



Gaining Great Publicity

TIPS FOR PUBLICITY OFFICERS

Why we need publicity officers

The role of the NGS Publicity Officer is vital in forming and building relationships at a local level with publications, media and special interest groups.

Your role as a Publicity Officer is to:

- Build the awareness levels of the National Garden Scheme and its charitable aims
- Encourage new and repeat garden visitors to our wonderful gardens

We benefit greatly from being a national organisation, but thrive on the individuality of the gardens and the counties. Each NGS County has its own approach to local publicity to meet local conditions: for some counties it is a very well-honed operation, making the best use of local media contacts, whilst others focus their efforts through the garden owners. There is no right or wrong way to achieve good publicity, but contained within this document there are some ideas, techniques and practices which are tried and tested and proven to get results.

Who to contact

Media contacts, communications, PR, image and video information / requests and

advice: vicky@ngs.org.uk

Social media advice: elena@ngs.org.uk

Technical/website support: joanne@ngs.org.uk

The Role of the County Publicity Officer

As a publicity officer it's essential that you:

- Enjoy communicating with people
- Enjoy researching contacts and information
- Have good computer skills including use of MS Word, email and web searching
- Enjoy researching and writing about gardens

We'd also be really grateful if you could visit some gardens and take some photos. The highest resolution that you can - whether on a camera or a phone - can make all the difference! Printed media usually require 300 dpi - you'll get away with lower for on-line publications and social media.

Working with the whole team

It is important that we work together to maximise awareness of the National Garden Scheme. Very often the messages that appear in national newspapers and magazines will be about our aims and achievements. At a local level you have a wonderful resource in the gardens to publicise. Head Office and Counties can work together to make the best possible use of information and opportunities

- Head Office supports the National Garden Scheme website www.ngs.org.uk. This is used by visitors to plan visits, but is also an excellent tool for publicity officers who can search gardens in their area by open date, location or key words.
- The website also provides information on National Garden Scheme activities and events and information on the charities that we support and our sponsors. New content is regularly uploaded to NEWS and LIFESTYLE pages which you can use for your own publicity outputs.
- The Marketing team also have access to a press database and can help you track media sources in your area and also pick up local and regional press coverage of the National Garden Scheme

At County level, there are many things you can do to support and inform Head Office Press activity.

- Create a list of gardens open in your area to send out to local press
- Ask Garden Owners for new imagery and updates on their gardens - hi-res is best!
- Help encourage garden owners to maintain a good quality listing on the website, particularly including good quality landscape images of their garden
- Please include our web address www.ngs.org.uk in all your publicity and wherever possible include this as a hyperlink

At the turn of the year we would suggest that you work with your team to plan which gardens you are going to publicise and when. Head Office will provide a Communications Calendar for the year ahead with themes, events and ideas.

Another idea is to liaise with Publicity Officers in neighbouring counties. You may be able to offer each other assistance in publicising garden openings in your respective counties. [Find local contact details here.](#)

Please inform Head Office of:

- Any newsworthy events or items so that we can post them on the website
- Any contact from national media (these should be referred back to HO unless the request is purely local, in which case, please let HO know)
- Any approaches made by television programmes or production companies
- Any professional photography completed, especially for gardens which will be opening for the National Garden Scheme for the first time

Attracting Media Coverage

Here are four tips to help keep regular contact with local media

1. Press releases are the most complete way of getting your message across to the media.
2. You can also keep the National Garden Scheme in the news by reporting Garden Openers Long Service Awards, County Organiser's yearly report, anniversaries and special events, special garden openings and any other newsworthy items, submitting photographs where possible to local publications.
3. Editorial and diary listings are free in most publications, as are entries on local websites and local borough and county council tourism websites. *It is a policy of the National Garden Scheme not to use paid advertising at county level.* Most visitors to National Garden Scheme gardens come from within the locality.
4. Local radio stations are often pleased to feature events and can have special charity or gardening slots. This is becoming an increasingly important means of getting local publicity. Don't forget to offer copies of *The Garden Visitor's Handbook* for giveaways.

Bear in mind typical lead times for publications are as follows:

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|------------------------------|-----------|
| • Regional monthly magazines | 3 months |
| • Regional weekly magazines | 6 weeks |
| • Weekly newspapers | 1-2 weeks |
| • Daily Newspapers | 1-7 days |
| • Local Radio/TV | 1-7 days |
| • Websites | 1-2 days |

Getting your press releases noticed

Here are some tips for making sure your press releases are published:

- Provide an eye-catching title and be brief.
- Make sure the key message is contained in the first paragraph.
- Try to find an **angle** for your press release – is the garden you're promoting great for children and families? Will it appeal to groups? Does it have historical interest?

Accompanying quotes or seasonal gardening tips from a County Team member or the Garden Owner will also help to secure coverage.

- The preferred method of delivery is by email. In this format releases should be typed in Helvetica, Calibri or Arial font, 1.5 spacing.
- Offer digital photographs if possible, fully captioned and credited to the photographer.
- Templates for press releases and brand material are provided within the resource centre of our website.

Other ways to create awareness

- Enlist the support of Garden Owners
- To help spread your workload, please encourage garden owners to generate their own publicity. Please ensure that copy states that the gardens are opening for the National Garden Scheme and give general information about the National Garden Scheme.
- Use County Booklet Distribution
- Every County should compile and develop a distribution list of places that will display booklets e.g. libraries, garden centres, tourist information centres, retail outlets, hotels and B&B's.

Other tips:

- Send a County Booklet with covering letter out to all contacts at the start of the year, e.g. clubs and societies from your database – and all your press contacts.
- Arrange for booklet swaps with neighbouring counties to maximise awareness.
- County booklets can be included with your mailings and taken along to talks.

LATEST NEWS

The Head Office team constantly update the home page and the news page of the website with the latest information and press releases so check there first. If you can't find the information you need please get in touch.

Accessing Information and Keeping Records

By keeping links or lists of information which you are going to use regularly, you should be able to work more quickly and effectively. In the table below we provide some tips on assembling this information quickly and easily. The knowledge that you build up will help you in future years and will provide valuable information for others.

Information	Why it's useful	Where to find it	Top tip
Garden Details	Quick access to respond to enquiries	Details of gardens can be located on the National Garden Scheme website.	The website has a 'gardens by type' area which is useful for finding themed gardens.
Garden Images	A picture says a thousand words	Images of gardens can be seen on the National Garden Scheme website or ask the publicity team to provide hi-res images for you.	Visitors to our website have told us that they love looking at the images of the gardens and that this inspires them to visit gardens.
Press Coverage	To keep track of coverage given and to inform others	Use Google Alert to track any National Garden Scheme coverage in your county, its free to use and simple to set-up www.google.com	The comms team at HO will provide regular press coverage updates and can help you find local contacts.
Local Newspapers	For press releases and diary listings	Head Office can supply a list if you team doesn't have one	
Radio and TV	For interviews, phone-ins, press releases and diary listings	BBC Local Radio news.bbc.co.uk For all radio stations www.radio-now.co.uk	
Local Community Groups	Promote Garden Openings and group visits	Try your local council website- communities section (e.g. go to council home page and type community groups in search) The WI U3A	Councils have a duty to provide listing of community groups, and community facilities such as libraries, etc. Groups such as U3A, Horticultural Groups may be listed here
Tourist Information Offices	To stock booklets and display posters	www.information-britain.co.uk	Ensure that they have your contact details for enquiries and re-supply of booklets