



# Impact Report 2024



Donations that help change lives







# About us

The National Garden Scheme gives visitors unique access to some 3,500 exceptional private gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands, and raises impressive amounts of money for nursing and health charities through admissions, teas and cake.

Thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers and visitors we have donated over £74 million to nursing and health charities since we were founded in 1927. In 2024 we agreed total donations from our garden season of £3,501,227 - the highest donation in our history.

Originally established to raise funds for district nurses, we are now the most significant charitable funder of nursing in the UK and our beneficiaries include Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Parkinson's UK, The Queen's Nursing Institute and Carers Trust.

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 run a Community Garden Grants programme and fund projects which promote gardens and gardening as therapy. In 2017 we launched our annual Gardens and Health Week to raise awareness of the topic.

Our funding also supports the training of gardeners and offers respite to horticultural workers who have fallen on difficult times.

This report looks at the impact of our donations throughout 2024 and how our beneficiaries use those donations to support thousands of people across the UK.

We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens in 2025.

## Front cover image:

Head Gardener Alex and patient enjoying garden therapy in Horatio's Garden Midlands © Eva Nemeth

## Photo (left):

National Garden Scheme gardens are for everyone, of all ages  
© Benjamin Mole

# Contents

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| Page 2  | About us                                 |
| Page 3  | Chairman and CEO review                  |
| Page 4  | Our donations                            |
| Page 5  | 2024 in numbers                          |
| Page 7  | Nursing and health beneficiaries         |
| Page 14 | Gardens and health beneficiaries         |
| Page 18 | Support for gardeners                    |
| Page 22 | Community Garden Grants                  |
| Page 24 | NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships |
| Page 25 | Special thanks                           |
| Page 26 | Who's who<br>Additional thanks           |

# Chairman's and Chief Executive's review



Chairman, Rupert Tyler and Chief Executive, George Plumptre

2024 was another landmark year for the National Garden Scheme when the charity donated a record total of £3,501,227. The impact of our donations to our major nursing and health beneficiaries means that thousands of people who live with health conditions such as cancer or Parkinson's, who have poor mental health, or who struggle financially as unpaid carers, have been supported by our funding of the nurses, health professionals and the case workers who support them. In this report you will also read about our Gardens and Health programme, as well as the projects supported by our Community Garden Grants which have now funded nearly 400 wonderfully diverse gardens, as well as our support for gardeners.

The National Garden Scheme was established nearly 100 years ago to fund district nursing and in 2024 that commitment to nursing remained at the heart of the support the charity gave to its nursing and health beneficiaries.

For our founding charity the Queen's Nursing Institute this meant not only continued funding of the Queen's Nurse programme, and additional funding of the QNI's Executive Leadership programme and Elsie Wagg Scholarships, but it also saw funding of vital support programmes for four different community nursing professional networks.

Emphatic evidence of the long-term impact of the National Garden Scheme's support for nursing also came this year in the shape of 40 years of continuous funding for Macmillan Cancer Care. As Macmillan's longest-standing supporter the National Garden Scheme has played a significant role in the charity's evolution to become a vital part of the nation's specialist cancer care and support.

For the other long-term beneficiaries, support for nurses and health professionals was paramount in

the use of our donations by Marie Curie, Parkinson's UK and Hospice UK. The impact of our donation to Carers Trust was exemplified by its support for their emergency grant scheme which provides carers with essential household items that help alleviate some of the day-to-day challenges that they face.

Alongside, and in many instances connected to, our support for nursing is the remarkable growth in our Gardens and Health programme which now has substantial impact in a variety of ways. Here again we commit to long-term support for Horatio's Garden and Maggie's as well as the Army Benevolent Fund. We also funded special garden projects for Sue Ryder and Thrive and supported gardeners, ranging from our ambitious programme with English Heritage to funding an apprentice at the National Botanic Garden, Wales.

Our Gardens and Health programme has always championed the premise that access to gardens and gardening can be hugely beneficial to everyone's health. We celebrate this annually in our 'Gardens and Health Week' each May which sees the publication of *The Little Yellow Book of Gardens and Health* but perhaps most of all, it is celebrated in our Community Garden Grants programme which saw the National Garden Scheme donate £232,000 to fund 89 projects in 2024. These gardens provide solace and inspiration for a hugely diverse range of local communities all over the country, many in inner cities and areas of urban deprivation where their impact is even greater.

None of this would be possible without the passionate support of the garden owners and volunteers who are integral to the remarkable success of the National Garden Scheme and who make garden visiting such an enjoyable experience for the public. A global spotlight illuminated this remarkable generosity when we were given the unique opportunity to showcase the charity with a show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May. The garden, designed by Tom Stuart-Smith and fully funded by Project Giving Back, won a gold medal and captured the admiration of visitors to the show as well as the huge audiences reached through BBC television coverage and other media channels. We would like to thank everyone involved in making our Chelsea garden such a memorable success.

You can read more about all of the amazing work we have supported this year, and the donations we have agreed for the year ahead, in the following pages.

Rupert Tyler  
Chairman

George Plumptre  
Chief Executive



# Our donations

Originally set up in 1927 to support district nurses, the National Garden Scheme now raises millions for nursing and health charities each year. We also support charities creating gardens to provide direct health benefits to people, grant bursaries to support gardeners at the start of their careers and run a grants programme for community gardens.

Throughout 2024 we worked with our main beneficiaries to help promote our partnerships, the importance of gardens to health, and to generate increased interest and support for the work of the National Garden Scheme and its portfolio of gardens. This report looks at how our donations made in November 2023 were spent throughout the year and highlights the amount we have donated from the 2024 garden season.

In November 2024, we donated a total of £3,501,227 which includes:

## Main beneficiaries:

|                               |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| The Queen's Nursing Institute | £500,000 |
| Marie Curie                   | £450,000 |
| Macmillan Cancer Support      | £450,000 |
| Hospice UK                    | £450,000 |
| Carers Trust                  | £350,000 |
| Parkinson's UK                | £350,000 |

## Gardens and health:

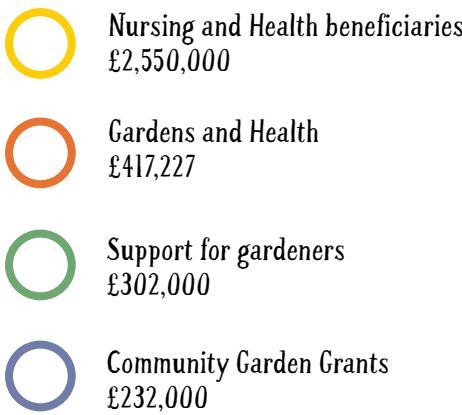
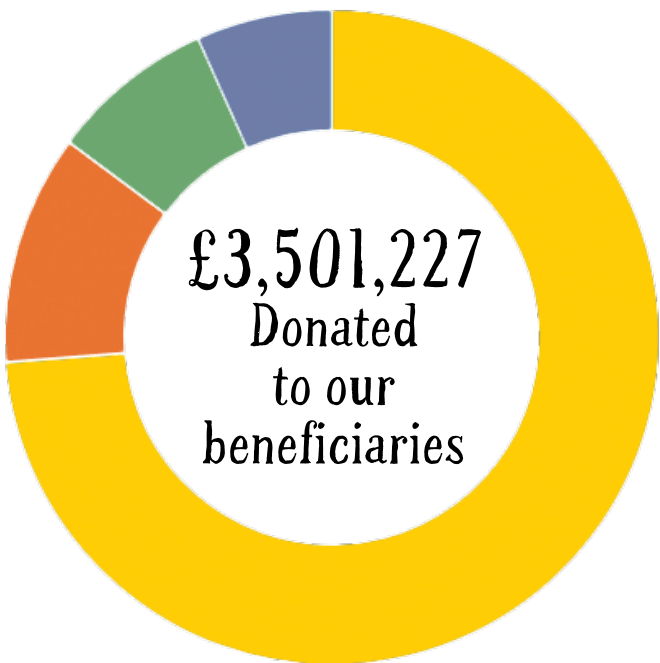
|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Maggie's                          | £122,227 |
| Horatio's Garden                  | £90,000  |
| Army Benevolent Fund              | £80,000  |
| John King Brain Tumour Foundation | £50,000  |
| Cancer Help Preston               | £50,000  |
| The Country Trust                 | £25,000  |

## Support for gardeners:

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| English Heritage                 | £125,000 |
| Perennial                        | £100,000 |
| National Botanic Garden of Wales | £26,000  |
| Bankside Open Spaces Trust       | £21,000  |
| Professional Gardeners' Trust    | £20,000  |
| The Garden Museum                | £10,000  |

## Community gardening projects:

|                    |          |
|--------------------|----------|
| 89 projects funded | £232,000 |
|--------------------|----------|





# 2024 in numbers ...

Our donation of £3,501,227 was generated from the opening of 3,372 gardens, supported by 582 National Garden Scheme volunteers during the 2024 season. The numbers illustrated here are just some of the incredible things that the money raised has supported.



**£3,501,227**  
Donated  
to our  
beneficiaries

**1,200**

Outpatients supported  
at Horatio's Garden  
Northern Ireland in  
2024

**3,000**

Queen's Nurses  
supported  
by our funding



**48,000**

People affected by cancer  
reached by Maggie's centres  
supported by the National  
Garden Scheme



**288**

Inpatients supported by the  
Y Bwthyn NGS Macmillan  
Specialist Palliative  
Care Unit in Wales to  
October 2024

**1,367**

People working in  
horticulture supported by  
our funding for Perennial to  
June 2024



# what our funding supports



**66,000**  
people cared for in  
the nine Marie Curie  
hospices thanks to our  
support



**129,032**  
People accessed guidance  
on what to expect when a  
person is dying through  
our support for  
Hospice UK



**89**  
Community Garden  
projects funded in  
2024



**710**  
Individuals supported  
through our donation for  
the Army Benevolent Fund

**9,000**  
People with Parkinson's  
supported across the UK by  
nurses funded by us

**26,081**  
Unpaid carers and their  
families supported through  
our donation to Carers Trust

Our audience reach in 2024 included: 64,500 subscribers to our weekly eNewsletter - 1.3 million visits to our website - 128,000 Instagram followers - 46,000 Facebook followers - 26,500 X (formerly Twitter) followers, 18,000 Threads followers and 21,900 YouTube subscribers. Forty National Garden Scheme gardens featured on BBC Gardeners' World.



# Nursing and health beneficiaries

## Macmillan Cancer Support



£450,000 donated  
in 2024 and over  
£19.6 million since  
the partnership  
began in 1984

*Macmillan nurses with National Garden Scheme President, Dame Mary Berry celebrating 40 years of partnership*

The National Garden Scheme is Macmillan Cancer Support's longest standing partner

having donated more than £19.6 million since our partnership began 40 years ago. In November 2024 we made a donation of £450,000.

During 2024, £50,000 went towards completing the £2.5million pledged for the Y Bwthyn NGS Macmillan Specialist Palliative Care Unit in South Wales. 228 inpatients were cared for at the Y Bwthyn unit in 2024 to October, receiving extraordinary care at the end of their lives. Complementary therapy sessions to boost wellbeing for both inpatients and outpatients were also referred to the unit by Consultants and Clinical Nurse Specialists, including reflexology and Reiki meditation.

Due to the fantastic space the unit offers patients and their families, several celebration events were also held in the Day Centre including a christening, a wedding and a birthday party.

The remaining £400,000 of the donation went to support Macmillan Nurses paying the annual

salary of approximately six Macmillan Nurses, each helping people living with cancer and their families receive essential medical, practical and emotional support. To date, National Garden Scheme donations have funded 150 Macmillan Nurses and allied healthcare professionals.

The National Garden Scheme's Gardens and Health Campaign remains a particularly useful way to engage Macmillan staff and supporters in the wellbeing benefits of gardens and gardening, and really resonates with Macmillan professionals as a holistic support offering that they can promote to their patients, as well as providing a great opportunity to showcase the partnership.

While funding and joint communications initiatives continue to strength the partnership, 2024 was most notable for the remarkable 40 years of continuous support that we have given to Macmillan. A number of events marked the occasion including a celebratory tea with Macmillan Nurses and National Garden Scheme President, Dame Mary Berry at which the nurses thanked the National Garden Scheme and garden owners for their generous support.

# Marie Curie

£450,000 donated  
in 2024 nearly  
£12 million since the  
partnership  
began in 1996



Registered Nurse Rekha Vijayshankar cares for a patient at Marie Curie Hospice, Hampstead © Philip Hardman/Marie Curie

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Marie Curie since 1996, with almost £12 million donated in that time including £450,000 in November 2024.

During the year, £47,575 of the 2023 donation was spent directly on funding the NGS Nightingale Challenge, a bespoke leadership challenge for Marie Curie Nurses and other members of their caring services staff. Unique to Marie Curie, the programme supports the next generation of healthcare leaders in palliative and end of life care. To date, 51 Marie Curie Nurses and caring services staff have completed the programme and the demand for places on the 2024-25 programme has been the highest ever with 24 delegates signed-up.

The remainder of the National Garden Scheme funding is unrestricted and enables Marie Curie Nurses, Healthcare Assistants and Support Line Officers, as well as Bereavement Services, researchers and campaigners to do the vital work needed to support those at the end of life.

“The unrestricted donation is invaluable as it provides the flexibility to address urgent needs and maximise impact, by allowing us to allocate

funds where they are most needed so we can achieve our mission.”

To give an idea of the impact of the donation it equates to:

- 17,496 hours of Marie Curie nursing care, ensuring that someone with a terminal illness and their loved ones can get the care and support they need in the comfort of their own home.
- 15,500 hours of bereavement support for those who have lost someone who has died from an illness and need to talk.
- 43 days of care in one of Marie Curie’s nine hospices. Thanks to the National Garden Scheme, Marie Curie has been able to directly care for over 66,000 people through their hospices, nursing services, helper and companion services and information and support calls.

Two Marie Curie hospices also opened their gardens for the Scheme in 2024, welcoming the local community to engage with the hospice and to experience the tranquility of the gardens.



# Nursing and health beneficiaries

## Hospice UK



£450,000 donated  
in 2024 and almost  
£8 million since the  
partnership  
began in 1996

*The garden at Shooting Stars Children's Hospice opened for the National Garden Scheme in 2024*

The National Garden Scheme has supported Hospice UK since 1996 donating almost

£8 million in that time, enabling them to continue supporting over 200 hospices in the UK that provide care for people facing terminal and life shortening illnesses, and their families.

In 2024 our funding enabled Hospice UK to:

- Invest £100,000 into the development of their Innovation Hub to support the development of a sustainable hospice sector and give members access to practical resources, examples of best practice, engagement with peers and network and learning events.
- Invest £25,000 on a workforce survey to understand the clinical workforce.
- Invest £20,000 into Professional Development Grants for hospice staff.
- Invest £100,000 into Dying Matters – aimed at breaking down the barriers to speaking about dying.
- Invest £50,000 into Project Echo – a worldwide movement providing an online learning and support methodology – supporting knowledge sharing between professionals across health and social care.

- Invest £50,000 into clinical advice and support.
- Invest £100,000 into support for hospice funding including raising awareness of the challenges facing hospice care in Parliament and launching a write to your MP campaign and advocate for fairer funding for hospices in Wales – securing national coverage for the latter.

Eighteen hospices in the network registered to open their gardens as part of the National Garden Scheme in 2024, inviting the local community to enjoy these special places and to engage with hospice staff and volunteers to better understand the role of hospices. The garden openings raised over £7,800 for the National Garden Scheme.

Commenting on the partnership Hospice UK CEO Toby Porter said: "We would just not be the same charity we are today without the support of the National Garden Scheme, and extend our gratitude to the whole team and to the generous garden owners who welcome guests to their gardens every year in order to raise funds for our vital work."

# Carers Trust

£350,000 donated  
in 2024 over  
£6.2 million since  
the partnership  
began in 1996



*Young carers enjoyed a free visit to the WWT Arundel Wetland Centre in Sussex as part of the National Garden Scheme's partnership with WWT*

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Carers Trust since 1996, having donated over £6.2 million in that time to help the charity raise the profile of carers' issues, and enabling them to extend their reach and support to even more unpaid carers.

In 2024 the majority of our funding, £325,000, was instrumental in supporting Carers Trust's core charitable activities, including policy, research, external affairs, major awareness-raising campaigns and supporting their UK-wide network of local carer centres.

The funding has helped Carers Trust expand their reach and impact and ensures that they are able to consistently deliver quality support to unpaid carers during the current cost-of-living crisis.

Thanks to the flexibility of unrestricted funding, Carers Trust has been able to continue to deliver and adapt its core work including:

- Supporting Young Carers Action Day 2024
- Strengthening their network of local care services
- Supporting Carers Week in June 2024

- Supporting policy, research and public affairs demanding an end of carer poverty and a commitment to fair futures for young carers.

£25,000 also went towards grants from the Carers Fund for essential household items, outdoor activities, essential respite breaks, garden visits and other items and services for 81 unpaid carers and their families.

Carers Trust also awarded grants of £300 to Carers Trust Mid Yorkshire and £100 to Care for the Carers for refreshment and travel costs associated with their respective visits to National Garden Scheme gardens. The National Garden Scheme's partnership with WWT also meant that young carers could enjoy a moment of respite with a free visit to the WWT Arundel Wetland Centre in Sussex.

These funds, grants and visits aim to address some of the financial barriers faced by individual carers and to offer much needed moments of respite.

In 2024 National Garden Scheme funding helped support approximately 26,081 unpaid carers.



# Nursing and health beneficiaries

## Parkinson's UK



© Parkinson's UK

£350,000 donated  
in 2024 and over  
£2.4 million since the  
partnership  
began in 2012

*Over the last 12 years of support the National Garden Scheme has helped fund 23 new nurse roles*

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Parkinson's UK since 2012. In that

time, we have donated over £2.4 million to bring better care, treatments and quality of life for those living with Parkinson's. In November 2024, the National Garden Scheme donated a further £350,000 to Parkinson's UK.

Thanks to this donation three new Parkinson's nurse posts were funded to directly support people with Parkinson's.

These posts are:

- A band 7 Parkinson's nurse at University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust.
- A band 7 Parkinson's nurse at York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.
- A band 6 Parkinson's nurse at Kent Community Health Foundation Trust.

Nearly 1,500 patients are now being supported through these three new nurse roles.

Thanks to the flexibility of National Garden Scheme funding, the remaining funds were used to once again enable Parkinson's UK to participate in The Big Give, the UK's largest matched giving campaign. £15,000 helped secure another £15,000 in matched funding in a campaign that raised over £55,000 in Christmas 2023. The money contributed to funding a new physiotherapist role at York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for over a year.

Over the course of the last 12 years of support, the National Garden Scheme has helped fund 23 new nurse roles which it is estimated now directly support 9,000 people living with Parkinson's.

The National Garden Scheme and Parkinson's UK continue to work together to promote the benefits of gardening for the management of Parkinson's with a number of garden owners with the condition opening their gardens for the Scheme and sharing their stories through video and digital content. These garden owners also contributed to workshops in 2024 looking at the role gardens have in managing Parkinson's.

# The Queen's Nursing Institute

£500,000 donated  
in 2024 and  
over £6.5 million  
since the partnership  
began



*A Queen's Nurse at work in the community © Kate Stanworth / QNI*

The National Garden Scheme was founded by The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) in 1927, when 609 gardens opened at one shilling a head. We became independent of the QNI in 1980 and the charity has remained a valued partner ever since with the National Garden Scheme donating more than £6.5 million over the charities partnership.

In November 2024, a donation of £500,000 included £100,000 to continue support for four professional networks for which other funding unexpectedly ceased in June 2023. Our continued support will ensure these important networks continue and grow while The QNI develops its plan for organisational membership.

The networks funded are:

- General Practice Nurse network (650 members)
- Community Children's Nurse network (400 members)
- Homeless and Inclusion Health network (2650 members)
- Long Covid Nurse Group (834 members)

The National Garden Scheme funded networks ensure that the charity's branding and raising awareness of the partnership is shared to more than 4,500 nurses.

Throughout the year National Garden Scheme support also funded all aspects of QNI's key work which includes these flagship activities:

- Offering up to 12 free places for suitably qualified applicants to join a selective cohort on the Executive Leadership Programme, developing senior leaders in community healthcare organisations.
- Funding the annual NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships focused on funding gardens and health projects designed by Queen's Nurses to help promote health and wellbeing in their communities. You can read more about the scholarships on page 24.

The number of new Queen's Nurses grows annually with 566 new nurses gaining the qualification in November 2024, there are now almost 3,000 Queen's Nurses in all community nursing disciplines.







# Gardens and health beneficiaries

Our Gardens and Health Programme raises awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of gardens and gardening for everyone. Celebrated in May each year with a dedicated Gardens and Health Week, we work to promote gardens and health throughout the year, linking service users from our beneficiaries with free garden visits, and funding gardens and health projects.

The charities we fund create gardens with health benefits and promote gardens and gardening as therapy. Each year additional smaller grants are made for one-off projects, in 2024 these supported Sue Ryder and Thrive. We also give grants for community gardening projects that support the wellbeing of local communities and groups both through our Community Garden Grants and our NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships with QNI. Our annual digital publication *The Little Yellow Book of Gardens and Health* (pictured) shines a spotlight on the importance of gardens to everyone's health and wellbeing and links us to our beneficiaries and the important work they do in this field.

The following pages report on the impact of our gardens and health funding in 2024.



## Army Benevolent Fund

In November 2024, the National Garden Scheme donated £80,000 to the Army Benevolent Fund (previously ABF The Soldier's Charity) to support the provision of horticultural-related assistance to soldiers, veterans and their immediate families and thereby improve their health and wellbeing. We have been supporting the charity since 2010, with donations in 2010 and 2011, then annual donations from 2017, totalling over £800,000.

During 2024, £27,000 supported horticultural grants to 19 individuals, including training fees for courses on tree surgery and landscaping, home adaptations and wellbeing support.

Almost £53,000 supported eight charity partners who provide horticultural services to those in need including providing communal spaces where they can practise horticultural skills and improve their wellbeing through horticultural therapy. These included grants to: PATT Foundation, High Ground, Veteran's Growth and Abberton Rural Training.

*Photo left: Nicky is a Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Practitioner at Veteran's Growth, where she runs the 12-week courses that help veterans learn new skills and cope with PTSD and other mental health issues © Em Fitzgerald*

In total 700 people were supported – 19 individuals directly and eight charity partners helping 681 direct and indirect beneficiaries.

Thanks to funding from the National Garden Scheme, the Army Benevolent Fund has been able to support veterans like Roy who was diagnosed with complex PTSD having served as a Regular Soldier in the Grenadier Guards and then in the Royal Military Police.

Roy joined a 12 week horticultural therapy course run by Veteran's Growth that helps veterans learn horticultural skills and to cope with PTSD and other mental issues. It is partially funded by the National Garden Scheme. For Roy, who does not own a garden, it has been life-changing.

"I've learned something new and it was just so peaceful. It's done far more for me than any therapy sessions. There's a lot to be said about just being out in an open green space."

£80,000 donated  
in 2024 and over  
£800,000 since the  
partnership  
began in 2010



# Gardens and health beneficiaries

## Horatio's Garden



© Carrie Davenport / Horatio's Garden

£90,000 donated  
in 2024 and over  
£670,000 since the  
partnership  
began in 2015

*The official opening of Horatio's Garden Northern Ireland, the seventh garden to open for the charity*

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Horatio's Garden since 2015 to

help the charity create and care for beautiful, accessible gardens in NHS regional spinal injury centres. In 2018, the National Garden Scheme committed funding for the completion of gardens at all 11 spinal injuries units across the country and donated £90,000 in 2024. The National Garden Scheme is Horatio's Garden's largest single funder.

In 2023 the National Garden Scheme donated £90,000 towards the seventh garden, Horatio's Garden Northern Ireland, the first of two donations pledged for the project,

The funding was put towards capital build costs including soft landscaping, planting, greenhouse, garden benches, furniture, and fixtures.

Horatio's Garden Northern Ireland has been designed by acclaimed landscape designer and nine-time RHS Chelsea gold medal winner Andy

Sturgeon in collaboration with people with spinal injury, their friends and families, NHS staff and representatives from the charity. It is the first Horatio's Garden with a boccia court for patients to enjoy playing the fully inclusive and adaptable Paralympic sport.

Groundworks at the garden in Belfast began in February 2023 and it opened its doors to patients just before Christmas 2023. The official opening in June 2024 attracted good media attention and the garden held a National Garden Scheme open day in October 2024 raising over £1,700.

This peaceful sanctuary in Northern Ireland supports around 70 inpatients and 1200 outpatients with spinal injuries each year. The garden is open to people with spinal injuries, their friends and families and NHS staff who care for them. In and outpatients at the Amputee Rehabilitation Unit also have access to the garden.

Six other open days were also held in Horatio's Gardens for the National Garden Scheme in 2024.



# Maggie's

£122,227 donated  
in 2024, almost  
£650,000 since the  
partnership  
began in 2017



© Associated Press / Alamy Stock Photo

*Her Majesty Queen Camilla, Patron of Maggie's visiting the National Garden Scheme garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May 2024*

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Maggie's centres since 2017 helping the charity offer the best possible support free to anyone with cancer and their families who walk through their doors. For each centre, architects and interior and landscape designers work closely together to create a strong connection between the outside and inside space.

During 2024, a donation of £100,000 went towards the new garden at the Maggie's Northampton centre which it is hoped will open its doors in 2025. Also in 2024, work on the extensions in Newcastle and Cheltenham got under way after a series of delays, and work will also be completed in 2025.

Previous funding has enhanced the gardens in Swansea and Oxford and new gardens in Yorkshire and Southampton. Each is enjoyed by thousands of service users. Over a 12-month period, collectively, these centres support around 48,000 visits.

In 2024, the National Garden Scheme's show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show -

designed by Tom Stuart Smith and sponsored by Project Giving Back - attracted huge attention from the media and visitors and won a gold medal. The garden will be relocated to a new Maggie's centre at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge. At Chelsea it was visited by Maggie's Patron HM Queen Camilla, as well as by a number of Maggie's staff including their CEO Dame Laura Lee and Lisa Punt, Centre Head at Maggie's, Cambridge.

The 2024 donation to Maggie's includes £22,227 raised from the sale of pictures by our Chelsea Flower Show artist in residence, Tyga Helme, and the plant sale we held at Chilworth Manor in Surrey after the show in June.

Also during 2024, five of the gardens at Maggie's centres opened as part of the National Garden Scheme providing wider access to these wonderful spaces and raising over £1,500.

In 2022, the National Garden Scheme committed to a ten year partnership with Maggie's, aiming to donate £1 million to help create bespoke gardens at new centres.



# Gardens and health beneficiaries

## Sue Ryder



Sue Ryder received a one-off Gardens and Health donation of £48,000 which, in 2024, was used to bring to life a series of designs by award winning garden designer Peter Dowle, at the Leckhampton Court Hospice in Gloucestershire.

During the year, Sue Ryder provided 118,973 hours of care through the services they provide at Leckhampton Court and supported 941 patients and family members through the inpatient unit, day hospice and Wellbeing Team. Each patient and their visiting family members and friends were welcome to enjoy the beautiful grounds and view the improvements the National Garden Scheme helped make possible.

Much of the funding went towards groundworks, garden design, plant irrigation, infographic boards, paths and plants.

The unveiling of the refreshed gardens received excellent local media coverage and Leckhampton Court Hospice once again opened its garden as part of the National Garden Scheme raising awareness and funds for both charities.

Elise Hoadley, Service Director at the hospice said: "It is difficult to convey just how important the hospice grounds are for patients and families, staff members and volunteers. They are places where memories are made and loved ones can be remembered."



## Thrive



Thrive received a one-off Gardens and Health donation of £27,300 which, in 2024, went towards the creation of a new sanctuary garden for vulnerable older Londoners. Designed to provide a peaceful, safe and accessible space for older and disabled people especially those living with dementia and their carers, work began in October 2024 and is due for completion in spring 2025.

The garden, located in Thrive London's main garden in Battersea Park, is designed to be a secure environment suitable for people with a range of sensory and mobility needs. Fragrant and vibrantly coloured plants and shrubs will provide excellent stimulation alongside sheltered seating to offer a place for conversation, quiet reflection and enjoyment of the changing seasons.

As well as making the benefits of nature and gardening publicly available to the older generation, the new garden will also support Thrive London's Garden Thyme programme. Here, trained practitioners help people living with dementia or memory loss to engage in gentle gardening activities and nature-based crafts to enhance their wellbeing and quality of life. Each session is designed to stimulate the senses, evoke memories and maintain or improve physical abilities, and provides an opportunity to interact with others and connect with nature and plants.

The garden will also be used as a resource within Thrive's Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) courses to help develop more professionally trained STH practitioners.

# Support for gardeners

The National Garden Scheme raises money from opening exceptional gardens many of which are looked after by professional gardeners. As well as helping gardeners and others working in horticultural through our donations to Perennial, we also recognise that it is often hard for people to get started in a gardening career so we also fund a variety of training and apprentice schemes.

In November 2024, our donations in support of gardeners totalled £302,000 and were distributed to Perennial, the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Professional Gardeners' Trust, the Garden Museum and English Heritage's outstanding Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme and Bankside Open Spaces Trust. These pages give a taster of how our donations are being used.

## English Heritage

### Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme

In November 2024, the National Garden Scheme donated £125,000, the third tranche of three years of funding, to English Heritage in support of their Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme (HBGTP) in the 2024-25 academic year.

The previous donation was used to support five trainees and two apprentices enabling them to take part in the Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme in the 2023-24 academic year. Trainees and apprentices are paid a salary at the living wage, whilst being supported pastorally by the HBGTP Manager and the professional garden team at their placement garden. At the end of their programmes, the trainees receive a Certificate of Completion at a graduation ceremony, while apprentices receive their Level 2 Horticulture Operative qualification certificate.

Working closely with English Heritage's Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and charity recruitment specialists Prospectus, they ensure that advertising, application and interview methods are inclusive.

Through its major contribution to the programme, the National Garden Scheme donation indirectly benefitted a further 14 trainees and apprentices, and over 36 trainee supervisors and mentors who were supported to develop their management skills through the programme. In addition, the many thousands of visitors to the gardens benefitted from the trainees' and apprentices' work. Long term, the funding will be impactful in the wider sector through passing on vital skills and creating passionate future gardeners.

The 2023-24 cohort supported by the National Garden Scheme were placed at Belsay Castle, Walmer Castle, Osborne House, Wrest Park, Audley End and The National Botanic Garden of Wales.



*Alan Titchmarsh was announced as the ambassador for English Heritage's Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme pictured here with Helen and Radu outside the greenhouse at Osborne House © Maria Bell*

In 2024 as part of the ongoing partnership, English Heritage hosted exclusive, out of hours garden tours at six of their properties in support of the National Garden Scheme. With promotion through print and digital media the openings raised £3,069. In 2025 nine English Heritage gardens will offer these exclusive garden openings for the National Garden Scheme, helping to not only generate additional income but also to raise awareness of the partnership.

In September 2024, Alan Titchmarsh became ambassador of the HBGTP, further raising the profile of this important training programme.



# Support for gardeners

## The Garden Museum



*Mattie O'Callaghan at Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage, Kent*

The National Garden Scheme has been funding the Horticultural Traineeship programme at The Garden Museum since 2013. This year saw the eleventh trainee funded through the partnership.

The funding supports the trainee's part-time role on-site at The Garden Museum, working under the Head Gardener, and facilitates their allocated 18 days on placement in gardens across the country and abroad, from Great Dixter, Gravetye Manor and Lowther Castle to gardens in Tuscany and the United States.

The £10,000 donation made in November 2024 by the National Garden Scheme brings our total funding for the programme to over £130,000.

The most recent traineeship began in May 2024 and will run until the end of April 2025. The current trainee, Mattie O'Callaghan, leads and encourages teams of garden volunteers, developing their understanding of horticulture and offering a regular, weekly, communal gardening session engaging about 10 people a week.

To-date, alumni trainees have gone on to work in a great range of horticultural roles from senior management in historic gardens to authoring popular garden books. The museum's new community garden now offers future horticultural trainees the opportunity to work more directly with the wider Garden Museum community, and to pick up skills in food growing, education and people management.



The Garden Museum also holds an open day for the National Garden Scheme each year.

## National Botanic Garden of Wales



*Apprentice Zoe Phelan says the experience has changed her life*

The National Garden Scheme has been funding the apprenticeship in Botanical Horticulture at the National Botanic Garden of Wales since 2016. Including the donation of £26,000 made in November 2024, we have donated £192,000 to the programme.

This entry-level position for an enthusiastic individual wishing to start a career in horticulture, employs an apprentice on national minimum wage rates with college fees and placements paid for by the garden and its partners.

The apprentice gains confidence and work experience in all areas of horticulture including: botanical horticulture, garden maintenance, working in glasshouses, nurseries and display horticulture. Personal development is encouraged with opportunities to gain appropriate National Proficiency Tests Council qualifications and options to take part in placements with partner gardens.

The National Garden Scheme has helped fund eight apprentices who have since gone on to work in a variety of horticultural roles in Wales and around the world. The latest apprentice, Zoe Phelan, said: "Every day I have regular 'pinch me' moments. The opportunity to learn in this environment is very special. I am surrounded by skilled and experienced horticulturists who are so generous with their time and knowledge. The experience has changed my life - I'm much happier and feel I now have a purposeful and fulfilling career."

The National Botanic Garden of Wales also held a series of special behind-the-scenes garden tours for the National Garden Scheme in 2024.

# Perennial

£100,000 donated  
in 2024 and over  
£2.3 million since  
the partnership  
began in 1986



© Zoe Schaeffer/Unsplash

The National Garden Scheme is Perennial's largest single donor having donated over £2.3 million since the partnership began in 1986. This contribution makes a huge difference to the lives of thousands of people who are working, or have worked, in the horticultural industry in the UK and their families who find themselves facing tough times.

The £100,000 donation contributed to supporting Perennials' nationwide team of caseworkers and debt advisers who deliver a range of services. The funding helped:

- Deliver 33,578 individual interventions (making and receiving 5,321 telephone calls, sending and receiving 13,441 emails writing 2,867 letters) to overcome immediate problems and making a sustainable impact on long term futures.
- Provide £240,000 of direct financial support.
- Provide 195 people with access to 395 emergency vouchers for food, heating, travel, clothing and other crisis support.

In addition, National Garden Scheme funding helped refer 51 people affected by injury, illness or disability to physiotherapy services; provide 24/7 access to in-the-moment support provided by clinicians for those facing stress and wider concerns; provide 96 people with access to legal advice and 14 people with access to Perennial's new employment support services.

With National Garden Scheme support, Perennial's clients felt that their health and wellbeing had improved, that they were better able to manage future setbacks and that they were more confident in managing their money.

Commenting on the funding support, Perennial said: "The generous donation from the National Garden Scheme is vitally important to our ability to create real and lasting change in people's lives."

In 2024, two Perennial gardens, The Laskett and Fullers Mill also hosted open days for the National Garden Scheme generating £4,860 in additional income for the Scheme.







# Community Garden Grants

£232,000 donated  
in 2024  
funding 89  
community garden  
projects

As part of the charity's wider Gardens and Health programme the National Garden Scheme awards grants to help community gardening projects, celebrating with the presentation of a special plaque on completion of the work. In 2024 we funded 89 projects with a total of £232,000.

The funding for 2024 was announced in April to mark Community Gardens Week. Commenting on the funding, Chief Executive of the National Garden Scheme, George Plumptre said: "Now, at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is forcing many people to find innovative ways to support themselves, their families and their communities, our Community Garden Grants are providing even more of a helping hand to thousands of people across the UK."

Many of the applications received centred on the growing of food for communities and those helping others to learn to grow food. Many cited the benefits to the physical and mental wellbeing of their local community including dozens supporting children and people with dementia. Applications also came from a broad spectrum of society, including a number from ethnic minorities.

"Community gardens help to reduce isolation, build friendships and give people a sense of purpose and hope so it is easy to see why people get involved and we are delighted to provide ongoing support to so many inspirational projects."

From social welfare and gardening projects that help the isolated, the disabled and the disenfranchised, to support for community orchards, food banks and social prescribing projects at GP surgeries, the funding provides a much-needed boost to those working on or

initiating community garden projects throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Many of the funded community projects in turn open for the National Garden Scheme completing a virtuous circle of giving and giving back.

Since the Community Garden Grants began, £893,000 has been donated to almost 400 community projects.

Funding for the next tranche of grants which is being generously supported by the Julia Rausing Trust over the next five years, will be publicly announced in April 2025.

With increased interest in community gardens and their impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, the promotion for 2025 applications received significant press and broadcast attention with features on seven ITV regional news programmes and through the horticultural media in September 2024.


These grants form part of the wider National Garden Scheme's Gardens and Health programme which in 2024 saw the total funding for Gardens and Health projects exceed £3.7 million.

To find out more about the Gardens and Health programme, including recent funding for nurse-led community projects visit our website [ngs.org.uk](https://ngs.org.uk)



Main picture, social and therapeutic gardening activities are delivered by The Fathom Trust in the Brecon Beacons. Above, the Gateway Community Garden in Surrey provides a safe space to talk, enjoy gardening and learn new skills © Julie Skelton



A man with a shaved head and a goatee, wearing a blue Adidas t-shirt with white stripes on the sleeves, is leaning over a garden. He is smiling and looking down at a plant with large green leaves and small white flowers. He is wearing a gold chain necklace and a silver watch on his left wrist. The background is a dense green hedge. In the top right corner, there is a yellow circular callout containing text.

Grants of £5,000 for innovative garden-related projects led by Queen's Nurses are changing lives



# NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships

In 2021, The Queen's Nursing Institute (QNI) and the National Garden Scheme created a scholarship programme for community nurses, the NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarship. Launched at the Queen's Nurse Annual Meeting on 12th May 2021, it is open to all nurses working in the community, with five scholarships available for the best applications each year. The projects, which receive £5,000 each are community gardens that promote the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting.

Named after Elsie Wagg, the QNI council member who originally had the idea to open gardens to raise funds for the charity, which led to the creation of the National Garden Scheme in 1927, the QNI has a long track record of supporting nurses to develop and implement their own ideas to improve the nursing care of the people they care for in the community. Each scholarship comes with a year-long programme of individual and group support, as well as funding to implement the project to improve healthcare.

Since the Scholarship began £75,000 has supported 15 projects, including in 2023/24:

**The Sanctuary Garden Project**, at Wotton Lawn Hospital, a community mental health hospital in Gloucestershire. The Sanctuary Garden is specifically designed for female inpatients to provide a safe, outdoor space for socialisation, activity and learning. The garden has inspired one of the doctors to undertake a research study, *Creating and using an inpatient women's therapeutic garden: service user and staff views and experiences – a qualitative service evaluation*, which the patients and staff have contributed data to.

**The Green Wellbeing Project** in Staffordshire aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of care home residents by early identification of deterioration by advance nurse practitioners, through re-engagement rehabilitation sessions through recycling and growing produce. The project has changed the organisation's perspective of social prescribing, and a health coach role to support preventative health has been developed. It has also enabled the development of a Green Social Prescribing group to encourage other healthcare professionals to use this approach for future care provision. Working collaboratively together with the local authority and GP partners has also reduced duplication of care and identified appropriate routes to care.

**Botanical Brothers Project**, East London. Studies show that 1 in 10 fathers struggle with postpartum depression and anxiety, 29% of UK men feel forgotten or left behind due to society's expectations of them and lack of support, and a third of men under 35 feel that struggling with mental health makes them less masculine. Father's mental health may contribute to family breakdown, which costs taxpayers about £41 billion a year. The project aims to provide a safe space for fathers and male carers to talk freely about their mental health and wellbeing without stigma, and to create awareness that asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

Activities include gardening theory and the benefits to health, sowing seeds and soil preparation, cultivation of food and flowers, and developing a 'how to' wean family recipe book using produce grown in the garden, as well as an organic food tasting workshop. The project has also been added to the social prescribing list in Newham in East London.

**The New Longton Wellbeing Garden Project** was originally designed as a wellbeing garden for staff and patients at the local GP surgery in New Longton Lancashire, but drainage issues meant the project had to be relocated to the local care home. Project lead, Queen's Nurse Corrie Llewellyn has been instrumental in setting up one-to-one social prescribing sessions for patients run by the social prescriber and health and wellbeing practitioner. With this garden space staff and patients can access gardening as part of the therapeutic appointments.

**The Grow Together Share Together Project** aims to bring together different generations in a shared space within the grounds of Dorking Community Hospital in Surrey. The once overgrown garden has been brought back to life with relaxing spaces to sit amongst clusters of greenery and colourful planting. The garden has improved the experience of patients and staff by engaging a cross section of the local population, including volunteers from the local secondary school, and encouraging a circular economy. A real sense of community has been created and many long-lasting and cross generational relationships have been formed improving the mental health and wellbeing of volunteers, patients and staff.

For a full report on the projects supported through this programme visit the National Garden Scheme or QNI websites.

*Photo: A father benefits from the Botanical Brothers project in East London*



# Special thanks ...



Across the year, garden owners and volunteers worked together to welcome visitors to 3,372 gardens and supported fundraising and awareness linked to our show garden at RHS Chelsea in May - Images © Harsha Parmer (top) and © Julie Skelton

The success of the National Garden Scheme and the significant amounts of money it donates to its beneficiaries would not be possible without the dedicated input of the charity's garden owners and volunteers. In 2024, 3,372 gardens opened for the National Garden Scheme supported by 582 volunteers. The enthusiasm, expertise and generosity of our garden owners and volunteers is at the heart of everything the charity achieves.

The National Garden Scheme's RHS Chelsea Show Garden in 2024 sponsored by Project Giving Back, provided a perfect opportunity to bring that enthusiasm and expertise to the fore. Sixteen garden owners donated plants to the garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith, the nine times

gold medal winning designer who has opened his own garden for the National Garden Scheme for 30 years. The garden and stand were manned by 75 volunteers during the week of RHS Chelsea welcoming over 168,000 visitors to the show and handing out 37,000 garden brochures spreading awareness of what the charity does and engaging with the crowds. Thirty volunteers also helped at the fundraising plant sale at Chilworth Manor, Surrey that followed the event on 1<sup>st</sup> June.

Across the year, garden owners and volunteers worked together to welcome visitors to gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands enabling the charity to donate a record £3,501,227 to its beneficiary charities.



# Who's who

**Patron**

His Majesty King Charles III

**President**

Dame Mary Berry

**Chairman**

Rupert Tyler

**Deputy Chairman**

Sue Phipps

**Honorary Treasurer**

Andrew Ratcliffe

**Chief Executive**

George Plumptre

**Trustees**

Arit Anderson

Atty Beor-Roberts

Richard Barley MBE

Lucy Hall

Maureen Kesteven

Professor John Newton OBE

Susan Paynton

Mark Porter

Vernon Sanderson

Debbie Thomson

Alison Wright

## Additional thanks

Core sponsor

# RATHBONES

Incorporating  
Investec Wealth &  
Investment (UK)

We are extremely grateful to our core sponsor Rathbones incorporating Investec Wealth & Investment (UK) who have supported the National Garden Scheme for over 30 years. We would also like to note our special thanks to them for their sponsorship this year of our hospitality events and communications and marketing activities at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, which helped us to engage and connect with a wide range of visitors.

## Our corporate partners

We are generously supported by a small group of corporate partners who help to raise awareness of our work, encourage more visitors to our gardens and make a financial contribution with an annual donation or through donations on the sale of selected products.

### GRIFFIN GLASSHOUSES

GREENHOUSES OF DISTINCTION

### Emma Bridgewater

**GreenThumb**  
LAWN TREATMENT SERVICE

**Agriframes**  
Garden Inspiration



**PARASOL-UK**  
HEAVEN AT HOME

### CROCUS

**DAVID AUSTIN®**





The National Garden Scheme  
East Wing Hatchlands Park  
East Clandon  
Guildford Surrey  
GU4 7RT

Email: [hello@ngs.org.uk](mailto:hello@ngs.org.uk)  
Telephone: 01483 211535  
9.00am - 5.00pm (Monday – Friday)

The National Garden Scheme is a charity registered in the UK. Charity Number 1112664

*Photo: Mindrum House Garden, Northumberland © Val Corbett*

# We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens in 2025