

A Yellow Book garden, open near you



What a clever idea to combine a nation's obsession with gardening (and our natural curiosity for what's happening on the other side of the fence) with raising money for charity.

When the National Gardens Scheme was born 83 years ago, visiting private gardens was a well-established pastime, but only for the privileged few with the leisure and means to travel. So asking owners of fine gardens to open once or twice a year to the general public was a simple, albeit radical, idea. Charging 'a shilling a head' and donating the proceeds to charity was a stroke of pure genius.

Today Gardens of England and Wales Open for Charity (affectionately known as the Yellow Book) is an annual best-seller that is tucked into a hundred thousand pockets and glove compartments. In a period

that spans a lifetime, the National Gardens Scheme has become a well-respected institution which reflects the massive changes in our society. War, taxation and shifts in the labour market have altered our whole perception of gardening and garden design. As well as encouraging visitors to enjoy the rolling acres attached to stately homes, which were the heartland of the Scheme, these days the Yellow Book includes thousands of privately owned suburban plots, most of which are designed and maintained by their owners.

Every year over 3,600 gardens across England and Wales open on behalf of the National Gardens Scheme, generating over £2.5 million each year for nursing, caring and gardening charities.

As you will know if you watched the television series on NGS gardens last year, standards

are high and most garden owners consider it a privilege to be taken into the scheme. It's a bit like winning gold at Chelsea and certainly something to be proud of. Gardens should engage visitors for at least 45 minutes; smaller gardens can open in groups. There should be a wide range of interesting and well-grown plants, with a design that enhances the planting. The garden must be weed-free with tidy working areas.

It is greatly to the credit of our Suburb gardeners that we have seven outstanding gardens opening in 2010. All the garden owners will be on hand to talk to you about their plants and give advice about problem patches.

On 6 June, Patricia Larsen's beautiful garden at 5 Heathgate is open from 2-5.30pm. Patricia is an perfectionist and her domain boasts some unusual features that may give you ideas for your own patch. Here there are lavishly planted traditional herbaceous borders with newly installed contemporary features. Patricia is an artist and you can buy her hand-made greetings cards of flowers from her garden as a souvenir of your visit.



Audit Help

The Horticultural Society could do with your help. Our previous Auditor has become our Treasurer, so we need a new one. If this once-a-year voluntary position is for you, please contact Robert Wallis on 020 8455 8926. Also our Show Secretary would like to pass on her knowledge to one or

HB School girls chartered

In an impressive ceremony in the school hall all the dignitaries of Golders Green Rotary and the Deputy Mayor of Barnet gathered to make a charter presentation to the girls who have formed a new Interact. Interact clubs, which

are Rotary International's service club for young people, are sponsored by individual Rotary clubs, which provide support and guidance, but are self-governing and self-supporting. Each year, Interact clubs complete at least two

community service projects, one of which furthers international understanding and goodwill. Seen here Deputy mayor Hugh Rayner, Nadia Shamsad, president and Komal Shah vice president and the rest of the school's Interact club.



Deborah and Colin Pulvarnis are opening their garden at 89 Willifield Way on Thursday 10 June, from 6-9pm. Deborah is offering sparkling Bellini cocktails and nibbles. As you wander through her delightful cottage garden, roses, clematis and jasmine scent the air and there might even be a fairy hiding among the flowers! Deborah worked for many years as a professional flower arranger which may account for the exquisitely colour-themed borders filled with interesting shrubs. If you can't make the evening opening, the garden is open on the following Sunday from 2-6pm with light refreshments and tea on the lawn.

Ruth Rees, at 5 Hillcrest Avenue, is indefatigable and has over the years raised thousands of pounds for the Scheme. The Mayor attends her openings and she has been featured in the local press so do try and see her unusual garden. Approached through an urban jungle of drought-resisting plants, the small labour-saving traditional back garden boasts a rockery, fish pond, tree ferns and secluded

patio. There is a stair-lift to the steep lower terrace. Teas are served in the conservatory and Ruth always has lots of plants for sale. Ruth opens her garden on Sunday 20 June from 2-6pm with home-made teas and light refreshments, and the following Wednesday evening, 23 June from 5-9pm when the entrance fee includes a glass of wine.

Another talented professional gardener, Veronica Clein, will be opening her exquisite garden at 113 Corringham Road on 27 June from 2-6pm. Shaded by trees, the formal garden is profusely planted with perennials, annuals and shrubs with an emphasis on painterly colour combinations. Veronica raises many of her plants in the greenhouse (and she always has plenty for sale). There's a pretty potager, a wild-life pond, contemporary sculpture and lavishly planted containers. Teas are out of this world, all homemade by Veronica. This stunning garden will be featured in 'The English Garden' this summer.

Judy Green's garden, at 5 Wildwood Rise, has also featured in the gardening press, most recently in the Ham & High. Judy has a head start on most of

us as she owns the delightful gardening shop in Flask Walk and her stunning garden is not to be missed. The formal box parterre filled with white hydrangeas looks spectacular at all times of the year and leads to a lovely traditional garden.

Judy believes that less is more and her planting is restrained and elegant with a carefully controlled colour palette. She always does a delicious homemade tea and has plenty of plants for sale.

Featured as one of Britain's top ten cottage gardens in 'Gardens Illustrated', Lorraine Wilder's garden at 25 Asmunds Hill has been described as "a charming and inspiring take on the rural idyll". Island beds and borders are crammed with flowers; a grassy track runs past a potager into a secret orchard, kept deliberately wild and filled with bees and birdsong. The most scrumptious home-made cakes are served on the wide terrace at the back of the house, and this year an added attraction is an exhibition of botanical drawings and paintings. Lorraine is opening her garden on Sunday 25 July from 2-5.30pm.

ANNE CRAWLEY, ASSISTANT COUNTY ORGANISER FOR HGS



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