

Dear Garden Owner

Welcome to the National Garden Scheme and thank you so much for opening your garden.

We really do appreciate your support. We are completely reliant on the generosity of garden owners like you who decide to open their gates and welcome visitors into their beautiful gardens. Last year garden owners enabled us to donate £3 million to our beneficiaries which include Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Carers Trust and The Queen's Nursing Institute.

I am sure you will find that you have joined a happy, friendly organisation. We all know that gardens are a wonderful source of enjoyment, reward and restoration. Opening them to raise funds for vital nursing and health beneficiaries adds a unique element to this, one that is appreciated as much by visitors to the gardens as it is by those who open.

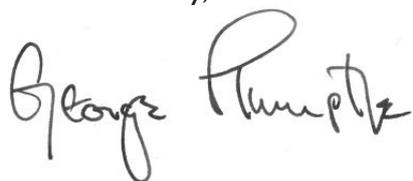
At the same time, we know that opening your garden – especially for the first time – can be daunting. We are all here to help, either actively or with information and advice, so do please ask, even if it seems over something trivial. To support you we have created this welcome pack for new Garden Owners, and I hope that you find the contents helpful as you prepare for your first opening.

The National Garden Scheme is very proud of its heritage stretching back to 1927. We are also proud of the fact that we remain true to our founding objectives, to open gardens of quality, character and interest to raise funds for nursing and health charities. The need of our beneficiaries for our support has never been greater, at the same time the potential for real enjoyment for all concerned remains undimmed.

Welcome!

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,



George Plumtre  
Chief Executive



**National Garden Scheme**

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

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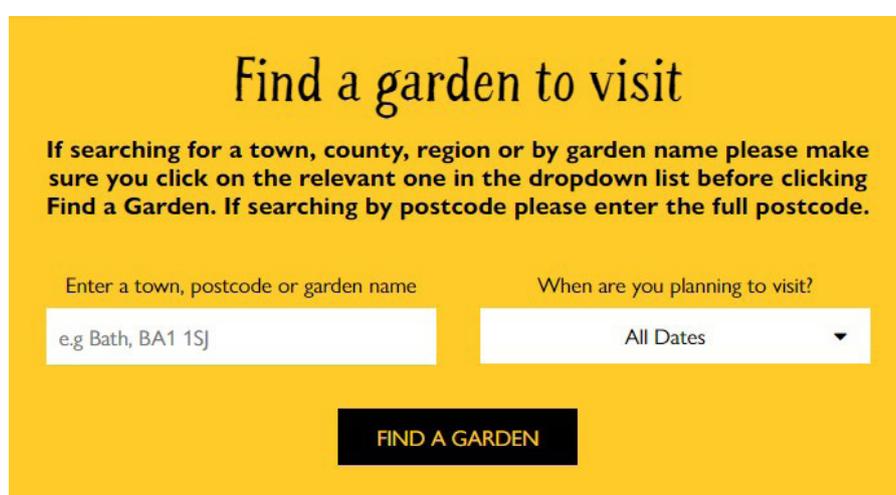
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# Finding your garden online

Your own garden will be promoted on the website so we would recommend that you review your garden entry to check the details and to read it as though you were a potential visitor. You can also see how well your photos showcase the quality of your garden, the planting, the views etc. These photos, more than anything else are what will inspire people to want to come and visit and to explore the garden. Advice on uploading images can be found later in this in a document called **Uploading Photos of Your Garden**.

On the home page of the website, ngs.org.uk, enter your garden name in the **Enter a town, postcode or garden name box** and, when you see your garden's name appear in the dropdown list, click on it.



The screenshot shows a yellow search form titled "Find a garden to visit". Below the title, there is a paragraph of instructions: "If searching for a town, county, region or by garden name please make sure you click on the relevant one in the dropdown list before clicking Find a Garden. If searching by postcode please enter the full postcode." There are two input fields: the first is labeled "Enter a town, postcode or garden name" and contains the text "e.g Bath, BA1 1SJ"; the second is labeled "When are you planning to visit?" and is a dropdown menu with "All Dates" selected. Below the fields is a black button with the text "FIND A GARDEN" in yellow.

You should now have your garden details on the screen in front of you.

Our website is also a wealth of background and interesting information about the National Garden Scheme.

[HOME](#) [PLAN A VISIT](#) [EVENTS](#) [WHO WE ARE](#) [GET INVOLVED](#) [DISCOVER MORE](#) [GARDENS AND HEALTH](#) [SHOP](#)

Under the **WHO WE ARE** menu option you can find out about our National Garden Scheme family, our supporters and the nursing and health beneficiaries that we donate to each year. You can also read more about our **Community Gardens Awards** and the garden apprenticeships that we support.

Under the **DISCOVER MORE** tab you can read about the latest news, as well as articles from garden owners and volunteers. You can also find some great recipes that you might want to try for your open day.

At the bottom of any page on the website you will find a link through to **Garden Registration**, **Garden Financial** and our **Privacy Policy**.

# The National Garden Scheme year

## August - September

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### **Annual Registration of Gardens**

Our year really starts in August with the registration of new gardens to open the following year. An invitation to register your garden will arrive via email containing all the information you will need to start the process. Please remember to check your 'spam' or 'junk' folder as occasionally emails have been located there. It will also be your chance to order materials such as the road arrows and posters to help promote your garden opening locally.

## February - April

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### **Preparing for the Season**

The Garden Visitor's Handbook is published in early February. As a National Garden Scheme Garden Owner you will receive a complimentary copy of the book and a Discretionary Garden Entry card.

**Please note:** *The Discretionary Garden Entry card can be used when visiting other National Garden Scheme gardens and is accepted at the discretion of the Garden Owner. Please do not be offended if they request an admission fee be paid. It cannot be used for 'By Arrangement' visits, Pre-ticketed events or at a Garden Open to the Public (Commercial) garden.*

Many counties hold a party for their Garden Owners before the main opening season, to say thank you for supporting the National Garden Scheme. It is also a wonderful opportunity to meet with fellow garden owners and to share stories about your open day, ideas to encourage more visitors and indeed anything else related to gardens! The parties are also used for giving you the posters and other items of stationery you will have ordered for your open day. When you have your stationery and posters please check that everything is in order and inform your County Team Member of any missing items/errors on posters etc as soon as possible.

**Please note:** *If you are unable to attend or your open day is prior to the party date, your stationery/posters will be sent direct to you.*

## February - October

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### **The Garden Opening Season**

The first gardens open for our annual Snowdrop Festival, welcoming visitors keen to get out in the garden. If your garden has a wealth of snowdrops or other early spring flowers it's worth remembering that 'early openings' in February, March and April, can attract rewardingly large numbers of visitors. People are keen to get out and there is less competition for their time compared to the summer.

The number of gardens open each week gradually builds and the end of May to July is our busiest period with over 50% of the gardens opening over seven weekends. October usually sees the last of the gardens opening – most with a glorious display of Autumn colour.



# Registration of your garden

This is a vital time of year for the National Garden Scheme. As a Garden Owner you will need to register online to say that your garden will be opening the following year and when. The information you provide and the quality of the photographs you upload are vital to attracting visitors into your garden. This process then becomes one of checking year on year and changing dates and admission times and prices as appropriate.

Your information will be displayed within our annual Garden Visitor's Handbook, our county booklets and on our website and App.

The registration period is August – September. It is important to complete your registration as soon as possible and within this timeframe so that it can be included in our annual Garden Visitor's Handbook and our county booklets which have a long lead time for print.

Between mid-August to early September you will receive an email inviting you to register your garden. Your email invitation will contain the following important information required to access your form so please do not delete it:

- A link to our Online Garden Administration system
- Your Username and Password

If you misplace or forget either of these please use the 'Forgotten username and/or password' request facility on the Login page of your online form or contact your County Team Member.

Within the Online Garden Administration system, you will see the Garden Owner Guide available from Guidance Documents from the left-hand menu. We recommend that you read this before completing your form. This will hopefully ensure that registration is a straightforward process, although if you do have any questions then don't hesitate to contact your County Team Member, who will be pleased to help.

When you are ready to register your garden, please select the  icon to begin the process.

You will also notice that various sections have an information icon  next to them. Place your cursor over the icon for further advice and examples on how to complete this section. Again, if you require any assistance please contact your County Team Member. The same applies if you require any assistance in ordering posters and/or stationery.

Once you are happy you have completed your registration form, please take the opportunity to use the Preview facility provided on the final page. This will enable you to view the information you have entered as it will appear in the Garden Visitor's Handbook. Once you are happy with your entry please click SUBMIT to submit your form to your County Team Member.

Congratulations! You are now an official National Garden Scheme garden. The next step is to upload photos of your garden to showcase why visitors will want to visit it.

## What do I do if I am uncomfortable registering online?

We are aware that some people are not comfortable using online systems and, in this instance, we will provide you with a paper form for you to complete and return. Your County Team Member will then register your garden using Online Garden Administration on your behalf.

# Uploading photos of your garden



Once you have completed the registration process you will need to upload your garden photos. It is said that 'a photograph says 1000 words'. A poor image can make your garden seem uninviting whereas a photo that captures what makes it special can draw visitors to your garden gate. (See the document 'seven photography tips to showcase your garden' to help you stand out from the crowd.)

The process of uploading your images is not complicated, however, if you do have any problems your County Team Member will be happy to assist you. You can upload a maximum of 18 images to the system and select a maximum of 9 images for viewing on the website. You can also select the one image that you want to be presented as the lead image.

Most modern mobile phones will take a photo which will be of good enough quality for us to use on the website. Our recommendation would be to upload the highest resolution photos that you have (with a maximum file size of 15MB). We would also recommend that you select a landscape image as your lead image since these create a higher impact on the website. The communications team are always looking for gardens to promote in the national press and media, but to achieve this high quality photography is essential.



## Image Criteria

If you have expertise in the use of digital photographs then the following criteria may be helpful to you:

- Image must be a .jpg file
- Landscape images must be at least 800 pixels wide and portrait images must be at least 600 pixels high.
- Image file size must be less than 15MB. Image must be between 72 and 1000dpi. (300dpi and above for print)
- Please do not resize/edit your images as doing so may result in the image being unsuitable for use.



# Step by step guide to uploading your photographs

1. Download your images to your PC or laptop and save.
2. Log on to Online Garden Administration as you did when registering your garden ([www.gardenregistration.ngs.org.uk](http://www.gardenregistration.ngs.org.uk)), using the same username and password.

*If you have forgotten/misplaced this information, a reminder can be requested by clicking on the 'Click here if you have forgotten your Username and/or Password' link located just above the yellow SUBMIT button.*

3. Along with other information relating to your garden, you will see a camera icon. Please click on this to access the image section.



*Note: Images can be uploaded at any time throughout the year, however depending on when you upload your images, the registration area (where you uploaded the details of your opening) may no longer be active. At this time you will only be able to view the information rather than change it.*

4. Click on **ADD NEW IMAGE**
5. Click **BROWSE** to search for an image.
6. Once located, double click on the image and then click **SAVE**.
7. If you have selected the wrong image or changed your mind click **CANCEL**.
8. Once you have uploaded your images you will need to select a **Primary image**. This will be the first image potential visitors see when they look at your garden's details on the website.

***Please note: you can only upload one image at a time. To upload further images simply repeat the process.***

9. Once you are happy with the images selection click **SUBMIT ALL CHANGES**

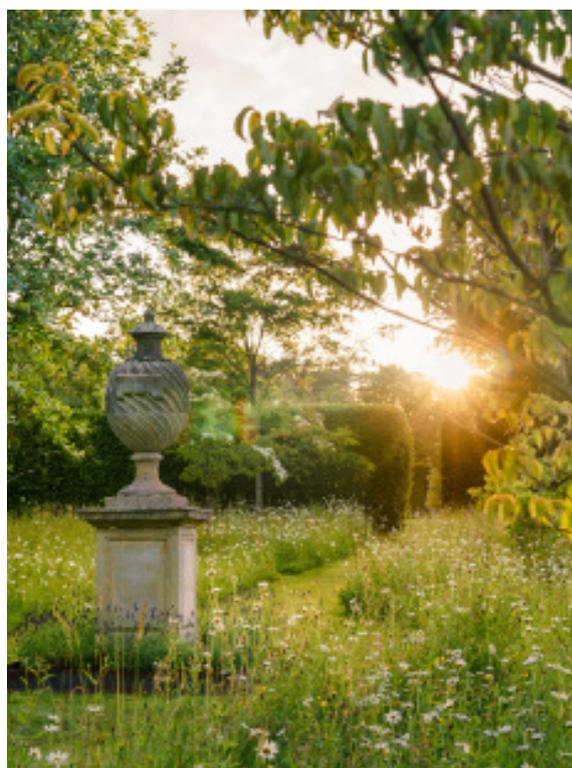


# Seven photography tips to showcase your garden

It's a truth universally acknowledged that good photos drive garden visits. So, roll up the hose pipe and put away the washing line and follow our top tips from professional garden photographer Julie Skelton. They will help make your social feeds or garden listing on the National Garden Scheme website not only stand out from the crowd but draw one too!

## 1. TIME OF DAY

If there's one huge rule, it's catching the space in the best light of the day. This is almost always at either end of the day before the sun is too high in the sky. When the sun is creating its longest shadows, the light is much more flattering and warm, with side light giving structure and form to the plants and landscaping.



## 2. SEASONS

Is your garden to be open to the public in summer? Be sure to photograph it in summer, showcasing the best of what visitors may see. Don't upload photographs of snowdrops if your garden is celebrated for its dahlia display! Equally, you may want to show the seasonal variety offered by your garden if it is to be open at different times of the year.

## 3. WEATHER

In general, people are always attracted to the pictures where the sunlight is enticing – not so much to images where the sky is a big grey washout. Keep an eye on the forecast and plan to take your photographs on a good-weather day with some interest in the sky (or leave the sky out altogether!).

## 4. COME & EXPLORE

Sometimes the most successful images do not show the entire garden, but offer a glimpse of an intriguing corner that visitors would want to discover. The aim is to invite people in, with a scene of somewhere they can imagine themselves - a pathway to walk along, a water feature to relax beside – so that they are keen to explore more for an uplifting couple of hours.





## 5. SHOWCASE YOUR STAR PLANTS

Do offer photographs of the plants that your garden is known for. Whether it's a torrent of tulips, wisteria hysteria or inspirational allotment ideas, garden lovers will seek out the places that cultivate their favourite plants and produce.

the worst for this, but do remember to also check that you or a family member are not casting a shadow into your picture. In general, adding people will draw the eye of the viewer away from the features of the garden, so for your showcase photographs, it's usually best to leave them out.

## 6. CLEAR THE DISTRACTIONS

Your garden is an aspirational space for many visitors, so do take a moment to make sure that your photo composition avoids off-putting distractions. A little tidy-up such as deadheading, moving a green sack or taking down a washing line will exhibit your hard-earned haven at its absolute best. And while photographing, do experiment with taking a little step left or right, up or down, to see if it improves the framing of your picture. (See the difference of the photographs here on the right.)



## 7. BEWARE THE ACCIDENTAL SELFIE!

While we're on the subject of distractions, check that you're not accidentally featuring in a photograph! Reflective surfaces are obviously

# Publicising your Open Garden event

Your garden will be publicised in our Garden Visitor's Handbook, and in your local county booklets which are distributed free of charge from garden centres, libraries, tourist information offices and a variety of other local outlets. Your garden will also be listed on the website and on the National Garden Scheme App.

## Support from your local county team

Most of our County Teams have volunteers on their team whose role it is to help promote the garden openings and to encourage visitors, through their social media channels, radio and in local magazines and newspapers. So do get in touch with your local team to find out how they can help.



## What you can do

You have an important part to play in helping to maximise your visitor numbers and ensure that as many people as possible can enjoy your garden with you. You can:

### Spread the word

Don't be modest! Tell all your friends and family what you are doing and ask them to help you spread the word through their own network of friends and work colleagues. Spending a wonderful afternoon in a beautiful garden, and at the same time raising money for vital nursing and health charities is an attractive invitation!

### Distribute flyers

Distribute A5 flyers of the event (can be ordered as part of your stationary order) locally.

### Place open day notifications

Put a notification about your garden opening – and why people should come, in the local parish magazine or other local newsletters you are engaged in.

### Upload seasonal photos

Make sure you have great photos of your garden in the season in which it will open and upload these with your registration. If you have lots more, let your county team know. (If you are struggling with photography let your

county team know too ... pictures of your garden are vital to drawing in visitors, and your County Team Member can help).

### Post on Social Media

If you are active on social media yourself, you can promote your opening on your own social media tagging in your local National Garden Scheme feed and letting your local publicity / social media officer know about your own social media pages.

### Tell us about your links with our beneficiaries

Let your county support team know if you have a specific connection to a National Garden Scheme beneficiary. Making the link between you, the National Garden Scheme and one of the charities we support can create powerful case studies for press, TV and radio.

### Share your expertise

If you specialise in a particular plant or have a story you feel sets your garden apart let your county support team know or submit your story to [stories@ngs.org.uk](mailto:stories@ngs.org.uk).

# Submitting the money you have raised

Once again thank you for opening your garden in aid of the National Garden Scheme and helping us raise funds for vital nursing and health charities.

It can be so rewarding to record how many visitors you shared your garden with and how much you raised from all your hard work - and we hope you experience a well-deserved glow as you put your feet up!



Shortly after your opening (or group of openings if your opening dates are close together i.e. a Saturday and Sunday) you will receive an email inviting you to let us know the number of visitors you welcomed, the amount of money you raised & other details. The email will contain:

- a link to our Online Garden Administration system
- your Username and Password.

And as soon as you can we would love to hear about your successes. So do please log on to the system and select the **£** icon to begin the process.

The best way to submit the money you have raised is by electronic transfer - further details are available online or from your County Treasurer. Alternatively you can send us a cheque.

## Gift Aid

A question often asked is 'Can the National Garden Scheme claim Gift Aid on the funds raised at gardens. Unfortunately we are not able to claim Gift Aid. The reason is because your garden is a private garden and does not belong to the National Garden Scheme.

If you would like more information about Gift Aid do get in touch with us at the National Garden Scheme on 01483 211535, [hello@ngs.org.uk](mailto:hello@ngs.org.uk).

# Questions and answers

## Who do I contact if I am unsure about something or I need help?

You should contact your County Team Member with any problems or questions. You can find their contact details on the National Garden Scheme website. (<https://www.ngs.org.uk/who-we-are/our-people/volunteer-teams/>)

## What can I expect on the day?

By far the best way to get a feel for an open day is to visit a National Garden Scheme garden yourself (if you haven't already done so). Talk to the garden owner and make notes from your visit. Don't forget most County Team Members open or have opened their gardens at some point and will know only too well how you are feeling.



## Do I need to give every visitor a ticket?

As part of our comprehensive insurance cover, every visitor must be given a proof of admission at the entrance. The admission tickets are numbered so using them is a good way to keep track of how many visitors you had.

## What if a visitor has an accident in my garden; what do I do?

Accidents rarely happen. You may have signed the very slippery path and the extremely deep pond then someone goes and trips on a single step! Most accidents are minor and often visitors will dust themselves off and be on their way. However, we do ask that any slip, trip or fall that occurs in the garden, on your open day, be recorded. Simply take the visitor's name, address, contact details (telephone/email) and record basic details of the accident. Then, at a convenient time, contact your County Team Member by phone or email to let them have the details.

## I really don't want strangers wandering around my house. What should I do if someone asks to use the toilet?

Most seasoned garden visitors know not to expect a toilet to be available. However, some garden owners will allow visitors to use a downstairs cloakroom. If you do allow visitors into your home we strongly advise they be accompanied at all times. If you do not have facilities available simply direct your visitor to the nearest public toilets.

## I would rather not offer tea and cake. What should I do?

It is not essential that you provide refreshments, however offering tea and cakes can add to your

visitors' enjoyment and make an afternoon out in your garden even more memorable. If this is not something you feel able to do, you can try joining forces with a local tea and cake shop (some even make a donation for the extra custom) or linking up with the local church. You can also talk to your County Team Member about one of our beneficiaries providing refreshments on the day.



*The refreshments are being organised by a third party on my open day. Do I need to make visitors aware the money is not for the National Garden Scheme?*

Yes. Charity Commission Guidelines state that visitors must be informed of where their money is going. This practice also applies to plant sales, either by a third party or by you as the Garden Owner. If you are still unsure about the procedure, your County Team Member will be happy to advise.

*Are there any other ways I can help boost the money I raise on the day especially where refreshments are concerned?*

Absolutely! Some garden owners make and sell cakes to take away. Why not try selling cakes by the slice or maybe pre-pack cookies or scones so visitors can treat the family when they get home? Homemade jams and chutneys are also very popular. If you are providing refreshments, please do ask your County Team Member for a copy of our easy to follow Guidelines for Food Hygiene & Labelling.



*I am planning to sell plants on my open day. Do I need to provide plastic bags?*

We can supply you with a limited number of plastic bags for your opening but, in our ever increasingly eco-friendly environment, we do not encourage their use. Try collecting used carrier bags from friends or neighbours in the lead up to your open day or ask your local supermarket for bags recycled by customers.

*How much should I charge for teas, cakes, plants etc?*

Ask your County Team Member what the average is for your county. Whatever you decide try to price in 50p denominations as this negates the need for a comprehensive float.



## *I'm not sure how much tea, coffee and milk to purchase. Are there any guidelines?*

1½ pints of milk will serve approximately 20 cups/mugs of tea/coffee (long life milk is a good standby) and a 100g jar of coffee provides roughly 96 cups. A 500g pack of sugar should be more than adequate. It is also worth having smaller cookies/cakes and juice available (with paper plates and cups) priced lower for children.

## *What other things can I do to make my open day a success?*

Music (especially for evening openings) is popular as are displays by local artists, painters, photographers etc. Many will donate a percentage of the proceeds from the open day to the National Garden Scheme. Another popular idea is a second-hand book stall asking for donations in exchange.



## *Are there any restrictions on the display of roadside arrows and posters?*

Your County Team Member will be able to advise you on best practice where displaying posters is concerned. However, we do suggest that you contact your local authority for guidelines on the use of roadside publicity. Most local authorities will allow limited use to promote charity events but this does vary from county to county so it is best to check. Your County Team Member may also be able to advise you of your county's policy.

## *If I have an afternoon or evening opening may I sell or serve alcohol?*

Yes, but you will need to obtain a Temporary Events Notice (TEN). A copy of the form can be obtained from the GOV.UK website (<https://www.gov.uk/temporary-events-notice>). This must be

done at least 10 days prior to your opening day. Please note: a small fee is required for this license. For more information talk to your County Team Member.



### *I would like to encourage families to visit my garden. How can I do this?*

Consider setting up a nature trail if space allows, or provide work-sheets. Specific picnic areas with colouring sheets, pens and pencils are always popular.

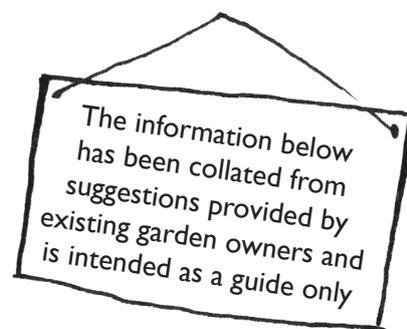
### *I have children's play equipment in my garden. May I allow children to use it?*

Yes, but with a few words of caution. Clearly sign all equipment with a disclaimer saying that its use is for under or over a certain age, that all children must be supervised by an adult and that it is used entirely at their own risk. Please discuss specific signage requirements with your County Team Member.

### *What should I do if I need to cancel my open day?*

Once a garden open day has gone to print it is a little difficult. However, it is understood that there will be times when continuing with a planned open day is impossible and cancelling is the only option. Please contact your County Team Member as soon as possible who will talk you through the process.

# Counting down to your open day



## 4 weeks to go....

- Display A4 posters. Your County Team Member will be able to help and advise you on the best places to do so.
- If you have not already received one, request a list of contacts for local radio/press/TV from your County Team Member. This is a great way to get free publicity for your open day. Your county may even have a dedicated Publicity Officer who will be more than happy to give you advice on how best to promote your garden open day.
- If you have arranged for a local third party to be present on the open day (e.g. craft/plant stall) check they have public liability insurance.
- Notify your household insurer of your open day. (For more information regarding insurance cover please contact your County Team Member).
- Check the garden and make a to-do list of any jobs that need to be addressed.

## 3 weeks to go....

- If you are providing refreshments and wish to prepare in advance, bake cakes and freeze. If you are borrowing/hiring catering equipment, confirm arrangements.
- Distribute A5 flyers (if applicable).

## 2 weeks to go....

- Remind any helpers of your open day.
- If refreshments are to be provided by a third party (e.g. Marie Curie/local church/WI), contact them now to confirm arrangements.
- Make sure you are up to date with your to-do list.
- Display A3 posters (if applicable).
- Draw up an instruction sheet to give to your volunteers on the day. This will allow you the time to engage with your visitors.
- Tackle any weeding.

## 1 week to go....

- Sort change floats for gate and refreshment areas (and plant stall if applicable).
- If you are providing refreshments, purchase tea bags, coffee, sugar, squash, wine (if applicable).
- Clearly label and price all plants for sale. Store non-sale plants in a separate area if possible to avoid confusion.
- Walk round the garden with a critical eye. Clear away any garden rubbish and ensure that areas visible to visitors are clean and tidy.
- Tidy the edges of the lawn.
- Check the weather forecast for the week ahead. Now is the time to plan for a wet, hot or windy day.



## Day before....

- Take pre-prepared cakes out of the freezer (if applicable).
- Purchase milk for teas and coffees. Put wine on to chill (if applicable).
- Put up large yellow road arrows near to the house to help visitors find their way. Make sure the entrance to the garden is well signed so visitors know where to go and, if applicable, where to park once they arrive.

## Open day....

- Take one last walk round the garden checking for potential trip hazards, slippery steps etc.
- Put up private signs, caution signs, welcome notices, beneficiary poster etc.
- Prepare change float/s.
- Hand out volunteers instruction sheets (if applicable).
- Close downstairs curtains, back and front of house.
- Take a deep breath, relax and enjoy your day.**

## The day after....

Hopefully, after all your hard work, you will have had the opportunity to enjoy the successes of your day – a day of sharing your beautiful garden with like-minded visitors, and at the same time raising vital funds for our nursing and health beneficiaries.

We could not do what we do without your generosity - opening your garden with the National Garden Scheme and welcoming visitors into your garden. Last year garden owners contributed to an impressive £3 million donation to our beneficiaries which include Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK and The Queen's Nursing Institute. Thank you!

- If your County Team Member was not able to attend your open day please let them know how it went.
- Please bank your garden proceeds as quickly as possible and let us have details of the number of visitors and amount raised through the Online Garden Administration system. If you have any queries regarding this please contact your County Treasurer or County Team Member or see the Submitting the Money You Have Raised sheet in this pack.
- Take down any roadside arrows and/or posters as soon as possible. This helps to keep local residents and the local authority on side.

