

## Interested in opening your garden?

*New gardens are always welcome. You must know something about us already but probably need further information. Please do not hesitate to contact us for more information, details at the end of this leaflet.*

### About us

Every year more than 3,600 NGS gardens across England and Wales welcome over 500,000 visitors. We have a long and respected tradition opening gardens of quality, character and interest, supported by our Patron, HRH The Prince of Wales.

Since we began in 1927, to provide funds for district nursing, we have raised almost £40 million and £25 million in the last 10 years. Head Office's small staff provides marketing, book production and support roles but each county is run by a team of volunteers led by the County Organiser.

### Our gardens

With over 500 gardens in each region, from the small and quirky to the big and grand, the delights of undiscovered gardens await our visitors. They have a chance to meet the owners, ask questions about plants, vegetables, water gardens and wildlife, before possibly relaxing with a cup of tea and excellent home-made cake or even a glass of wine. Most open individually, some in pairs, but smaller gardens often enjoy opening as a community, allowing visitors to enjoy walking round a whole village with perhaps tea in the village hall. Many gardens also offer 'by appointment' visits, allowing individuals, garden clubs and tour groups an opportunity to visit at a convenient time.

### How we Choose

Our definition of what makes a garden interesting is immensely varied. Some of the



largest and most prestigious gardens in the country open for us, but they are by no means typical. Most of our gardens are less than one acre and include allotments, organic, wildlife and other speciality gardens.

New events continue to broaden our appeal. Evening openings provide a relaxing way to visit gardens after work and 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 are on offer, such as hide and seek trails or a garden quiz, to keep youngsters entertained. Other gardens sport a variety of animals and pets and many welcome dogs on leads.

### How it works

Your county volunteers will arrange to visit you to talk about what's involved in opening for the NGS. They use their experience to ensure that the garden will attract visitors and reward your efforts. When they look at your garden, the team will consider these points –

- if you have visited other NGS gardens to get an idea of what is involved
- if your garden offers at least 45 minutes interest
- 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
- teas and/or plant sales as an added bonus.

The team will go through our paperwork with you and 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
- publicity (by posters we provide) and via the local press
- directions signs, tickets etc., you need for your open day
- the garden registration form you need to fill in each year
- how you look after the financial side

If we decide we cannot accept your garden, please do not be disappointed. 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.

### Volunteering

Unlike many national charities, the NGS is still largely run by its volunteers. Over 350 people form the backbone of the County Teams, sharing the fun and the work involved in organizing thousands of garden events. The NGS Council of Trustees includes elected representatives from our county volunteers.

We are always welcoming 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 new gardens.

### Where the money goes

The NGS is a registered charity. Our donations are 'unrestricted' which means our money can be invested in areas which the beneficiaries consider vital to future development, and which might be difficult to fund from other sources.

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 - 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 the 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 [gardens@ngs.org.uk](mailto:gardens@ngs.org.uk)
- find your county in the Yellow Book or in the Local Leaflets which are distributed in garden centres, nurseries, libraries and information centres
- telephone us at Head Office on 01483 211535 or Fax 01483 211537 or email [countysupport@ngs.org.uk](mailto:countysupport@ngs.org.uk)
- write to The National Gardens Scheme, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Surrey GU4 7RT