

**EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM/RHS
JUDGING GUIDELINES**

Core Pillars of Britain in Bloom

- Horticultural Achievement
- Environmental Responsibility
- Community Participation

Judging Guidelines

General

The UK RHS Britain in Bloom Finals brings together the highest achievers from all of the 18 regions and nations participating in the campaign and as a result the expectations are higher and the judging is more rigorous. Put simply, the judges will be looking for the best and they will be scoring you against the best from the other regions/nations that are in your category. Please also remember that your entire tour route is subject to judging; that means what the judges see on the way from one feature stop to another as well as what they see at all the stops and as they further explore sites on foot during the tour are ALL subject to judging. Furthermore, the judges will expect that your campaign has considered your entire community not just the high street or the village square and that you, at the very least, have plans to address “problem” areas (i.e. gap sites, eyesores etc.). Finally, please also bear in mind that judges will be looking for your campaign to benefit your community not just for today but for the longer term.

Section A – Horticultural Achievement (50%; max 100 points)

In this section the judges will be looking for your year-round achievements in horticulture (including conservation and natural areas) focusing on 5 key factors:

- A1. Impact
- A2. Horticultural practice
- A3. Residential and community gardening
- A4. Business areas and premises
- A5. Green spaces

Each of these key areas will make up 10% of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 20 points.

The judges will take account of:

SECTION A: HORTICULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT – 100 points; 50%	
A1. IMPACT – 20 points; 10%	
<i>Impact will be evaluated across the entry, in each area and as a whole</i>	
Colours & Design	Is there a scheme or theme overall and/or in key locations? Are the colours/design suited for the location?
Appropriate choice of plants	Are there of too many/too few plants to enhance the area? Are the plants appropriate in terms of flowering period and habit? Is there Sufficient variation, appropriate herbaceous plants? Are there appropriate varieties of both newly planted and recently (up to 5 years) planted areas (including mixes of trees, shrubs and herbaceous planting). Planting could be for foliage effect, bark effect etc. or for a specific purpose (i.e. conservation) or to provide flowering or other effects for a defined period.
Special features	Sometimes provided as a focal point, and may include structures or an intensive area of bedding.
Presentation	Are areas well presented and maintained?
Innovation	Are new and creative ideas evident in the design, colours, themes, plant selection etc.?

A2. HORTICULTURAL PRACTICE – 20 points; 10% <i>Horticultural practice in all areas on the tour route will be assessed</i>	
Cultivation and Maintenance	Watering, dead-heading and weeding is important. Appropriate feeding may be necessary. May include irrigation considerations, thinning, trimming or pruning as appropriate.
Quality of plants	Good quality plants, obviously flourishing. No obvious signs of pests, diseases or deficiencies. Appropriate size for planting situation, appropriate soil type etc.
Sustainability	Sustainability is about ensuring ecological functions, processes, biodiversity and productivity can be maintained and only using resources at a rate at which they can be replenished naturally. You should therefore take into consideration the balance of permanent/sustainable planting vs. seasonal/bedding plants and the timing of displays.
New planting	How much new planting has been undertaken on an annual basis? Is there a longer-term plan for the whole area or district etc.?
A3. RESIDENTIAL AND COMMUNITY GARDENING – 20 points; 10%	
Areas that may be included	Residential - Primarily front gardens/gardens in public view Communal areas - Shared residential & communal spaces Allotments Public Buildings (grounds of) - includes schools, town halls, libraries, community centres, churches etc. Free car parks - Car parks where no fee is charged
What is assessed	<i>This section relates to only the areas as described above but they will also be evaluated with consideration for the criteria outlined in sections A1 and A2.</i> Are these areas in keeping with the overall efforts of the scheme? Do they show support for the scheme's goals of improvement/enhancement? Has the scheme engaged other community groups in improving their own areas and/or included these areas in their own initiatives?
A4. BUSINESS AREAS AND PREMISES – 20 points; 10%	
Areas that may be included	Retail and shopping areas, leisure sites, transport (i.e. bus stop, station), fee-paying car parks, farms, rural businesses, pubs, post offices, tourist areas/attractions and other business premises (i.e. estate agents, law offices...) etc.
What is assessed	<i>This section relates to only the areas as described above but they will also be evaluated with consideration for the criteria outlined in sections A1 and A2.</i> Are these areas actively involved in the initiatives of the local bloom campaign? Are their efforts in keeping with the overall efforts of the scheme? Do they show support for the scheme's goals of improvement/enhancement? Involvement can include: sponsoring displays/planters, actively engaging in horticultural efforts on their own premises, funding bloom initiatives, volunteering/participating in local bloom activities etc.

A5. GREEN SPACES – 20 points; 10%	
Areas that may be included	Verges, parks and open public spaces including woodlands arboretums, bulb & tree planting initiatives, copse, shelterbelts
What is assessed	<i>This section relates to only the areas as described above but they will also be evaluated with consideration for the criteria outlined in sections A1 and A2.</i> Are these areas actively involved in the initiatives of the local bloom campaign? Are their efforts in keeping with the overall efforts of the scheme? Do they show support for the scheme's goals of improvement/enhancement?

Floral displays are an important element of the RHS Britain in Bloom Campaign, but **must be proportionate** to the areas of sustainable planting and permanent landscaping within the entry. Floral displays may be present in a number of locations but typically, displays will be located in:

- Publicly owned areas, including parks, publicly owned buildings, roadside areas and roundabouts.
- Housing and residential areas, residential homes, schools, allotments etc.
- Shopping areas, business areas, commercial premises, public houses, hotels, garages, and transport terminals such as bus and train stations.

Britain in Bloom has environmental responsibility at its core and the judges will wish to see permanent/sustainable planting initiatives as well. Landscaped areas with permanent plantings could include any of the areas outlined above as well as:

- Woodlands, copse, shelterbelts, verges, parks, public open spaces
- Business parks, industrial estates
- Screen planting, near factories/industrial areas, eyesores, gap sites etc.
- Amenity planting near residential areas, car parks, shopping areas

Section B – Environmental Responsibility (25%; max 50 points)

In this section the judges will be looking for your year-round achievements in 5 key areas:

- B1. Conservation and biodiversity
- B2. Resource management
- B3. Local heritage
- B4. Local environmental quality
- B5. Pride of place

Each of these key areas will make up 5% of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 10 points.

Please bear in mind that judges will be considering environmental responsibility across all areas of your local campaign so, for example, if you have a fabulous floral display they will also want to know if you have achieved this effect with consideration for the environment. Although this section does outline the key areas of environmental responsibility please bear this important core pillar in mind across all of your Bloom activities and initiatives.

The judges will take account of:

SECTION B: ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY – 50 points; 25%	
B1. CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Wildlife areas and natural habitats
What is assessed	Is the local bloom campaign involved in: Efforts being made to preserve and maintain these areas? Activities to educate the community and encourage them to visit these areas? Activities or plans to re-introduce or restore these areas where they have disappeared or been damaged?
B2. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Recycling; minimising demand placed on natural resources; minimising or where possible eliminating any harmful impact on the environment
What is assessed	What activities has the local bloom campaign been involved with or initiated to make strides in these areas? Has the bloom campaign shown due consideration to resource management in their own activities? For example, has the local bloom campaign recycled its container compost? Does the cemetery have a compost heap and waste separation area? Etc.
B3. LOCAL HERITAGE – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Management and development of local heritage and/or identity such as natural heritage, community landmarks/icons, other heritage sites etc.
What is assessed	What activities has the local bloom campaign been involved with or initiated to ensure these areas are appropriately managed and developed? Has the campaign taken these areas into account in their own activities/initiatives?
B4. LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY – 10 points; 5%	
Areas/activities that may be included	Vacant premises and plots, litter, graffiti, fly-posting, dog fouling, water features/courses, litter picks etc.
What is assessed	Has the local bloom campaign considered these areas/activities and actively included them in their initiatives? Are the efforts in these areas/activities in keeping with the overall efforts of the scheme? Do they show support for the scheme's goals of improvement/enhancement?
B5. PRIDE OF PLACE – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Management of street furniture, signage, art in the landscape, fences, way-marking, interpretation, hard landscaping etc.
What is assessed	Have these been considered in the initiatives of the local bloom campaign? Are the initiatives in these areas in keeping with the overall efforts of the scheme? Do they show support for scheme's goals of improvement/enhancement?

The RHS Britain in Bloom objectives represent environmental standards that are designed to improve the areas where we live, work and spend our leisure time. Looking after our environment has become a very important community concern and we are all being encouraged to recycle and use environmentally responsible products and practices wherever and whenever possible. It is the expectation that participants in Britain in Bloom should strive to provide a co-ordinated approach where all environmental issues are resolved in harmony with each other.

The judges will be looking for local bloom groups to either initiate or actively engage with programmes/activities (as appropriate) which are working towards providing environmental enhancements and which might include:

- Establishing nature conservation and wildlife areas
- Cleaning up polluted sites and appropriate treatment/screening of derelict property or other eyesores
- Active policies to reduce the demand placed on natural resources - e.g. source of water used for plants, use of peat, use of hardwood timber etc
- Maintaining and preserving natural habitat.
- Minimal use of pesticides and nitrate fertilisers and reducing or eliminating harmful effects on the environment
- Interventions, management and development of local heritage

Section C – Community Participation (25%; max 50 points)

In this section the judges will be looking for your year-round achievements in 5 key areas:

- C1. Development and continuity
- C2. Communication and education
- C3. Community involvement
- C4. Year-round involvement
- C5. Funding and support

Each of these key areas will make up 5% of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 10 points.

Community participation is crucial to the success and sustainability of Britain in Bloom campaigns and so judges will consider community participation in all appropriate areas of the local campaign’s initiatives. For example they will consider whether the local campaign has engaged the community in responsible resource management or educated them about this important issue or have they tried to educate and engage the community with regards to local heritage sites. Although this section does outline the key areas of community participation, please bear this important core pillar in mind across all of your Bloom activities and initiatives.

The judges will take account of:

SECTION C: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION – 50 points; 25%	
C1. DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUITY – 10 points; 5%	
Areas/activities which may be included	Development and sustainability of the local bloom initiative and evidence of on-going projects
What is assessed	Has the local bloom campaign: Considered how to maintain and/or improve upon current achievements in the future? Are the initiatives/works of the campaign sustainable for the longer term? Have any plans been developed to ensure on-going benefits to the community of the local bloom campaign? Are there plans in place for on-going projects? Has the bloom campaign established a structure and support network to ensure its own existence and/or development in the future?
C2. COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION – 10 points; 5%	
Areas/activities which may be included	Publicity materials; press coverage; signage/interpretation; displays; engaging with schools, young people and/or other community groups; community awareness and understanding; educational and awareness campaigns on key issues (resource management, conservation, heritage etc.)

What is assessed	Judges will expect to see evidence of public awareness campaigns and educational programmes generated and/or actively supported by the local bloom campaign. In this section they will particularly be looking for activities and initiatives to inform, educate and engage children and young people. Has the local bloom campaign engaged with their local media (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV as applicable)?
C3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT – 10 points; 5%	
What is assessed	Has the local bloom campaign made every effort to include and secure community involvement which is representative of the community’s size and diversity? Have they engaged the community across all ages, ethnicities, races, cultures, religions, abilities (i.e. special needs and the disabled) and incorporated community reparation volunteers? Has the bloom campaign supported and encouraged any Neighbourhood Awards groups in their area or helped support the start up of new Neighbourhood Awards groups?
C4. YEAR-ROUND INVOLVEMENT – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Entries will be expected to show evidence of a year-round programme of activity through photographs, sample promotional materials, press clippings, calendar of events etc. Some examples of “out of season” activities would be litter picks, leaf clearing, fundraising events, repairing/preparing of landscape areas and street furniture, educational activities, etc.
What is assessed	Judges will be evaluating whether the local bloom campaign has been active and has engaged the community throughout the year. The judges will expect to see this through the 15 minute presentation and other supporting evidence (see above).
C5. FUNDING AND SUPPORT – 10 points; 5%	
Areas that may be included	Both efforts made to secure support and amount of support actually secured for the local bloom campaign. “Support” can mean not just funds but also the active engagement of the local government, commercial and corporate sectors and the general public in the campaign (i.e. maintenance support from council services, shopkeeper cleaning up & greening up their own storefront, local business sending staff out to volunteer on a Bloom project etc.).
What is assessed	Has the local bloom campaign made efforts to engage and secure support from local government and the commercial/corporate sector? Have there been activities to raise support and/or funds from the general public? Has sufficient support been secured to ensure the campaign is able to deliver its objectives? Is there a plan of action to secure sufficient on-going support for the development and future plans of the campaign?

RHS Britain in Bloom is a proactive campaign of communities creating long term improvements to their local environment. As such it is expected that a diverse range of community members will be involved in the campaign and that there will be broad based public awareness and support. Focusing on community participation may require some local authorities and public bodies involved to in driving local bloom initiatives to take on the role of enabler or advisor to generate that participation.

Britain in Bloom’s positioning as a community improvement and environmentally responsible campaign means that the judges will want to see how finalists intend to continue to develop their programme. Judges will also be very interested to see that young people and schools have been involved and that care has been taken to make effective use of the educational opportunities which exist. Furthermore, Britain in Bloom is not just about spring and summer floral displays; it is about a year-round programme of activity to improve, enhance and maintain the environment around us and keep the community actively engaged in keeping things at their best.

The judges will be looking for schemes which:

- Evidence thoughtful planning of how to maintain the improvements they make and how to develop in the future.
- Have an effective communication and education programme evidenced by the level of awareness and understanding in the community as well as by physical evidence such as informative signs and displays, press clippings, publicity materials etc.
- Evidence a broad base of community involvement across all ages, ethnic and/or religious backgrounds, socio-economic groups with a particular effort to engage young people/schools/colleges as appropriate to their community.
- Have a year-round programme of activity to keep their community engaged and at its best throughout the year (not just spring/summer displays and activities).
- Have secured funding and/or sponsorship to support their activities and the support of government/commercial/corporate sector for their scheme.

**Please note that all marking sheets can be downloaded from the RHS Britain in Bloom website:
www.rhs.org.uk/britaininbloom/resources_downloads.html**