

East Midlands in Bloom Autumn/Winter Newsletter 2025



EAST MIDLANDS



Welcome from our Chairman, John Constable

Congratulations to Uppingham for being awarded a Gold Medal in the Best Small Town category of the 2025 national competition! Whether you're involved with a Bloom entry, a school or an IYN - congratulations on what you've achieved in 2025!

Our plans for 2026 include the introduction of a new independent category for Railway Stations. The competition would be judged on a Gold/Silver Gilt/Silver/Bronze award scale, with a formal certificate being presented. Many other UK Bloom regions offer this, along with other categories, charging a small entry fee, and they have found it increases interest in the existing competitions as well as providing welcome additional income.

Our major source of income is the allowance we receive from the RHS for IYN entries. Unfortunately that has been frozen at 2024 entry number levels and consequently EMiB will make a significant loss in 2025. It was for that reason that we reduced the value of the IYN gift vouchers in 2025 and also had to seek Committee agreement to pause our grant scheme in 2026.

We are keen to welcome new entries, both in the main Bloom competition and in IYN, so please encourage any groups that you are aware of to consider getting involved.

We are very sorry to be saying a fond farewell to Peter Benham, who has been a real asset to East Midlands in Bloom for the past 35 years, whether as an entrant, a judge or as a member of the EMiB Management Team. I have always appreciated Peter's wise words and have enjoyed judging with him in the past. Peter has recently moved to Worcester, and we are urgently seeking someone to take on his sponsorship role on the Management Team. If you have contacts with business, or would like to develop some, then please do consider it.

Finally, we are always looking for volunteers - whether judges, assessors, or to add a new viewpoint to our Management Team. It's a great thing to get involved with so if you would like more information then please get in touch with myself or our EMiB Secretary Julie Walker to have a chat. We look forward to hearing from you!

chairman@emib.org.uk secretary@emib.org.uk

Best wishes for 2026. John Constable.



Peter Benham

Congratulations to Uppingham in Bloom

Uppingham represented the East Midlands in the Small Town category of the Britain in Bloom competition this summer and achieved a prestigious Gold award.

Mike Thornhill and Keith Dunne attended the presentation event in Brighton and received the award from TV gardener Arit Anderson on behalf of the whole Uppingham in Bloom team. Congratulations from all at East Midlands in Bloom!



Win a
£10
National
Garden
Voucher

Photo competition

You're invited to send us your photos on the theme of 'Season's Greetings.'

You might interpret this as something seen on a traditional Christmas card - but equally it could be another aspect of the autumn or winter season, or something else entirely that catches your imagination.

Photos should have been taken in your Bloom or IYN area between 1st October 2025 and 30th January 2026. If your photo features people, please ensure that you have their permission. There's a limit of one entry per person.

Send your best photo to secretary@emib.org.uk by Friday 30th January 2026 for shortlisting by the Management Team. Shortlisted photos will be displayed at the Seminar on 25th February where attendees will be invited to choose the winners. There are two x £10 National Garden Vouchers to be won.

Good luck!



The Exeter Arms, Uppingham

Dates for your 2026 Diary

- ▶ AGM and Seminar at Newark Town Hall - Wed 25th Feb 2026 from 1pm
- ▶ Deadline for main Bloom entries - 31st March 2026
- ▶ Deadline for School entries - 30th April 2026
- ▶ Deadline for IYN entries - 31st May 2026
- ▶ Committee Meeting - Wed June 3rd 7pm on Zoom
- ▶ School Garden Competition Judging - Mon June 1st to Fri June 12th
- ▶ Main Bloom Judging - Monday June 29th to Friday July 10th 2026
- ▶ IYN Assessments - June to mid August 2026
- ▶ Presentation event - potentially Wed 23rd September - date/ venue tbc
- ▶ Committee Meeting - Nov 2026

Information for Judges and Assessors :

- ▶ Pre meeting for Judges - Wed April 22nd 2026 at Melbourne
- ▶ Post Judging meeting - Wed July 29th - venue tbc
- ▶ Training for judges - date and venue tbc
- ▶ Online meeting for IYN Assessors - tbc

Entry forms for the main Bloom competition, the Schools competition and It's Your Neighbourhood will be available from Jan 1st on the East Midlands in Bloom website, www.emib.org.uk Please complete and send them to secretary@emib.org.uk as early as possible as this will help with our planning. Thank you!



Book your place for our Spring Seminar

We hope you will join us at Newark Town Hall on the afternoon of Wednesday 25th February for our AGM and Spring Seminar. The event is open to Bloom groups and IYN groups across the East Midlands.

We have a great line-up of speakers including bulb expert Johnny Walkers, who will talk about preparing bulbs for Chelsea.

Other topics will include:

- **Working with young people and people with disabilities.**
- **Conservation and wildlife surveys.**
- **Tips from Uppingham in Bloom on how to get a Gold!**

Places are limited, so reserve your place by contacting Julie Walker - secretary@emib.org.uk.

The cost will be £8 per person, payable in the New Year. Watch out for an email with more details.

An inspiring front garden



Tina Shirt from Edwinstowe is this year's winner of the Frank Constable MBE Award for Best Front Garden. We love the joyful photos of Tina receiving her Gold Award and engraved carriage clock at Edwinstowe's 'Big Reveal' event.

Tina's garden is a former colliery house on the Fourth Avenue estate. It has retained the space as somewhere to get the car off the road, alongside a colourful array of annuals, perennials, vegetables, herbs and fruit. A raised border near the house has lavender, sage and other herbs as well as herbaceous perennials and shrubs. Pots are everywhere, with courgettes, beetroot, beans, rhubarb and more, enabling Tina to harvest fresh produce and flowers daily through the spring to autumn season, as well as providing a lovely view for passers-by and a resource for bees and butterflies. Judges Jeff and Irene Bates said it was a remarkable effort.

Over to you for 2026 . . .

Gardens of all shapes and sizes can be entered in the competition, and we encourage all main Bloom entrants to consider nominating a garden that could inspire neighbours and passers-by. The competition rules stipulate that judges assess the part of the garden visible from a public place - often an adjoining footpath. The initial assessment is made from that place and then, the judges make a closer inspection. A range and blend of species and colours often increases the visibility and attractiveness of the garden. Standards of plant health are taken into account, as well as general maintenance such as deadheading and lawn care.

The competition is sponsored by the Constable family in memory of Frank, who was a former President of East Midlands in Bloom. Frank's son John, our current chairman, says: "As we are all aware many people take great pride in their gardens and we can take huge enjoyment from many private gardens. Gardens whose owners are able and willing to share with the general public are those which will do best in this competition and, we hope, go on to encourage others."

When you send in your Bloom entry this year, please consider nominating a front garden. There are also awards for Best Business/Commercial premises and Best Pub/Hotel. Each of these adds 15 minutes on to your judging time.



EMIB Schools Competition 2026

Do you have young 'Green Fingered' gardeners in your school?

This could be just what you are looking for to celebrate their hard work this school year!!

We recognise the **Overall Best School, Junior and Senior Garden** in the East Midlands



The overall winning school and any winners of the judges' discretionary awards will be invited to send representatives to the Awards Presentation in September.

All participating schools will receive a certificate and written report in recognition of their endeavours.

If you would like to enter, please contact your local "In Bloom" group, if you don't know who your group is, or if there isn't currently one in your area, please contact our secretary at East Midlands in Bloom on 07925 565346 or secretary@emib.org.uk

Complete the entry form and return to schools@emib.org.uk by April 30th 2026.

Handy School Garden Award guidelines and requirements for entry are available on our website www.emib.org.uk - click the **EMIB Competition** tab.

Good luck - and we look forward to hearing from you!



Bleasby School - Best Overall Primary School Garden 2025, and Best for Wildlife



Cambridge Park Academy Sixth Form, Grimsby - Best Senior School Garden 2025



Littlecoates Primary Academy, Grimsby - Best for Fruit and Veg 2025



Ranby School - Doug Stacey Young Persons' Award 2025



IYNs celebrate

We had an amazing 115 entries in the 'It's Your Neighbourhood Awards' this summer. Presentation events were held at venues across the East Midlands, including Northampton City Hall, various community halls, outdoor sites in Loughborough, Leicester Indoor Bowls Centre, Treetops Hospice and Newark Cemetery Chapel.



More 'It's Your Neighbourhood' news



Most Inspiring IYN

Congratulations to Bulwell Forest Garden in Nottingham, chosen as our region's Most Inspiring IYN 2025. Assessors Jane and Karen, who nominated them, said:

"This garden is a hidden gem in the heart of an extremely deprived area of Nottingham. Built up over the past 13 years, the garden has growing areas, cooking areas, play areas, sitting and relaxing areas. Locals come along and work in the garden, at their own pace and suited to their own abilities.

"Community groups gather to practise yoga and Pilates, schools use the space as a Forest School.

"Open days encourage locals to participate in the Cook Grow Eat sessions, using produce from the gardens and providing lots of information on how to cook and grow. Regular courses help families put into practice what they have learnt. Budding gardeners are encouraged to take home plants that they can nurture at home, be it in their small back gardens or even just on the windowsill - showing that they don't have to have a big garden to be able to produce something tasty to eat."



"Thank you for putting on such a wonderful presentation event at the Leicester Indoor Bowls Centre last Wednesday. It was such a lovely, upbeat afternoon and so encouraging to know that such a lot of people are trying so hard to make a difference in their community. Sometimes when slogging away and often only achieving a little bit at a time, it's hard to keep going, but goodness me, that worry was put to rest last week. It was an event to lift the spirits and certainly I and my two friends came away determined to keep going and even go further than the initial area we have defined."

Sue Lobb, Peace Memorial Park IYN group, Wigston.

National Certificate of Distinction

Five IYN groups in our region received an RHS National Certificate of Distinction this year, for excellence demonstrated over time.

Congratulations to:

- Friends of Markeaton Park, Derby.
- Forest Road Green Belt Gardeners, Loughborough.
- Peter Le Marchant Trust, Loughborough.
- Fearon Community Association, Loughborough.
- Thorpe Acre Community Association, Loughborough.

Becoming an IYN Assessor

This summer our 22 volunteer IYN assessors visited a total of 115 wonderful 'It's Your Neighbourhood' projects across the East Midlands. Karen Dawson and Jane Bailey explain here how they got involved.

- ▶ It all started with an advert about recruiting new Bloom assessors. Curious, we both went along separately just to find out what it entailed. Neither of us has any horticultural expertise, just a love of gardening and chatting to people! We immediately teamed up and have been assessing together for the past ten years.
- ▶ After having some initial training, we were let loose assessing community gardens and spaces. We found it easy to fit the assessing in with our full-time jobs as the appointments are left to you to arrange around your own timetable. Depending on the size of the garden, visits usually take from half an hour to an hour, but we find that getting chatting over a cup of tea and biscuit with the volunteers, time flies! We ask questions, take photos and write our reports after each visit. There's always help on hand, so it's not a daunting task.
- ▶ We have been amazed and delighted by the variety of places we have visited, from hospitals to historic buildings and from allotments to communal courtyards. The enthusiasm and energy of the people who work so hard to build and maintain these wonderful community assets is joyful, and it's always interesting to hear the stories behind each project and their plans for the future. We feel privileged to see first-hand the effect these gardens have on the wellbeing of volunteers and the community alike.
- ▶ Karen Dawson and Jane Bailey, Nottingham



Karen and Jane (third and fourth from the left) chat to gardeners at the Dig In Community Allotment in Stapleford

If you'd like to find out more about joining our team of volunteer IYN assessors, we'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch with our Secretary, Julie Walker, on secretary@emib.org.uk or 07925 565346.

An historic occasion at The Dovecote

One of our longstanding IYN entrants is Wollaton Village Dovecote Museum in Nottingham. Sue Smith tells us about a special day this year.

On a glorious day in May, over 100 people gathered in the garden of Wollaton Village Dovecote Museum for the official opening of the 2025 season. The ceremony was performed by Lord Middleton, who also unveiled a new garden bench in memory of Maureen Jones, 'the dovecote lady' as she was affectionately known.

It was an historic occasion for Wollaton, as almost 100 years ago to the day, Lord Middleton's grandfather, the 11th Lord Middleton, had completed the sale of Wollaton Estate, which included the sale of Wollaton Hall and Park as well as many farms, small holdings, cottages and land. The display inside the dovecote has information about the three-day auction of 260 Lots, along with details of the properties that can still be seen in the village today.

Wollaton Dovecote was built in 1565 for Francis Willoughby, who later went on to build Wollaton Hall. The sole purpose of the dovecote was to provide a home for up to 4,500 pigeons to provide fresh meat and eggs for the Willoughby household.

Since the restoration of the building in 1987, a garden has been created to provide a welcoming space for visitors to relax and chat. We have no water at the garden so volunteers have to bring their own water when new plants are put in, but after that, they have to survive!

More details can be found at wollatonhistorical.com/dovecote-museum



Lord Middleton and Maureen's daughter unveiling the bench in the newly planted corner of the garden.

An update on EMiB grants given in 2025

Blooming Milford's School Project 2025

A new project this year has been working more closely with Milford Primary School. Head Emma Roberts approached us, wanting to get the children inspired by planting seeds and nurturing seedlings and plants. So on 17th March we went to the school armed with two dozen seed trays, compost and seeds (peas, beetroot, lettuce, radishes, nasturtiums, English marigolds) and all four classes helped in their planting. We also provided them with watering cans to keep watering the trays.

We then successfully applied for a grant from East Midlands in Bloom for £320 for local carpenter Stuart Marshall to make a pair of large bespoke wooden planters for the steps down to the nursery. On 16th May we returned to the school and found the seedlings had been well looked after and helped 2 classes of children plant them in the newly constructed planters. The £48 of peat free compost needed was bought for us by the school PTA.

David Moreton



Trusthorpe: £500 towards Amberol self-watering planters

Our 'In Bloom' project this year is a new Education Centre, to be used for small courses, evening wildlife watching and small craft courses. It is situated in our large church garden where we have garden fetes, dog shows, Remembrance Services, etc. We wished to use two of the new style planters to put round the outside of our new Education Centre. We were impressed with the self-watering idea at the Amberol demonstration in last year's Chesterfield EMiB meeting. Our biggest problem in previous years was watering during the hot months of May/June. Everyone in our team has a job and we work hard to make the gardens beautiful for villagers and visitors to enjoy. Previously, the watering was our main downfall and we hope this will address comments from Judges that "we need new and sustainable ways to combat the hot weather before another judging day." **Diana Povah**

Alan Pope, Gardener in the Trusthorpe Team, who developed our new Woodland Walk and who we named our Education Centre and planter after.



Loughborough in Bloom signs project

Loughborough in Bloom were delighted to receive a grant of £885 from East Midlands in Bloom to help fund a project in collaboration with Charnwood Borough Council and the Loughborough in Bloom Board designed to celebrate Loughborough's successes in both the East Midlands and Britain in Bloom campaigns over the years.

The project involved erecting 'East Midlands/Britain in Bloom Winner' signs in Loughborough. However, contrary to the convention of placing the signs at the entrance to the Town, the Loughborough in Bloom Board decided to erect a total of six signs directly onto high profile, major key sites that form part of the judging route year on year. This was in recognition and deep appreciation of the enormous power of our volunteers who work on these sites and are totally committed to their community by selflessly giving generous amounts of their time, ideas and often money to enhance them. **Nicola Clarke**



THANK YOU to our sponsors and supporters



Special thanks go to Richard Adams, our longstanding official photographer for Bloom presentation events, who kindly took all the photos at this year's event at Grimsby Town Hall.



East Midlands in Bloom is grateful for the loyal support of its wonderful sponsors. If you would like to consider taking on the role of Sponsorship representative on the East Midlands in Bloom Management Team, please contact Julie Walker - secretary@emib.org.uk