

November 2025 Newsletter



2025 AWARDS EDITION

The highlight of this newsletter is a roundup from the annual awards ceremony

We had a great turnout for the annual awards ceremony in September that was again held at the Oakwood Centre in Woodley.

Two of our judges provided excellent talks.

Paul Cooper told us all about the Windlesham trophy run by the Prison service. There were some absolutely superb prison gardens.

Secondly Tony Stead gave us food for thought on how do we effectively measure success through surveys.

We would like to thank Windowflowers for their continued sponsorship and the wonderful flowers they bring along each year.



A Word from our Chair

As always I am indebted to all the committee members and judges that give up their time to come and judge and assess all the wonderful projects in the Berks, Bucks and Oxon counties that make up Thames & Chilterns in Bloom.

We were very pleased to see some returning entries this year, including Henley-on-Thames and Newbury and Hungerford entered for the first time.

We also welcomed a number of new It's Your Neighbourhood entries with many new entries for Reading town.

I am constantly amazed at the differences you all make to your communities through gardening.

Ted Smith

Chair - Thames & Chilterns in Bloom

In this newsletter

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Landscape
Awards

Parks &
Regional Awards

It's Your
Neighbourhood
Awards

National Awards

Gardening and
Wellbeing

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Towns and Business Landscape Awards

We would love to see more entries in these categories as numbers continue to fall.

Large Town

Chesham	Silver
Newbury	Silver Gilt - Category Winner

Town

Amersham	Gold - Category Winner
Henley-on-Thames	Gold
Wallingford	Silver Gilt

Small Town

Goring-on-Thames	Gold - Category Winner
Hungerford	Silver
Stony Stratford	Gold



Business Landscape

Bicester Village	Gold - Category Winner
Littlecote House Hotel	Silver Gilt



Parks and Regional Awards



RHS Parks & Open Spaces

Amersham - Memorial Gardens	Gold
Milton Keynes - Open University	Gold
Wallingford - Castle Gardens	Silver Gilt
Witney - Lake & Country Park	Silver



RHS Parks National Certificate of Distinction

Amersham Memorial Gardens



There has been a change to the Regional Awards this year as we took the decision to adopt the RHS National Community Awards whilst keeping two of our own Regional Awards. For the first time, we have included IYN entries into the Awards as well as the Britain in Bloom entries. The one thing that hasn't changed is the emphasis on excellence.

Regional Awards

Community Engagement	Secret Community Garden, Newbury
Gardening for Wildlife	Cattle Market Car Park Garden, Wallingford
Sustainable Gardening	York House, Stony Stratford
Heritage	Cholsey & Wallingford Heritage Railway
Visual Impact or "Wow" Award	RISC Roof Garden, Reading
Gardening with Young People	Wild City Collective, Reading
Gardening for Health & Wellbeing	Green Health Thames Valley, Reading



It's Your Neighbourhood Awards

Entries into IYN continue to thrive with 31 entries this year and we were pleased to see a number of new entries.

Outstanding

British Islamic Gardens - Reading

Erleigh Road Community Garden -
Reading

Green Health Thames Valley - Reading

Link to Nature, The Link Visiting
Scheme - Wokingham

RISC Rooftop Garden - Reading

IRDC Group - Reading

North End Pond Project - Stony
Stratford

Sensory Gardens Community Group -
Bletchley

York House Community Gardens -
Stony Stratford

Holmer Green Village Society - Sensory
Garden Volunteers



Thriving

Cholsey and Wallingford Railway
Gardens - Wallingford

Coach and Horses Floral Display -
Wallingford

Mill Lane Community Garden -
Chinnor

Oxfordshire MIND Allotment -
Wallingford

St Leonard's Church - Wallingford

St Peter's Street - Wallingford

The Taco - Wallingford

Uffington Community Gardens
Association

Continued next page....





It's Your Neighbourhood Awards Continued...

Thriving cont....

Galley Hill Community Gardening
Group - Stony Stratford

The Rowans Family Centre
Community Group - Milton Keynes

Lovely Larks Rise Community Garden -
Chesham

Nash in Bloom

Holy Brook Nook Community Garden -
Reading

Royal Berkshire Oasis Wellbeing
Garden - Reading

Jealott's Hill Community Landshare -
Bracknell

Southcote GrowAllot - Reading

Wild City Collective - Reading



Advancing

Station Garden Project Group - Chesham

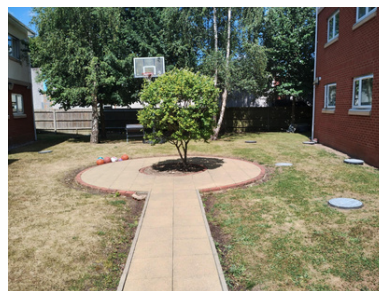
St Mary's Church - Wallingford

Weller Community Garden - Reading



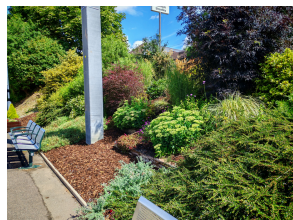
Establishing

Bearbrook Green Fingers



RHS IYN National Certificate of Distinction

Erleigh Road Community Garden -
Reading



RHS Community Awards

We were pleased to nominate Goring-on-Thames for the RHS Community Engagement Award.

We are delighted they received a certificate from the RHS in recognition of their achievement. Well done Goring!

RHS National Awards

Thames & Chilterns in Bloom put two entries forward for the RHS Britain in Bloom UK Finals 2025

- Amersham in Bloom - Town Category
- Stony Stratford in Bloom - Small Town Category

They received fantastic results with both receiving Gold awards.

Amersham in Bloom was also crowned Category winner in the Town Category

This year, each of the Britain in Bloom UK Finals judging pairs selected a group from their judging category to shine a spotlight on and celebrate. So how amazing is it that both our region's entries received a special mention.

Amersham in Bloom - an award for flourishing community engagement

Stony Stratford in Bloom - an award for establishing a heritage fruit orchard

Huge congratulations to both towns for their achievements.

[See all the results](#)



Amersham



Stony Stratford



Gardening and Wellbeing

Well, I think we all know the benefits of being outdoors gardening.

Here we look at two aspects of research on how gardening can make a positive impact to our lives.

Research into Gardening and Wellbeing

Research conducted by the University of Exeter and the RHS, published in Landscape and Urban Planning, analysed data from nearly 8,000 people collected by Natural England between 2009 and 2016. The research found that people who spend time in the garden are significantly more likely to report general good health, higher psychological wellbeing and greater physical activity levels than those who do not spend time in the garden. People who regularly spend time in their garden were also more likely to visit nature elsewhere once a week.

There is no doubt that if they conducted that research now there would be an even stronger correlation as so many of us sought solace in nature and gardens during the surreal years of Pandemic lockdowns.

You can read more on this story on the RHS website - [here](#).

Research Into Wellbeing and Integration of Minority Groups

We were lucky enough to visit a lovely project on some Reading allotments under the umbrella of a group called Integrated Research and Development Centre (IRDC). Their aim is to address health and environmental challenges in minoritised communities in Reading, including the Nepalese communities.

IRDC have been working with University of Reading since 2022 on IRDC designed and delivered, culturally relevant and responsive research on marginalisation. Involving communities in gardening projects forms part of this research.

IRDC supports more than 200 Reading residents on allotments throughout the area. We visited some well maintained plots that were growing both traditional UK crops and some hailing from Asia such as Chayote, fenugreek and shoot eating pumpkin, eating the tendrils and leaves in curries and stir fries. It was clear to see that being able to participate in growing food gave them great pleasure. It was enabling some of them to provide up to 30% of their food needs. Clearly a great benefit to those on a low budget seeking to try and eat healthily.

The project was also trying to foster good recycling and reuse practices within the community and as many of us know allotments are great for that.

You can read the report on the research [here](#).

Mohammad Fayyaz Receives Prestigious Honour



We were pleased to hear that Mohammad Fayyaz, chair of Chesham in Bloom, was awarded the prestigious British Empire Medal (BEM) in the 2025 New Years Honours for service to his community.

Mohammed has been a member of many organisations throughout the town, including being a longstanding chair of Chesham in Bloom and twice holding the post of Mayor.

Our warmest congratulations to Mo.

Anne Kempson



Many of you will know Anne from her years of judging Thames and Chilterns in Bloom, primarily in the Buckinghamshire area.

After over 15 years service on our committee and also as a judge Anne has decided to step down.

Anne brought a keen eye and great expertise to her judging and will be very much missed by the committee and all the judges Anne has worked with over the years.

We wish Anne the very best and hope she will have time to just sit and enjoy her own garden next summer.

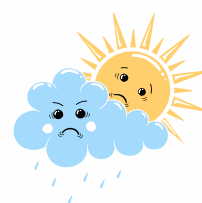
Wokingham Link Visiting Scheme



The scheme, one of our Berkshire IYN entries, has just received an award as Charity of the Year in the Great British Expo's Business & Community Awards.

Congratulations to this scheme that helps tackle isolation and loneliness in the older generation.

Dealing with Climate Extremes



Wow - what a scorching and dry summer we had.

We'd love to hear your stories on how you have coped in the heat this year and any plans or top tips for 2026.

With climate change causing milder and wetter winters and hotter and dryer summers it's going to be a challenge to find plants that can cope with both these extremes.

Here are a few suggested perennials to trial (if you click it takes you to more info):

- [Agapanthus](#)
- [Euphorbia palustris](#)
- [Helleborus x hybridus](#)
- [Iris sibirica](#)
- [Lythrum salicaria](#)
- [Bistorta amplexicaulis](#)
- [Geranium 'Rozanne'](#)
- [Verbena bonariensis](#)

Here is what the RHS has to say about [resilient planting](#).

Thank you for reading!

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