



Judging guidelines

These are general guidelines to accompany the main marking sheet used by Regions & Nations in Bloom and in the UK Finals. Some Regions & Nations may have made slight modifications to certain details; **to request the full details of judging in your own Region/ Nation, please [contact your coordinator](#).**

If you are a UK finalist and would like additional information about judging in the UK Finals, please contact communities@rhs.org.uk / 020 7821 3022.

All groups' initiatives should focus around *the* three core pillars of RHS Britain in Bloom:

- Horticultural Achievement
- Environmental Responsibility
- Community Participation

Bear in mind that your local Bloom campaign should consider your entire community, not just the high street or village square. Where you have 'problem areas' (e.g. vacant premises/plots, eyesores etc.) you should have plans to address these if you are not doing so already. Your activities should also be sustainable and benefit your community in the long term.

Please be assured that visiting Bloom judges recognise that every community is at a different stage of 'greening up' their local area and will be introducing the RHS Britain in Bloom values in a way which suits their local area. Your judges will be interested in the impact your efforts have made over time and what your plans are for the future.

HORTICULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT

The key areas to consider are:

- Impact
- Business areas and premises

Green spaces
Horticultural practice
Residential and community gardening

Your activities should be effective year round; Bloom is not just a campaign for the summertime. Seasonal displays are an important element but must be proportionate to areas of sustainable planting and permanent landscaping within your entry. Seasonal floral displays are usually present in a number of locations but typically will be located in:

- Publicly owned areas including: parks; civic buildings; roadside and roundabouts
- Housing and residential areas, residential homes, schools, allotments etc
- Shopping areas, business/ commercial premises, public houses, hotels, garages, and transport terminals, such as bus and train stations.

Locations to consider for sustainable planting, in addition to those above, are:

- Woodlands, copse, shelterbelts, verges, parks, public open spaces
- Business parks, industrial estates
- Screen planting near factories/industrial areas, eyesores, vacant premises/plots etc.
- Amenity planting near residential areas, car parks, shopping areas.

In addition, groups will strive to:

- Ensure best horticultural practice is in place in regard to choice, cultivation and maintenance of plants, sustainability, renewal/ replacement and new planting.
- Engage residential gardeners and those working in public spaces (e.g. retail areas, car parks, leisure centres, businesses parks, pubs, post offices, offices, civic gardens, communal gardens/ allotments etc.) in your campaign, ensuring that these areas are up to the standard of the rest of your community.
- Work to enhance green spaces such as verges, parks and public green spaces.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

The key areas to consider are:

Conservation and biodiversity
Local environmental quality
Pride of place
Resource management
Local heritage

This section of the marking encompasses care for the built environment (e.g. litter, vandalism; street furniture etc.) as well as care for the natural environment.

While groups will be marked on the specific criteria above, please also bear in mind that environmental responsibility should underpin everything you do as part of your campaign. For example, if you have an impressive bedding display, the judges will want to know if you have

achieved this with consideration for the environment: have you been able to grow your own plug plants; recycle the bedding; or reduce your resource/ maintenance requirements?

Local Bloom groups should either initiate or actively engage with environment-enhancing activities. These might include:

- Establishing nature conservation and wildlife areas
- Cleaning up polluted sites and appropriate treatment/screening of derelict properties or other eyesores
- Active policies to reduce the demand placed on natural resources (e.g. source of water used for plants, use of peat, use of hardwood timber etc.)
- Maintaining and conserving the natural habitat
- Minimal use of pesticides and nitrate fertilisers, reducing or eliminating harmful effects on the environment
- Interventions, management and development of local heritage (including natural heritage)
- Maintaining street furniture and signage, introducing art in the landscape, improving hard landscaping
- Reducing litter, graffiti, fly-posting, fly-tipping, dog fouling and raising public awareness about these.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The key areas to focus on are:

Development and continuity
Year-round involvement
Funding and support
Communication and education
Community involvement

Community participation is crucial to the success of your local campaign and you should try to involve the community in all your Bloom activities. In addition to inviting support for planting activities, think about other ways you can connect with local people. For example, could you engage people in an information campaign to increase recycling, or run an activity to raise awareness of a local heritage site?

As Bloom is a community-driven campaign, it is expected that a diverse range of local people will be involved in your campaign and that there will be broad-based public awareness and support. Increasing the level of participation may require the involvement of your local authority and other organisations – think creatively about the partnerships you can build.

Finally, it is important to show how you intend to continue to develop your programme and what your plans are for the future.

Successful Bloom campaigns will:

- Thoughtfully plan how to maintain and develop the improvements they make.
- Have an effective communication and education programme resulting in high levels of awareness and understanding in the community. Groups might use tools such as

informative signs and displays, press clippings and publicity materials to help them achieve this.

- Show a broad base of community involvement across all ages and backgrounds, with a particular effort to engage young people/schools/colleges, making effective use of the educational opportunities that exist. **Please note** - Groups working with children and young people are responsible for ensuring that they do so in accordance with the law with regards to child protection and safety. For further information, please contact your national volunteering body: [Volunteer England](#); [Volunteer Development Scotland](#); [Wales Council for Voluntary Action](#); or the [Volunteer Development Agency in Northern Ireland](#).

If you are struggling to engage with your local schools, why not encourage them to join the [RHS Campaign for School Gardening](#) and offer to mentor them through the process. The scheme provides schools with free advice and support.

- Have a year-round programme of activity to keep the community engaged and the area looking its best throughout the year (not just in spring/summer).
- Have secured funding/sponsorship and/or support-in-kind for their activities and the support of local government (e.g. local authority, parish/ community council, local MP etc.) and local businesses.