



SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES 2021

These guidelines include information about the following topics...

- Messaging
- Security and risks
- Using images
- Responding to difficult comments
- Useful resources
- Handing over your social media accounts



Messaging

As a social media officer, you are representing your county team and the National Garden Scheme. It's important therefore that the content you share aligns with our values, both locally and nationally. Here are some quick pointers when writing about the National Garden Scheme on your regional social media pages.

Tone of voice

We are...

- Friendly and informal
- Down-to-earth
- Witty and engaging
- Wise

We are not...

- Corporate or technical
- Bland, stiff, dull or dreary
- Inappropriately light-hearted
- Childish or patronising

Please always refer to the National Garden Scheme, not NGS.

When talking about our donations, make sure to use the most up to date figures. These can be found in the Resource Centre and are updated [on our website](#) when our donations are announced.

Be mindful

It's always important to be mindful on social media.

When sharing content on your channels, please make sure you post is positive, and will not cause upset to our supporters, you fellow volunteers, Hatchlands staff or the National Garden Scheme as an organisation.

Of course, you can share whatever interests on your personal accounts but it is very easy to accidentally

post something unsuitable to a National Garden Scheme page if you are logged into multiple channels on your mobile phone. Please double check you are logged into your own account before sharing anything personal.

Security and risks

Here are some steps you can follow to ensure that your National Garden Scheme account is protected against security any risks:

We recommend that at least two members of your regional team have access to your social media pages. Please remember to keep note of who has access to your channels.

Access on Facebook:

Ensure there are two admins assigned to your county team Facebook page.

If your personal email address or social media channel is compromised, the second user can use their login to recover the page and secure it. If you forget your password or lock yourself out of the account, this also allows the second user to recover your access. A guide to creating multiple admins is available in the resource centre.

If you would like Hatchlands to keep a record of your logins, please let Elena know (elena@ngs.org.uk).

Instagram and Twitter:

If you are creating a new Instagram or Twitter account, you will need to create a generic username and password. This login will be the same for all team members with access.

Third-party websites:

There are many benefits to using third-party websites to generate and schedule your social media content, but it's best to be careful when picking which one to use. These will require access to your social media account to function, so it is important that you trust these websites. Research the website and find reviews of other people's experiences to help you make the decision and if you are unsure, do not use them. We recommend Hootsuite, Buffer or Later.

Passwords:

Obscure passwords are the most secure! Make sure to set a different password for each of your social media accounts. You can use online password generators to create these – you might need to keep a note of these as they can be hard to remember.

Never share your passwords with anyone digitally. Email accounts are commonly targeted by hackers and if you have shared your password in an email, you are at risk of this falling into the wrong hands.

Do not share your login details with anyone who is not associated with the National Garden Scheme or does not have permission to work on behalf of the National Garden Scheme.

Using images

We are extremely lucky to be publicising a very photogenic topic – gardens! Using images across social media is one of the best ways to engage your followers and encourage visitors but it's important that images are used correctly.

Quality

High-resolution images will always gain better engagement. These are images that are usually large in size (1MB +) good quality, clear and in focus. If a photograph appears fuzzy or blurry, it is recommended that you use an alternative. If you need imagery for a particular garden, you can contact Elena, who can source a high-resolution image via the National Garden Scheme's image library.

Consent

If you are posting a photograph on social media which shows an adult's face, you need to have at least verbal consent from each person before sharing the image.

If you are posting a photograph on social media which shows a child, you need written consent from their parent or guardian before sharing the image. This written consent needs to be filed in case we are asked to produce evidence of it.

Credit

If you are posting a photograph taken by a professional photographer, you need to credit the photographer when you share the image. This can be done in the following ways:

Photo credit: [photographer's full name]

Photograph taken by: [photographer's full name]

© [Photographer's full name]

Responding to difficult situations

Whilst most of the interaction with your followers on social media will be fun and positive, there may be times when a difficult comment or question is left on your channel.

When this happens, it's very important to respond as soon as possible, and most importantly, make sure to take the conversation out of the public eye.

When dealing with a difficult situation, the Hatchlands team follows this process:

1. Politely reply to the comment, asking the social media user to contact you via direct message.
2. Discuss the issue with the social media user through private messenger. Always be polite during these conversations, and make sure not to make promises or speak on behalf of other organisations, such as our beneficiaries.
3. If a resolution arises from this conversation, make sure to action this as soon as possible and inform the social media user when you have completed this.
4. Escalate, if necessary. As a social media officer, you are encouraged to contact Elena if someone becomes persistent or abusive.

There are some social media users who go further than posting difficult comments or questions – and they actively seek to cause harm; often by posting extremely offensive, inflammatory or controversial comments. They are commonly referred to as 'trolls'. Although these types of comments are very rare, it is best not to respond at all, as engaging can often make things worse. If someone is consistently disrespectful on your channel, despite you ignoring their comments, you can take steps to block these accounts, and report anything that oversteps the line to the social media provider.

If you are unsure how to deal with a difficult situation, you are always welcome to contact Elena before moving forward.



Useful resources

Brand guidelines

National Garden Scheme brand guidelines offer insight into the brand, and some do's and don'ts when applying our brand to your social media content. These can be found in the Resource Centre.

Create:

Create is an online design tool that allows you to easily create branded content for your social media channels. For access, please get in touch with Jo (joanne@ngs.org.uk).

Handing over your social media accounts

If you or a team member decide to step down from a role, there are a few steps you will need to take to complete this handover.

Once a resignation has been made official with a County Organiser, you or the team member will then need to:

1. Ensure the usernames and passwords to the regional social media account are handed over to a nominated county team member or to the volunteer who takes on the role.
2. Notify the volunteer who shares admin access to your Facebook page, so they can remove admin access.
3. Ensure relevant documents relating to your social media channels are passed on to a nominated county team member or to the volunteer who takes on the role. This could include information about scheduled content, social media contacts or draft documents.

Communications team

If you have any questions about this year's communications campaigns, social media or needs some digital support, please feel free to get in touch with us.

Vicky Flynn,
Communications Manager
vicky@ngs.org.uk

Anna Wili
Head of Marketing
anna@ngs.org.uk

Elena Pearce
Social Media Manager
elena@ngs.org.uk

Jo McGowan
Digital Development & Infrastructures Manager
jo@ngs.org.uk

Throughout the year, Elena is happy to arrange a one-to-one video call with county teams to discuss social media, or to provide training. Please get in touch with Elena if you would like to book a session in.