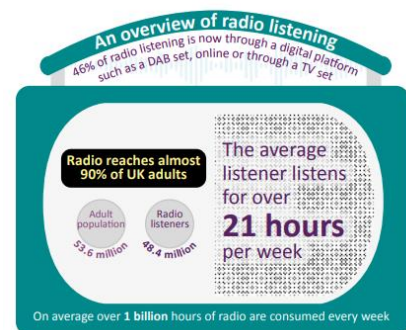
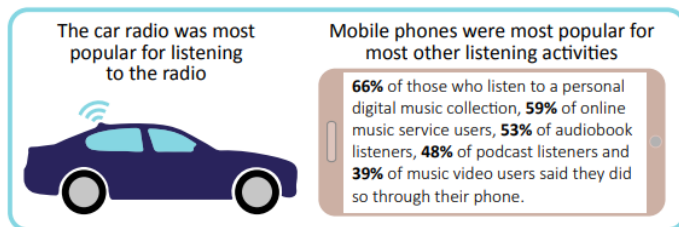


How to guide ... to radio interviews

Why bother with radio interviews?

Radio is an important promotional tool – nine in ten people in the UK listen to the radio at least once a week and over 1 billion hours of radio are consumed every week – which means that there's lots of air time to fill! 63% of adults listen to radio stations that mainly play music, 38% listen to mainly speech-based stations and 16% listen to podcasts. In the mainly speech-based category the age groups most likely to listen are 45-54s and 55-64s. Here's a few more facts and stats:

Figure 3.6: Ways in which listening activities are listened to



The great thing about local radio is that they are looking for *local* news with a positive angle that engages and involves local people and that means your garden openings and all the great stories associated with them and with the National Garden Scheme.

Making Contact

There are a number of ways to contact your local radio station – you can email or call. A direct, personal approach by phone is always good, but whichever way you choose to approach them make sure you have a good story to hook them – make them want to interview you or your garden owner. Ensuring that the story runs a week before an opening – or closer – so people don't forget it, will help generate more footfall and be more newsworthy. Hooks could include:

- The garden that will open for the X consecutive year
- The garden owner who has a unique plant collection
- A garden that has been created for wildlife / drought resistance / that's organic / grow your own (link it to a theme you know your local station have been discussing or campaigning on)
- The amount of money raised for charity by your county in a given year
- An historic garden or group of gardens with great local interest
- The new gardens opening in your area (media love 'new' things)
- Your youngest garden opener
- Your oldest garden opener
- The tiny town garden stuffed with exotic plants

We had huge success in 2019 with [Great Cliff Exotic Garden](#) in Wakefield telling the story of a suburban garden full of exotic plants. We'd styled it a 'Family Friendly Garden' because the garden owner's children loved exploring it and had made YouTube videos about what they loved and

because family friendly often conjures up images of lawns for football and games and this garden had none. The story went on the NGS website and was sent to the local papers and radio who picked up the story, it was covered by local BBC Radio, followed by the local BBC television news show Look North. Our garden owner was kept very busy with media interest so do make sure before you embark on publicising a garden that the garden owner is willing and available to be interviewed ... most journalists will want to go to the source of the story however good you are at selling the story.

Local radio coverage also helped boost garden visitors to [Amanda Goode's](#) garden in Shropshire which we'd included as a Gardens and Health garden case study in May and shared with local press contacts.

August is also a great time to grab a radio slot – news tends to be quieter and there's room for softer stories – but because it's holiday season double check the availability of those you want to involve first!

Contacts for your local radio are usually available on the station's website – if you have trouble finding a contact, get in touch with the communications team at Hatchlands and they'll try and source it for you.

Preparing for your Radio Interview

Keep calm, stay on message and make the right impression. This is your chance to promote the National Garden Scheme and entice visitors to your local gardens. Whether you're being interviewed in the studio, in a garden or over the phone from home, here are some top tips to help you make the most of your time on air.

Before the interview:

#1 Make a plan

It's really important to plan your interview with a list of the key points and messages you want to get across. Highlight key words in each point so you can scan your list quickly in the interview and find a relevant point to make. If the interview is focussed on a particular garden opening make sure you know lots about that particular garden and why people should visit. Research its history – planting style – owners – special features and attractions etc.

#2 Send them your bio

Help the interviewer out by sending them a short bio that they can use as part of a trail for their show and to introduce you before the interview. Read it out loud to make sure it's not too wordy. Keep it succinct.

#3 Write a closing list

At the end of the interview the interviewer may ask for your top tips on the subject you're talking about or how listeners can find out more. Prepare this by writing the list or the links out in advance, keeping the answers short and to the point. Make sure you have ONE MORE tip or link up your sleeve in case the interviewer asks 'and is there anything else you'd like to say?' you'll be ready.

#4 Do your research

The internet is a wonderful tool for researching so find out as much as you can about your interviewer and the station so that you don't make the faux pas of pronouncing their name wrong.

#5 Practice, but not too much

It's a good idea to practice speaking through your points as though someone is interviewing you. Speak slowly and clearly. In an interview, especially your first, it's natural to speak too quickly so try to slow your speech down a bit more than normal. It might sound strange to you but it will come across better on air. But don't try and perfect it word for word otherwise you'll come across as over-rehearsed.

During the interview:

#6 Get comfortable

If you're doing it over the phone make sure you are comfortable and in a quiet place where you won't be interrupted or disturbed. If you're going to the studio make sure you get there ahead of time and get used to the environment. You might be ushered in, headphones on and off you go. So making sure all your key points are prepared is really important. Make sure you're not wearing any jangly jewellery... if you wave your hands around while you're talking and your bangles jangle it can be very off putting and your words will be lost.

#7 Prepare for an abrupt start

A lot of radio interviews – especially from gardens – might be done by phone, not in studio. As you plan ahead you may have to call them or they will call you – make sure you have a good signal! Some producers call a few minutes before the interview begins, allowing you to listen for few minutes to get a feel for the programme's tone. But others wait until the last possible second, meaning you're on the air within moments of picking up the phone. When you pick up the phone, be ready to go live on a second's notice—or on no notice at all. You'll hear the host over the phone line, so turn your radio off to avoid hearing a distracting delay.

#8 Smile

Smile when you're speaking – it will brighten your voice. If you're feeling nervous and you are able – stand-up while you're talking.

#9 Express passion

You may be on the radio but listeners will tune out if you are boring. Try to match or slightly exceed the host's energy level to avoid sounding flat. After all, you'll probably be talking about a fantastic garden or two – or the amazing donations the National Garden Scheme makes.

#10 Use the interviewer's name

Use it sparingly through your interview. To the listeners' ears you will sound more experienced than you are.

#11 Water

Have a glass of water at hand in case you get dry while you're talking.

#12 Keep going

If you stumble on a word keep going. Dead air time is the worst thing for an interviewer and most listeners probably won't even notice your slip-up.

#13 Don't use jargon, acronyms or abbreviations

Don't use jargon or acronyms. Always use the National Garden Scheme (in full – not NGS). It's easy to use terminology that is familiar to you without thinking.

#14 Keep to your plan

Try not to go off topic – you are being interviewed because of a story you have ‘sold’ to the radio station or because you can add value to a conversation or topic. Don’t oversell – the audience isn’t interested in sales speak – and don’t pretend to know about something if you don’t. Try and direct your answer to one of your planned points.

#15 Don’t rely on them to make the plug – milk it!

Be prepared to make your point or to promote the reason for you being there – ie that a garden opens on a certain date – make sure you don’t end the interview realising you didn’t say what you wanted to ... planning and preparation will help!

#16 Don’t interrupt

If you are being interviewed as part of a group of people you may be in different locations and not able to see the other interviewees. It’s important to wait for your cue from the interviewer and not to interrupt when someone else is speaking – it makes a poor listening experience. If you really don’t agree with another interviewees point, wait until they have made it – the interviewer will usually always want both sides of an argument and will ask for your response.

#17 Umms and errs

Try and avoid too many umms and errs – if you’re prepared this shouldn’t be a problem.

After the Interview:

#18 Learn from your experience

If you are able, record your interview and play it back afterwards. Try not to be too critical of yourself but listen for what went really well and what you could improve on. Did you speak too fast or too slow? Did you hesitate too much? Make a mental note for next time.

#19 Ask for a copy for the interview – take a photo

Ask the interviewer if they would be kind enough to send you an MP3 of the interview that you can put on your social media to help promote that garden opening or the story you told. Having a photo of the interview in progress – or afterwards with the interviewer – are also really useful for social media and for showing off your publicity coverage for the year!

#20 Stay in touch

After your interview send an email thanking the interviewer. Include your contact details and say you’d be happy to comment on any subjects or news stories relevant to your garden openings / National Garden Scheme themes or campaigns. They might ask you back and if you don’t feel able to cope with a particular topic do ask head office if they want to help out.

Useful information

Make sure you have the most up-to-date information about National Garden Scheme donations and campaigns calendar by referring to the publicity area of the resource centre. If you can’t find the information you need feel free to contact the team at Hatchlands on 01483 213908.