as they will benefit from the heat that will radiate from the wall overnight creating a microclimate that benefits those less hardy plants.

Whatever the reason, our climate is changing, so experimenting with plant hardiness can be exciting. The need for drought-tolerant species is increasing – they save time and effort to maintain and use fewer natural resources, chiefly water. A good selection of perennials and herbaceous plants will benefit honeybees, so consider using more droughts tolerant and perennial plants in future designs rather than traditional bedding plants.

#### **Don't forget:**

Check on shrubs that are not very drought tolerant, particularly during hot spells, such as Rhododendron and Azaleas, so water well and if they are in pots move to shadier areas of the garden.

Continue to hoe beds and borders regularly to prevent emerging weeds from flowering.

Trim hedges as required to keep them looking neat and check for weeds underneath. Check for bird nesting first as they may have a late brood.

Keep checking for aphids and blackfly and on your roses - black spot. Woolly aphid and mildew - treat as necessary.

Keep the bird feeder and birdbath topped up. Birds love to snack on greenfly too!

Continue looking out for slugs and snails, they will still reappear when it rains!

Keep paths clear of weeds, moss, and algae.

With any chemicals, always read the label before applying. If at all possible, keep used to a minimum or find other control methods that are not harmful to beneficial insects.

Start to think about spring-flowering bulbs.

Next time I'll provide a list of plants attracting birds, butterflies, and bees into your garden.



## Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager -The rise of the green oasis

To me, if you were to put down on paper the happenings of the past 18 months it would read like a plot of an awful virus/zombie film destined for the bin. It has instead been our bizarre new reality. As lockdown loomed in March 2020 my family and I moved into a new house, which as you can imagine kept us very busy. It also gave me a new garden, a perfect lockdown project.

If you cast your mind back to April 2020, the weather was glorious, beautiful sunshine lifted our spirits, making our daily walks a bit nicer and for those of us with a garden, a sunny space to sit and contemplate what was happening in the World.

With all but essential shops closed, online shopping boomed – I think it's best if I don't share how much Amazon alone made from orders arriving at our house. Whilst some industries struggled, the home improvement and garden industries saw a huge uptake in orders. Redecorating, long-planned jobs and garden makeovers gave many people something to focus on.

Garden seating, parasols, lighting, lanterns, plants, pergolas were being snapped up and bird food sales shot up, as people found the time to stop and watch what went on in their garden.



Houseplant sales also went through the roof in 2020 - I do have to admit I may have contributed to a fair amount of that. So much so the phrase “not another plant” was commonly heard in my house as my teenage children and husband were not huge fans. Now, they have just accepted they do live in somewhat of an indoor jungle, but something is calming about bringing the outdoors into your home. It is a deep-rooted (pardon the pun) addiction that I feel is only going to worsen over time.

We live in an age of social media, I am very much part of that. As I scroll through, my screen is full of those proudly showing their newly styled garden, their newly built garden bar, their beautiful balcony made into a little private paradise, those proudly showing their allotment plot or indoor jungle they have created. Facebooks groups sprung up with people sharing the photos of the birds that visited their birdfeeders, hedgehogs, badgers or even fox cubs playing in their garden.

I think the events of the last 18 months have made us take the time to stop and think. A stark reminder that we can never truly know what is around the next corner. Many who had never visited their local park, woods, forests and gardens suddenly saw the appeal. Those who had not before began to appreciate their garden wildlife visitors and it is fantastic to see these trends continuing.

It is so easy to get wrapped up in the trappings of day-to-day life that we don't see the beauty of the world around us. The last year or so has maybe made many of us realise that we often take things for granted. The importance of creating a calm, safe space for ourselves and our loved ones has become very clear. From the balcony of a flat, a roof garden, community garden, allotment, traditional garden space, to filling your house with indoor plants, it doesn't matter what form these green oases' come in, they are all special and all unique in their wonderful way.

So, on that note, I think may take another trip to our local garden centre to see what else I can buy to cram into the heaving borders of my garden or possibly where I can squeeze another houseplant or four. I mean, is there a thing as too many plants?

## The Louisa Bay Gap – Broadstairs – Sue Wainwright



The Louisa Bay Gap is an area of historical interest and the access road is a much-used route to the popular Louisa Bay beach and the coastal path.

In autumn 2020, the Broadstairs Town Team Garden Group collaborated with The Broadstairs Rotary Club to plant 4,000 purple crocus corms on the raised bed at the Louisa Bay entrance to Victoria Gardens. This was to mark Rotary International's role in helping to eradicate polio worldwide. During this project, many of the volunteers and members of the public said, "Wouldn't it be nice to do something with the raised beds further down the slope". Thus began the Garden Group's Louisa Bay Access Road project.

During the lockdown, the importance of gardens and gardening has come sharply into focus. Broadstairs has a rich gardening history that dates from Victorian times. Fast forward to the 1990s, when Broadstairs won their South & South East in Bloom category in three consecutive years.

Research into the origins of Louisa Gap as it was originally known, and the raised beds on the slope. Although the actual date when the raised beds were created is not known, I found a series of wonderful pictures which showed what

the beds must have looked like in the 60s and further sleuthing revealed the beds may date to an even earlier time when there were steps down to the beach. A more recent picture of the beds, circa 2009, shows they were grassed over. Sometime after this photograph was taken, the access road was re-asphalted. During this work, the top raised bed was reduced in size to widen the access road. In January 2021, we approached Thanet District Council for permission to regenerate these neglected beds. Permission was granted and the overhanging branches were cut back. In February, we started to plan our project in earnest. Superficial inspections of the beds indicated we may not have a great depth of soil as we believed they were built on the hardcore of the original steps. After digging a few inspection holes, we were delighted to find that our fears were unfounded.





Covid-19 restrictions relaxed in March and we started to garner volunteers old and new and draw up an "Action Plan". Our funding bid to Broadstairs and St Peter's Town Council "Community Gardening" was successful and gave us the funds to kick start the project.

Work started on 13 April. Our volunteers dug over both beds removing approximately 35 bags of weeds and rubbish. The soil was much better than anticipated however to counteract the impact of it has been a "Dogs' Toilet" for many years, we added 1,800 litres of compost. April in Broadstairs was exceptionally dry and the cold north wind was not conducive to planting the site. While we debated if we should start to plant, our Chair surprised us with the wonderful news that a local business had made a generous donation to our project. Our "Make do and Mend" project took on a new life. Instead of depending wholly on donated plants to fill the beds, we could now afford to buy a range of carefully chosen plants. Our local nursery, Youngs, has always supported our garden group and this project was no different. Planting started on 22 April. In addition to the purchased plants, many of our volunteers brought plant donations and helped with the planting. The dry weather continued, and watering became our next challenge. Undeterred, we continued planting and volunteers trudged up the hill with water from the beach tap. At last, the rain was forecast. We arranged to have a delivery of ornamental bark to mulch the newly planted beds. Sadly, the Met Office let us down. Too late to change plans, so on a sparkingly bright sunny morning a group of volunteers spread 1,700 litres of bark. The beds looked stunning. Stage One of our project received a unanimous thumbs-up from dog walkers, joggers and residents and is set to welcome our early summer visitors.

The before and after photographs show what a total transformation was achieved between 13 and 29 April by 27 volunteers, working different shifts over a total of 9 days.



Name last month's plant – *Pinus montezuma* "Sheffield Park"

What is the connection between the Gladioli below and an old-world city that has changed its name at least twice?



## Plant hunting adventures Kate Harris – Co-Campaign Manager

I would think it is fair to say that many of us have experienced the heat of a far-flung tropical destination, the smells, the humidity, the excitement of exploring places new. We can reach the other side of the world within 24 hours, sitting on an airplane with all the modern comforts we can imagine. In most places we visit, we can overcome the language barrier and enjoy the beautiful environment around us, with mobile phones giving us the ability to be in touch with civilization within seconds.

Plant hunters on the other hand often set off without any real knowledge of what was in store for them. Tropical diseases, imprisonment, earthquakes, sea crossings that could take months, all manner of wildlife and even attack by pirates were all risks that plant hunters could face. Many met gruesome deaths, David Douglas met his end after falling into a bullock trap in Hawaii whilst others succumbed to tropical disease. Often miles away from civilization, the risks taken by these explorers were immense.

As the thirst for bigger, better and more exotic plants grew, so did the risks taken by the intrepid plant hunters to bring home these botanical status symbols.



Though some hunted for private collections, likely paid handsomely and others had their name immortalized in plant name form, many chose this path due to their passion for horticulture and botany. With no colour photography available, these plants were drawn in stunningly accurate botanical images, capturing the appearance of flowers, seeds and foliage. Replicas of these beautiful images are found hanging in many houses today.

Whilst some hunters were independently wealthy and able to fund their adventures, most trips were funded by patrons, private collectors and even Kew Gardens and the RHS provided horticulturalists and botanists in lieu of funding.

Despite the more common image of linen-clad, handlebar moustached men in Pith Helmets that may come to mind, many women went against social norms and perceived limitations of the female kind.

From China to Tibet, Australia, New Zealand, America's and the West Indies to name a few, the plants we commonly see in our houses and gardens are a direct result of cataloguing and transporting specimens back to our shores from these destinations. Our modern gardens would be very different without these discoveries. There are many fascinating stories to be told, and many that deserve more than a mere mention in this article and over the next few months I will aim to tell some of these stories.

Whilst we celebrate these explorers and the contributions they made to modern horticulture, I feel it is only right that we acknowledge the fact that these expeditions took place in a different time, many at the height of our checkered colonial past. Plant hunting continues today and even with our modern modes of transport and technologies, it does not come without its perils.

Lullingston's own Tom Hart-Dyke and his co-explorer Paul Winder were kidnapped in 2000 and held for nine-month after they were captured along the border of Colombia and Panama whilst searching for rare Orchids. Even today there are still places in remote corners of the earth with their botanical secrets waiting to be discovered and I believe where there are still plants to be discovered, there will still be intrepid people ready for adventure.



## Dates for your Diary

### Regional Virtual Awards 2021

South & South East in Bloom Its Your Neighbourhood, Our Community, Parishes in Bloom & DeskTop Special Awards Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September 14.00 – 16.00

South & South East in Bloom Main & Parks Awards Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September 10.00- 12.00

London in Bloom Its Your Neighbourhood, Our Community, & DeskTop Special Awards Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 14.00-16.00

London in Bloom Main & Parks Awards Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 14.00-16.00

Our Awards this year will be via Zoom and we will be sending you a link and further information nearer the time.