

## New Garden Recruitment Support Pack

Gardens are the lifeblood of the National Garden Scheme. We are reliant on the generosity of garden owners in taking the decision to open their garden for us, and the challenge we all face is holding on to our existing gardens while also trying to grow the number of gardens that we are able to offer to visitors. Across the counties we have examples of proactive garden recruitment which result in a constant supply of new gardens and we felt it would be helpful to formalise the process, sharing best practice and providing you with tools to support your efforts.

### Your role

County organisers (and their teams) play a vital role in finding new high-quality gardens at a local level as well as encouraging existing garden owners to continue opening their gardens. The impact proactive recruitment has can mean increased garden income, increased popularity of our gardens and increased awareness of the National Garden Scheme locally.

So, don't be timid, you too can find new gardens and encourage them to open. To support you, we have outlined some information about the motivations of our garden owners and the meaning of a quality garden, as well as a package of tools and best practice below.

### Why do garden owners decide to open and continue opening year after year?

There are many varied reasons why someone might decide to open for the National Garden Scheme, however recent research highlighted the following as key motivators:

1. **Sharing over giving:** The primary motivation is to *share their garden with like-minded visitors* who have an interest in gardening. The National Garden Scheme has a reputation for quality. It is this reputation that draws more of the type of visitors they find most rewarding.
2. **Visitor numbers over funds raised:** Visitor numbers are a key motivator to continue opening. The more people they can share their garden with the happier they are. And they look to us for support in recruiting people to their gardens.
3. **The relationship with the county team member is the glue:** The relationship between the county team member and garden owner is vital and is a key motivator to continue opening. A close relationship can make all the difference to a decision to open again the following year and to recommending the experience to friends.

### What makes a quality garden?

Quality is a hard term to quantify. In general terms we refer to it as a garden which has *quality, character and interest*. As part of our research county organisers and garden owners shared their own definitions:

- A garden that has a story. Perhaps it is:
  - its importance to the owner, their health and wellbeing
  - its development from a bare field
  - its restoration back to former glory
- A garden that is loved and nurtured, rather than perfect with every blade of grass in place
- A garden that shows thought and planning
- A garden that can inspire others
- A garden with colour, variety, structure, layout knowledge and engagement

### When should you recruit new gardens?

Gardens can be recruited at any time during the year, added to the website and promoted locally. However, to ensure that the garden details are included in our annual Garden Visitor's Handbook and county booklets for the following year, they will need to be registered with us by September.

### Sharing best practice ideas

The following examples highlight some of the most successful methods that counties have used to recruit new gardens:

- Sending an approach letter to gardens that have previously opened, gardens that you may have read about in the media or heard about locally (see *word templates below*)
- Displaying posters and flyers in garden centres, local shops, post offices and village notice boards (see *design templates below*)
- Placing an advertisement in Parish magazines, local country and garden magazines.
- Making a video of a garden owner talking about why they open their garden and what they enjoy about it to share via your county social media channels
- Placing a series of posts on Facebook and Instagram, highlighting the benefits of opening your garden and encouraging new gardens to join the scheme (see *social media resources below*)
- A 'refer a friend' initiative for garden owners. You can request flyers from the Hatchlands team to support you. (see *pre-printed flyers below*)

### Additional innovative ideas

Counties have also had great success using the following approaches:

- Giving talks and presentations to gardening clubs and local special interest groups. You can download a standard presentation and speaker notes from the resource centre, which you can then adapt locally
- Having a presence or stand at Plant Heritage Shows, County Flower Shows and in large National Garden Scheme garden openings
- Targeting event days and garden talks at main local garden centres and nurseries, either attending in person, sponsoring or having a stand
- Follow up with large village group openings, via [opengardens.org.uk](http://opengardens.org.uk), potentially visit some on the day to find out suitability or contact the main organiser, if known
- Approaching our local beneficiary contacts to ask if any of their employees would consider opening their garden
- Speaking with professional garden photographers to see if they have photographed any gardens that could potentially open for the National Garden Scheme
- Approaching garden groups to ask if they have seen any gardens that they would consider worth us approaching to be part of the National Garden Scheme
- Making contact with additional useful contacts including garden designers, the local WRAGS coordinator and head gardeners
- Joining local relevant special interest groups: The Hardy Plants Society, Cottage Garden Society, Plant Heritage, Alpine, Cottage Garden Society, Gardens Trust and local Horticultural Societies
- Propose a pop-up opening to a potential new garden owner as a way of trying out opening your garden for the National Garden Scheme, particularly if they are nearby to another National Garden Scheme garden
- Suggest other activities for an open day that may generate interest and engage garden owners, such as crafts, exhibitions, music or an evening opening with a glass of wine
- Help new garden owners with refreshments and plants, as required by establishing a database of possible helpers from the WI's, beneficiaries, nurseries etc.

If there are any other new garden recruitment initiatives that you have implemented locally that you would like to share with others, then we'd love to hear from you!

Please send any additional suggestions through to Ali Wright, South West Regional Chair on: [alison.wright@ngs.org.uk](mailto:alison.wright@ngs.org.uk) or Tel: 01935 83652.

## Resources and template materials available

To support you in recruiting new gardens we have created a package of materials which you can use and adapt locally to support your own efforts:

### 1. Word templates:

One of the first approaches you might want to try is sending out approach letters to gardens that have opened previously, gardens that you've heard about locally or gardens which have been in the media. You can download word templates from the resource centre.

[Download letter templates](#)

You can also request a list of gardens previously opened across your county from Georgina Waters: [georgina@ngs.org.uk](mailto:georgina@ngs.org.uk)

### 2. Photography

Showcasing National Garden Scheme gardens through high-quality photography is one of the best ways to engage our online supporters. The National Garden Scheme's 'Smug Mug' is a gallery of relevant photography you are welcome to use on your social media channels. The first gallery shows the garden opening experience; from hanging road signs to garden visitors enjoying the space.

[View garden photography](#)



### 3. Customisable design templates:

The following templates can be found on our design system called Create. Examples of available templates for your garden recruitment are shown below. You can adapt these templates for your county and print locally or share via your social media channels.

[Click here to visit Create](#)

If you don't yet have login details, please contact [joanne@ngs.org.uk](mailto:joanne@ngs.org.uk).

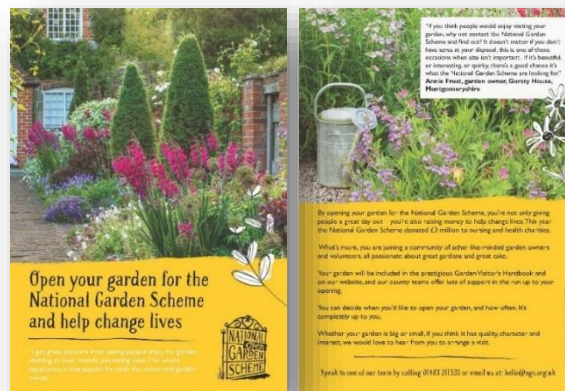


## New garden recruitment support pack



- Garden recruitment poster – for display in garden centres and other local outlets

- Garden recruitment flyer - for professional printing



#### 4. Social Media resources

Social media offers a fantastic space to promote the National Garden Scheme and to encourage new supporters to become involved with the charity; whether that's by visiting gardens or by opening their own.

Outlined below is some sample copy to support your communications about finding new quality gardens through social media.

### Facebook and Instagram

#### **Option one:** sharing your garden

Would you consider opening your garden with the National Garden Scheme? By opening your garden you'll join a community of like-minded garden owners and volunteers, all passionate about gardens.

Whether your garden is big or small, if you think it has quality, character and interest, we would love to hear from you. Contact [x] to find out more.

#### **Option two:** fundraising

Would you consider opening your garden with the National Garden Scheme? By opening your garden you'll share a memorable day with your visitors and help raise money for vital nursing and health charities at the same time – last year garden owners contributed to an impressive £3 million donation!

If you think your garden has quality, character and interest, we would love to hear from you.  
Contact [x] to find out more.





## Twitter

### **Option one:** sharing your garden

Thinking about opening your garden for the National Garden Scheme? By opening your garden, you'll join a community of like-minded garden owners and volunteers, all passionate about gardens. Get in touch to find out more.

### **Option two:** fundraising

Could you open your garden for the National Garden Scheme, and help raise millions for nursing and health charities? Whether your garden is big or small, if you think it has quality, character and interest, we would love to hear from you!

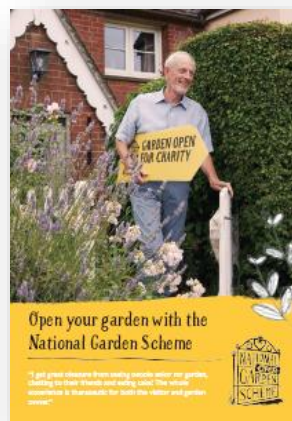
## 5. Materials available from the central office at Hatchlands:

### **Pull up banners & open your garden flyers – customised for your county**

If you are doing lots of talks or attending events and flower shows where you feel the 'Open your garden' message would be effective you may wish to use a pull up banner.

We have artwork for a pull up banner which you can request for your county – together with a customised flyer (see below). We can also customise this with a photo from your county if you prefer (Note: the image need to be very high quality for the pull up banner so likely to be professionally taken and therefore needing permission from the photographer)

If you would like to request this, please contact [elena@ngs.org.uk](mailto:elena@ngs.org.uk)



## 6. Pre-printed flyers

We have a flyer which outlines who we are, and the charities we donate to. You can request these through your annual bulk stationery order or contact your county support team.

