



INFO & IDEAS FOR MEDIA PITCHES

(29 Jan 2026)

Celebrating the National Garden Scheme's Centenary in 2027 **100 years of great gardens, great cakes & great causes**

In 2027 the National Garden Scheme marks 100 years of opening exceptional gardens for charity and would love to collaborate with you on telling our uniquely British story.

From the inspiration of Elsie Wagg (see below) who is credited with having the idea of opening gardens for charity and the formidable women who ran the campaign in 1927, to the historic gardens that first opened their gates, led by King George V and the gardens at Sandringham, to a wonderful diversity of gardens and gardeners, communities and visitors all supporting the vital work of nursing and health charities today, we have 100's of stories and case studies to share.

Master's research: The origins of the National Garden Scheme by Clare Waters

You can take a deep dive into the founding of the Scheme and the remarkable people who made it happen. Covering the year 1926-27 Clare's thesis looks at how an idea for a one-off fund raiser to support district nursing went on to thrive for 100 years and was the genesis of opening gardens to the public across the UK.

In 1927 relatively few gardens were open to the general public compared with today. As the Yorkshire Post wrote in an editorial supporting the garden scheme: 'The tendency in England is for private beauties to be zealously reserved from the vulgar gaze' (6 June 1927).

Today, the passion of thousands of garden owners to share their spaces has created a much copied British phenomenon that inspires visitors from home and abroad and continues to raise significant funds for nursing and health charities.

If you would like to be put in touch with Clare Waters email vicky@ngs.org.uk to be introduced.

The gardens

Two gardens have opened every year (bar Covid restrictions) in support of the National Garden Scheme since 1927; Ramster in Surrey and Sandringham in Norfolk. In 2026, 59 founding gardens are opening from Fallodon Hall in Northumberland to Prideaux Place in Cornwall. See them [all here](#)

Our goal is to have 100 founding gardens open in 2027.

Elsie Wagg – credited with the idea of opening gardens to the public and a founder of the National Garden Scheme



Elsie Wagg by John Singer Sargent c.1893

Now owned by the Thomas H. and Diane DeMell Jacobsen PhD Foundation.

Elsie Margaret Wagg was born in Marylebone, London on 29 January 1876, into a wealthy, close-knit Victorian family. They lived at 40 Bryanston Square and 2 Adelaide Crescent, Hove. She led a philanthropic life and was on fundraising committees for the QICN and the Red Cross. In 1926, as a council member of the QICN, Elsie wrote to chair Sir Harold Boulton suggesting the open garden idea as a way of raising funds for district nursing to run across the 1927 Whitsuntide holidays. She never married and in 1923, moved to The Hermitage in East Grinstead a large house with extensive gardens, which she opened for the Scheme from 1929 until her death in 1949 and which her brother continued to open until his death in 1969. Sadly, the house and garden no longer exist.

Clare Waters dissertation – mentioned above – looks at the life and impact of Elsie Wagg.

The link to nursing

What was created as a one-off fundraiser for district nurses in 1927 proved so popular that the idea of opening private gardens for charity has continued for 100 years. Originally part of the Queen's Institute of Community Nursing, the National Garden Scheme became an independent charity in 1980.

Today, the millions raised by the Scheme support some of the UK's best loved nursing and health charities including Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Carers Trust, Parkinson's UK and the Queen's Institute of Community Nursing. It is estimated that 25,000 nurses working in the UK today have a link to the National Garden Scheme either through direct funding or the beneficiary charities it donates to.

The charity remains the key funder of the Queen's Institute of Community Nursing helping to provide nurses with professional development, learning events, and career opportunities to improve nursing

care in the home and community. 510 nurses received the Queen's Nurse title in 2025. There are now nearly 3,500 Queen's Nurses.

Money raised through garden openings also supports nursing posts for Parkinson's UK and Macmillan Cancer Support and funds the National Garden Scheme Nightgale Challenge, a bespoke leadership challenge that caring services across Marie Curie can apply for to help their development, and which helps Marie Curie train the next generation of nursing leadership.

Money is also allocated to the National Garden Scheme Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships for nurse-led community garden projects that promote the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting often in some of the most deprived areas of the country.

Centenary Merchandise

We'll also be marking our special year with the help of specialist growers, nurseries, manufacturers and garden centres with a fabulous array of plants and bulbs, garden care and accessories, and gifts that support our work. These include: an exclusive design from Matthew Rice (shown left) for tins, tea towels and trays. A clematis grown by Raymond Evison in celebration of our 100 year partnership with the QICN, a Harkness rose, garden stakes from LV Bespoke and a pair of National Garden Scheme gardener ducks and a baker duck from DCUK.

Product launches are planned for this year and next.

For more information about these and many more products contact Anna@ngs.org.uk