

# OPEN

Open your garden to raise money for charity and discover the joys of sharing your hard work.



## Interested in opening your garden?

*NGS Gardens Open for Charity (The National Gardens Scheme) is always looking for gardens of interest, quality and character which can be opened to the public to raise money for charity.*

### About us

In the last 10 years alone we have raised over £25 million for nursing and caring charities.

Every year approximately 4,000 gardens open on behalf of NGS across England and Wales and welcome over half a million visitors. We have a long and respected tradition of opening appealing and well loved gardens, supported by our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales. New gardens joining this initiative continue to broaden our appeal.

### The gardens experience

From the small and quirky to the big and grand, the delights of undiscovered gardens await our visitors, who welcome the chance to meet the garden owners, to ask questions

about plants, vegetables and wildlife, before possibly relaxing with a cup of tea and excellent home-made cake.

Most gardens open individually on chosen dates but some gardens are open in pairs. It is not unusual for smaller gardens to open as a group event in the community, so visitors can enjoy walking round a whole village with perhaps tea in the village hall. Many gardens also offer 'by appointment' visits, giving garden clubs and tour groups an opportunity to visit at a convenient time.

Evening openings provide a relaxing way to visit gardens after work and perhaps enjoy a glass of wine. We have family-friendly guidelines with most gardens now offering free admission to accompanied children of 16 and under. A variety of other events is on offer, such as hide and seeks trails or quizzes, to keep youngsters entertained. Other gardens sport a variety of animals and pets and some welcome dogs on leads.

### How to open your garden

Many different aspects of a garden can be interesting to visitors. Some of the largest and most prestigious gardens in the country open for us, but they are by no means typical. The size of the garden is not the priority and many gardens are normal back gardens. Most of our gardens are less than one acre and may include allotments, organic, wildlife and other speciality gardens.

Each garden is supported by designated volunteers. The local county organiser will arrange to visit you to talk about what's involved in opening for the NGS and answer any specific questions. Their experience is valuable in ensuring that your garden will attract visitors and reward your efforts. When they visit your garden, the county organiser will consider these points:

- **are the plants, landscaping and design interesting and attractive**
- **is the garden well maintained**
- **are you happy to welcome and chat with visitors**
- **can you organise adequate car parking space**
- **can you provide teas and/or plant sales as an added bonus**

It is a good idea to visit other NGS gardens to get an idea of what is involved

The team will also brief you on:

- health and safety both for the garden and tea preparation
- insurance we provide for the days you are open in aid of the NGS
- explaining how NGS will support you to promote your garden with posters and local press coverage
- direction signs, tickets etc., supplied by NGS for your open day
- the garden registration form
- how to look after the financial side

There are some lovely gardens which are not able to open because it is simply not practical. We very much appreciate all contact from potential garden openers and will do our best to include you in the scheme.

### Volunteering

The NGS has a small team of employees but the volunteers ensure the charity operates across the country. Over 350 volunteers form the backbone of the county teams, sharing the fun and the work involved in organising the thousands of garden events. The NGS Trustee board includes elected representatives from our county volunteers.

We welcome new volunteers to join our county teams. They do not need to open their own garden but can help in other ways. Help and training is given to all new volunteers. Although knowledge of gardens is always helpful, the main requirement is for good organisational skills and for people who enjoy working as part of a team. Many garden openers also join our teams and offer their support and experience to other new gardens, forming a network of support.

### Where the money goes

The NGS is a registered charity. Our donations go to highly respected charities including:

- Macmillan Cancer Support - we are the largest ever donor
- Marie Curie Cancer Care - providing help to people who want to spend the end of their lives at home
- Help the Hospices - our regular donation helps train hospice nurses and make the case for better public funding of palliative care
- Crossroads Care - a major donation helps them provide practical support and training for carers and their families.

We keep up our tradition of funding the improvement of nursing care through the Queen's Nursing Institute and we help horticultural workers and their families through Perennial and the Royal Fund for Gardeners' Children. Each year we give money to National Trust to fund training in gardening skills.

### Contacts

For further information about your County Organiser and Team, finding a garden near you, and for details of Head Office, use one of the following:

- **Visit our website [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)** and look up details for your county team or email [ngs@ngs.org.uk](mailto:ngs@ngs.org.uk)
- **Find your county in The Yellow Book** or the local booklets distributed to garden centres, nurseries, libraries and information centres
- **Telephone Head Office 01483 211535** or fax 01483 211537 or email [ngs@ngs.org.uk](mailto:ngs@ngs.org.uk)
- **Write to The National Gardens Scheme**, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Surrey GU4 7RT