



Our volunteers' handbook



Great gardens, great cakes, great causes

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Your National Garden Scheme volunteer contact

Don't hesitate to get in touch with any queries, suggestions or concerns

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Welcome to our team

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with the National Garden Scheme. Volunteers are at the very heart of our organisation and you are joining an army of energetic and friendly individuals across the country who generously give their time and talents to support the work we do.

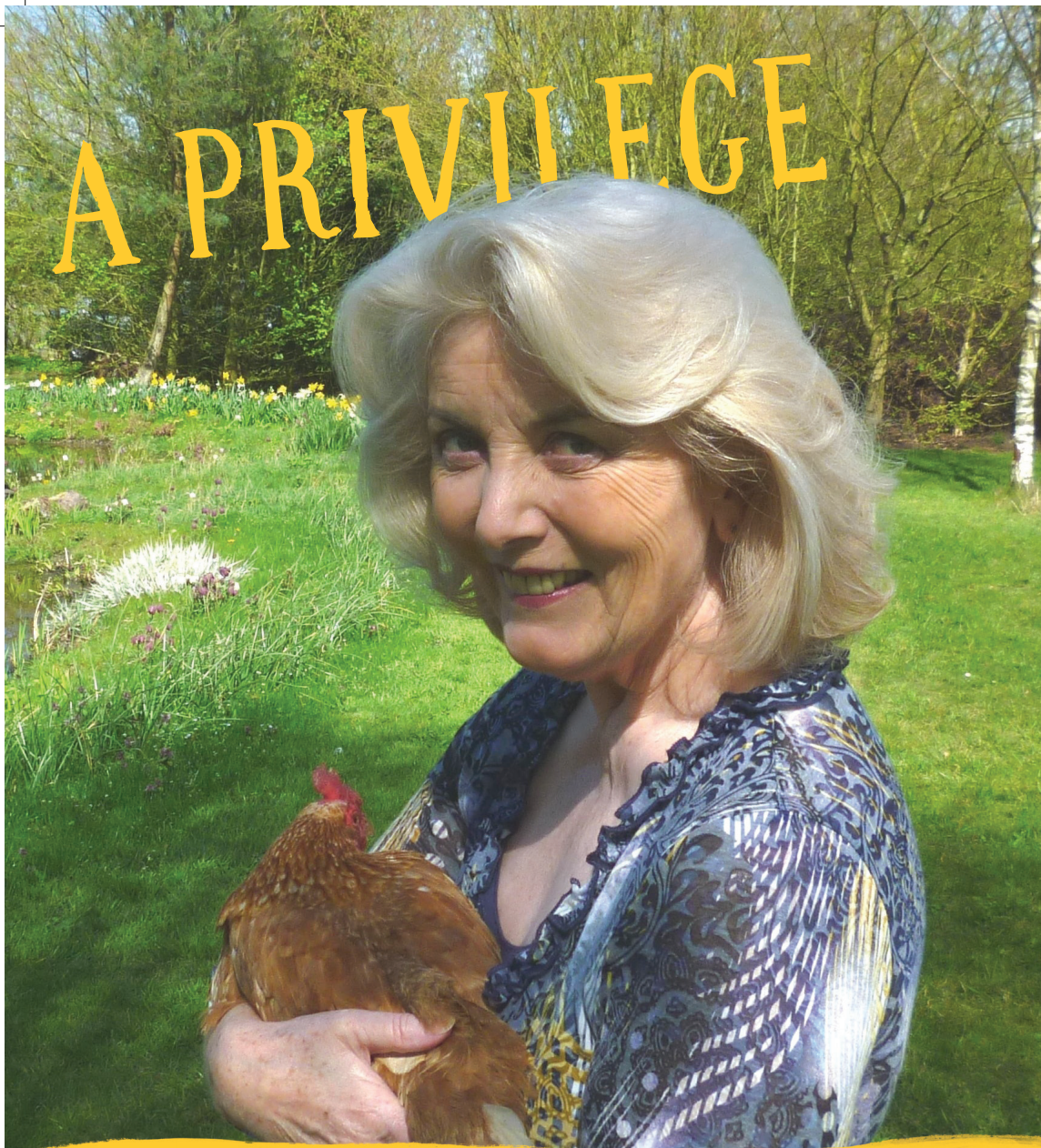
Perhaps you'll be helping to discover new gardens, promote our garden openings, bake cakes or serve teas, manage our social media channels or keep account of all the money raised within a county. Whatever role you take on, whatever time you have to offer, your contribution is valued and will make a real difference to people's lives.

This handbook has been designed to explain everything you need to know about volunteering for the National Garden Scheme. It will introduce you to some of our wonderful volunteers and will point you in the right direction for support and additional information when you need it.

Thank you.



A PRIVILEGE



“A dear friend died and I wanted to give something back to the charity that had helped her and her family, namely Macmillan Cancer Support.

Being a volunteer for the National Garden Scheme is in my blood now. Each role is challenging and rewarding and I have gained a wide circle of wonderful friends.”

SUSAN COPELAND, COUNTY ORGANISER, REGIONAL CHAIRMAN AND TRUSTEE

Our story

For almost 100 years, we've been inviting garden owners to open their extraordinary gardens to the public to raise money for good causes, giving people unique access to many of Britain's best gardens.



We offer our visitors a relaxing, memorable and affordable day out while raising impressive amounts of money through admissions, teas and cake. We are proud that over 80p from every pound raised is donated to charity.

Thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers and visitors we have donated over £63 million to nursing and health charities since we were founded in 1927. Originally established to raise funds for district nurses, we are now one of the most significant charitable funders of nursing in the UK. Our main beneficiaries are: Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Carers Trust, Hospice UK, The Queen's Nursing Institute and Parkinson's UK.

The National Garden Scheme doesn't just open beautiful gardens for charity - we are passionate about the physical and mental health benefits of gardens too. We fund projects that promote gardens and gardening as therapy, and in 2017 launched our annual Gardens and Health Week to raise awareness on the topic. We also support charities doing amazing work in gardens and health, and give grants for community gardening projects. Our funding also supports the training of gardeners and offers respite to horticultural workers who have fallen on difficult times.



Our values

underpin everything we do



WE ARE GENEROUS

garden owners who share their expertise and beautiful gardens, volunteers who devote their time and talents, and visitors who support our work

WE BELIEVE IN QUALITY

the quality of our exceptional gardens and our visitors' experience in them

WE ARE A COMMUNITY

a national organisation rooted in local communities and building a sense of shared community

WE ARE CHARMINGLY BRITISH

we love the quirky, characterful and ever so slightly eccentric!

WE ARE DOWN-TO-EARTH

authentic and honest



“People often don’t realise how wonderful and unique their gardens are. It has been such a joy to encourage and support new garden owners to showcase their hard work and passion for gardening. Volunteering has brought me closer to my local community and I’ve forged many new friendships along the way.”

HASRUTY PATEL, ASSISTANT COUNTY ORGANISER, LONDON

What you can expect from us

Inspiring, rewarding, positive, sociable, a joy and a privilege are just some of the ways our volunteers describe their experience as part of our team. We want you to have the same experience and to get the most out of your new role.

So our commitment to you is that we will:

- always treat you with respect, consideration and appreciation
- ensure you have a clear idea of your responsibilities and the information you need to fulfil these
- provide training for your role where appropriate
- provide fair, honest and timely feedback on your contributions
- update you as to how your work makes a difference
- demonstrate our values in all interactions with you
- provide you with a key point of contact for any concerns, queries or support

What we expect from you

We are a community of passionate individuals who care about what we do. Every one of us is important and we could not do what we do without all of you.



We ask that you:

- always treat National Garden Scheme staff, fellow volunteers, garden owners and visitors with respect, consideration and appreciation
- ask your National Garden Scheme volunteer contact for guidance if you don't fully understand your role and the standards of performance required of you
- bring any support, development or further information requirements to our attention
- uphold and demonstrate National Garden Scheme values
- let your volunteer contact know if your circumstances change and affect your ability to volunteer



"Becoming a volunteer was a chance to combine my work experience and my love of gardens, with the added bonus of giving as much or as little time as I want. I've met some lovely people and my own garden looks SO much nicer!"

JANE COOPER, PUBLICITY OFFICER, YORKSHIRE

Ways to get involved

We have a wide variety of roles and are always looking to involve new volunteers – whether just for a few hours helping to serve teas at an open garden, or in an ongoing role. Whatever time you have available there will be a role for you where you can use and develop skills, become part of a team and make new friends - knowing you are supporting some fantastic causes.

Do you enjoy talking to people and visiting gardens? You could become part of our county team, identifying new gardens and supporting our garden owners.

Do you have experience in press and publicity? You could volunteer in a media role dealing with local press, contribute to our local social media channels or give talks to local groups.

Do you enjoy finance? You could help the National Garden Scheme in a treasury role.

Or perhaps you are a keen photographer? We are always looking for great quality photos of our garden open days to help us feature the gardens and promote the work we do.

When you become a volunteer you will join one of our county teams, and we invite all our new members to join us at our central office on one of our 'Welcome Days', to learn more about the National Garden Scheme and how we can best support you.



The essentials

As a volunteer, you'll need to be aware of the following policies and procedures:

DATA PROTECTION

Before we can collect or store any data about anyone, the law requires that we have a legal basis to do so, and that we store it responsibly. Details of our data protection policies can be found in our online volunteer resource centre*.

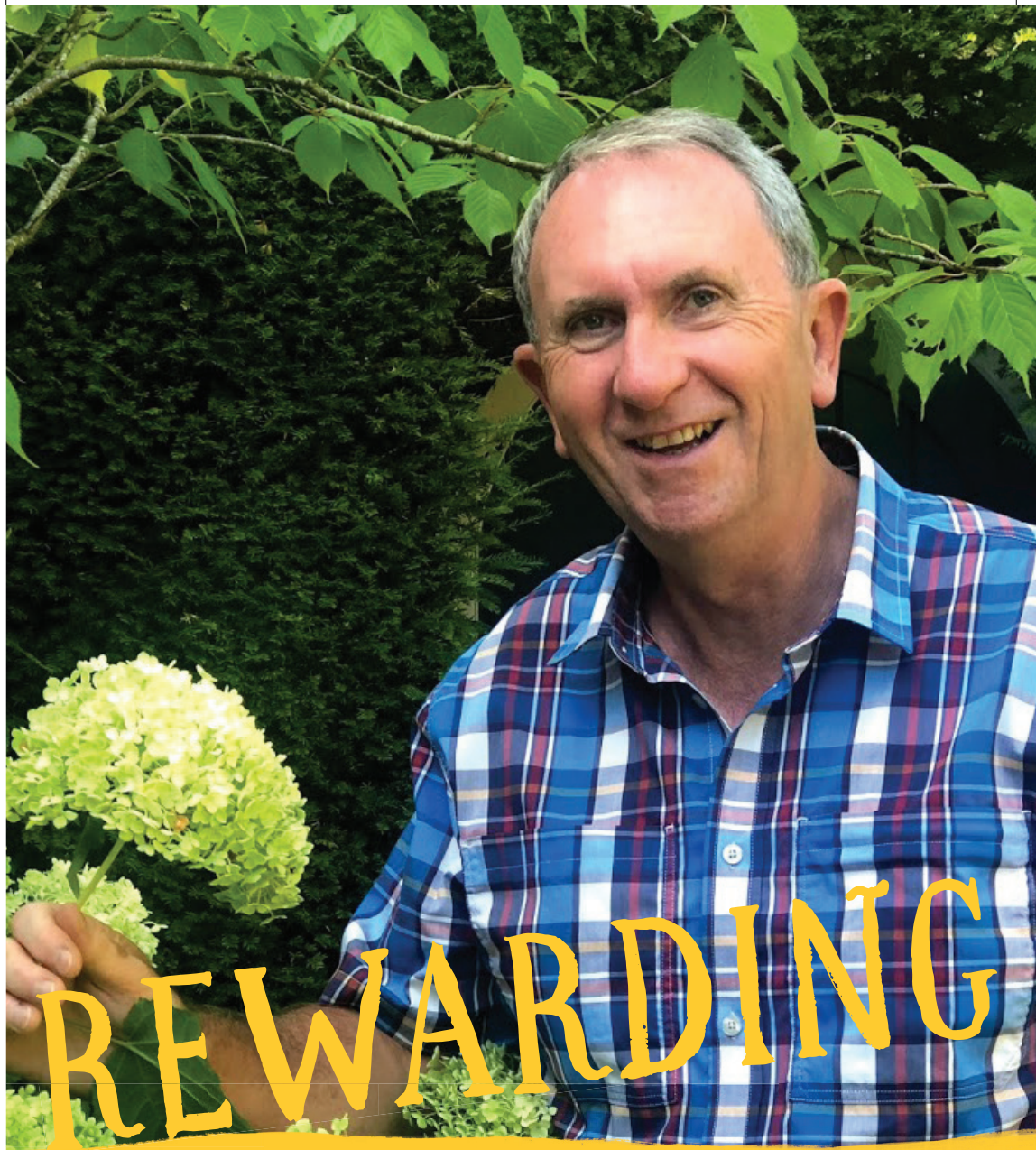
EXPENSES

The National Garden Scheme will reimburse volunteers for reasonable out of pocket expenses – you will be asked to complete a simple expense form and submit this together with your receipts.

OUR PERSONALITY

Our visual look and feel, and tone of voice, are vital components of the National Garden Scheme brand and personality. As a volunteer it is important that you also reflect these in the way you talk about the National Garden Scheme and the way you present us in the press, on social media or in talks given to groups. You can find all the guidance you will need in our online resource centre*.

**As soon as you sign up with our county team, you will be given access to our online volunteer resource centre. However, if you would like to see any of our policies before then, please don't hesitate to ask.*



"I've been a volunteer for five years and love the variety and flexibility. I especially enjoy giving talks to local groups, encouraging people to visit our beautiful gardens and explaining where the money goes."

GRAHAM O'CONNELL, ASSISTANT COUNTY ORGANISER, BERKSHIRE

A portrait of a woman with short, wavy, light brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a grey textured jacket over a white top and a striped scarf. The background is a soft-focus green foliage. The word "INSPIRING" is written in large, yellow, serif capital letters across the bottom of the portrait.

INSPIRING

"It's such a wonderful idea – that gardeners should do something they love and share it with others, all for such a good cause.

Our county team is a bunch of committed people who are passionate about what they do. It's even inspired me to open my own garden!"

VANESSA BERRIDGE, COUNTY ORGANISER, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Our National Garden Scheme family

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Responsible for governance of the National Garden Scheme. Includes our six volunteer regional chairs plus elected individuals selected for their specific skills and experience.

REGIONAL CHAIRS

Six volunteer regional chairs provide leadership and support to county volunteer teams in their regions.

COUNTY TEAM MEMBERS

Over 500 volunteers, responsible for recruiting and supporting garden owners, local press and publicity, social media, photography, and county finances.

HATCHLANDS TEAM

A small, central office team provides strategic leadership, financial management and operational support to our county team volunteers and garden owners.

GARDEN OWNERS

Over 3,500 gardeners who open their gardens to raise funds for the National Garden Scheme.

VISITORS

Over 650,000 visitors each year who enjoy a relaxing and memorable day out



Where you can find support

Once you join one of our county team of volunteers, you will be given access to all our online resources listed below.

ONLINE RESOURCE CENTRE

ngs.org.uk/my-ngs/account/resource-centre/

Here you will find a wealth of information, promotional materials and 'how to' guides developed to support our volunteers

THE POTTING SHED

This is a closed Facebook group set up to enable the sharing of ideas and exchange of knowledge between volunteers. It's a great way to get involved, learn from other volunteers and share your own experiences and expertise.

You can request to join here: **facebook.com/groups/thepottingshedngs**

YOUR COUNTY TEAM

ngs.org.uk/who-we-are/our-people/volunteer-teams/

Every county has a team of volunteers – all of whom will be happy to provide advice and support.

HATCHLANDS TEAM

Your county will have a dedicated county support team member at our central office, Hatchlands Park, Surrey. Call our central number and we will ensure you speak to the most appropriate person: **01483 211535**

A woman with dark, wavy hair and a blue t-shirt is smiling and standing in a garden. The background is filled with tall green plants and pink flowers. The word "DYNAMIC" is written in large, yellow, stylized letters across the bottom of the image.

DYNAMIC

"The positive change brought about by the sharing of people's gardens is what led me to volunteer. I admire the can-do attitude of National Garden Scheme people."

SONYA PINTO, PUBLICITY VOLUNTEER, LONDON

The National Garden Scheme year

It's always busy



January - April

The first gardens open for our annual Snowdrop Festival, welcoming visitors keen to get out into the garden. In February we distribute our new county booklets and Garden Visitor's Handbook – key marketing tools that list all the gardens opening throughout the year.

We distribute all the signage, stationery and marketing materials to garden owners from February onwards and hold our six regional meetings – a chance for volunteers to get together and discuss last year's successes and plans for the coming year.





May - August

In May we celebrate the positive impact of gardening on health and wellbeing during our Gardens & Health week. While the week in May focuses on promoting the key campaign themes, gardens take part throughout the year opening free of charge for groups of people who would not usually get the opportunity to enjoy a garden, either because of health or social reasons.

This is our busiest period, with over 50% of our gardens opening across seven weekends in June and July. There may be stands to man at county flower shows, talks to be given to local groups and gardens open by arrangement.

In July we invite the general public to join us in our annual community fundraising event the Great British Garden Party. Individuals up and down the country host an event - it could be afternoon tea, a plant sale, prosecco by candlelight - to help raise funds for the National Garden Scheme.

August is also an important time of year when garden owners start to register their gardens to open the following year.

September - December

Garden registration is completed and work starts on the production of next year's county booklets and annual Garden Visitor's Handbook. Orders are placed for stationery, signage and promotional materials required for the next season. Treasurers prepare their annual submission of county accounts and garden income.

In December we announce our annual donations and publish our Impact Report.





Photo credit: Sue Sayer

A rich blend of generosity to help others lies at the heart of the National Garden Scheme. Lots of individual acts of generosity from our army of volunteers add up to make a huge difference to people's lives.

Thank you

National Garden Scheme, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Surrey, GU4 7RT
Registered charity number: 1112664