

East Midlands in Bloom Spring Newsletter 2025



EAST MIDLANDS

Welcome from our Chairman, John Constable

It is my great pleasure, as I start the second year of my role as Chairman of East Midlands in Bloom, to welcome you to our first newsletter of 2025.

As those of you who were able to attend our recent AGM will be aware, we have said goodbye to our secretary of seven years Elaine Atkinson and welcomed Julie Walker as her replacement. Elaine will continue her busy life closely involved with the Grimsby in Bloom group and we look forward to seeing her at future EMiB events.

Julie has been involved with EMiB for several years as a judge and we're all looking forward to working more closely with her in the future in her new role.

Financial pressures are amongst the most constant in our daily lives and we know that many Bloom groups are finding their sources of funding difficult and are having to look at different ways to maintain their inputs. We understand only too well, and by offering free entry for first-time Bloom entrants together with the opportunity for more established groups to apply to our Grant scheme we try to support groups where we can.

Several areas have looked to the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' (IYN) scheme as an alternative route to progress and allow communities to continue the excellent work they undertake in maintaining many of the places where we live. If we can help in anyway, please do not hesitate to contact myself or any member of our management team. We will be only too pleased to try and offer assistance.



John presents a framed photo to Elaine and her husband, Glyn, at the AGM

Chairman's message - continued

The Frank Constable MBE front garden competition was started by my father, a founder member and former Chairman and President of EMiB, as an incentive to private gardeners to make the most of the visible frontage to their properties both to give pleasure to passers by, as well as, hopefully, encouraging neighbours to do likewise.

Dad studied at Kew Gardens and left in 1949 having previously being first employed as an apprentice gardener at Chatsworth House prior to WW II, after which he studied at the Midlands Agricultural College at Sutton Bonington. Dad then worked for Leeds Parks Department before moving to Bolton, Sheffield and finally Derby where he was Director of Parks from 1961 until his retirement. Many former Parks department employees will fondly remember when they had sensible budgets to use to maintain parks, roundabouts and community areas for us all to enjoy. I know Dad would have been impressed by how many people now volunteer to carry out some of that work and would be proud that both the RHS In Bloom competition and IYN play a part in supporting that work. Many Bloom groups hold their own front garden competitions and I know judges enjoy seeing some of those entries both as part of the judging route or as entries to our own competition.

As a judge I look forward to enjoying more of them this year and wish everyone that enters any area of the Bloom competition or who is assessed as an IYN entry the best of luck this year.

Thanks for all that you do.

John Constable, Chairman of East Midlands in Bloom



Frank Constable MBE was a Britain in Bloom judge for more than ten years

Expectations for judging day - Advice from our Lead Judge

Our Lead Judge, Richard Stephen, has been involved with 'the Bloom' since 1984, as an entrant or judge - and at times both. His experience spans Wales in Bloom, London in Bloom, Northumberland in Bloom and now East Midlands in Bloom. At our seminar in February he shared these thoughts of what the expectations of both judge and entrant might be on judging day.

Richard advises that the entrant should expect the judges-

- To arrive on time at the agreed meeting point.
- To be dressed smartly, with suitable footwear and clothing appropriate for the weather.
- To have read the previous year's report and the current Portfolio if it has been sent in advance (always a good idea).
- To be friendly, interested, observant and not too formal.
- To be happy to meet volunteers, dignitaries, sponsors etc who have spent time and money preparing the entry for this special day.
- Not to delay the tour schedule, despite being busy talking to volunteers and taking photographs.

Richard says: *"Because this is an important day on the entrant's calendar and can be quite stressful for all concerned, the judges need to be professional, respectful and friendly throughout the visit."*

"Having said that, it should be remembered that the judges are volunteers who have given up their time in order to provide support and guidance to each entry they have been allocated to judge. They often travel a significant number of miles over the two-week judging period across the six counties that make up the East Midlands in Bloom region."



Richard judging in Chesterfield with Julie Walker, who is the new Secretary of East Midlands in Bloom. Photo: chesterfield.co.uk

Advice from our Lead Judge - continued

And so, it's reasonable for the judges to expect -

- A warm welcome from the hosts - and perhaps a cup of tea.
- Toilet facilities to be available, particularly as they may well have travelled a considerable distance.
- An overview of the past few months eg planting, litter picking, fund raising, renovating street furniture etc.
- Appropriate transport for the driving route of the tour. (Quirky is fine - tractor/trailer, bus, boat, steam train, horse and cart!). If a car is being used it should - unless under special circumstances - hold a maximum of driver, guide and two judges.
- Entrants to let people know in advance when the judges will be visiting and to ensure they are available to talk to them.
- The hosts to control the pace of the tour to ensure it finishes on time, taking into consideration talking to volunteers, travelling from A to B, roadworks / diversions.
- If the entrant won a trophy the previous year, to have it ready for collection.

Finally, in order for entrants to develop year on year, judges are expected to compose a report that is supportive, encouraging and highlights the good points. Within the development section, judges provide suggestions they feel would help the entrant to develop further for next year's competition. It is entirely up to the entrant whether the suggestions are taken up or not. We understand it is easy to make suggestions but not necessarily possible to implement them.

“May I take this opportunity to wish you all well for 2025 and that you enjoy your preparations for this year's competition. The judges will be keen to see the fruits of your labours as well as meeting up with friends they have made across the six counties over the years.”

Richard Stephen, Lead Judge



Good luck to Uppingham in Bloom - Britain in Bloom finalists 2025

This summer, Uppingham in Bloom will represent the East Midlands in the Britain in Bloom competition. Uppingham is a historic small town in the county of Rutland, not far from Oakham and Rutland Water. Our Chairman, John Constable, tells us more:

Uppingham in Bloom enters its 42nd year of existence in 2025. Reading its history on the website (uppinghaminbloom.co.uk) the most consistent element is one of co-operation within the town.

It was started in 1983 by three local traders who decided to decorate their premises with floral displays. Meanwhile, Britain in Bloom started life as a national competition. Uppingham's entry was encouraged by a national judge - believed to have been our former President Frank Constable MBE - who after passing through the town contacted the local group to encourage their participation.

Doug Stacey has been involved with Uppingham in Bloom for 30 years. He knew Frank professionally, and notes that this suggestion led to the formation of a committee which encouraged the whole town to become involved through various interest groups along with a supportive Town Council.

Uppingham Public School grounds team became significant partners and supporters. Involvement spread through a "Friends and supporters" group and a wide range of local clubs and organisations including a Brownies Veg box scheme, school children encouraged to help with weeding and dead heading and a litter picking group.

An encouraging aspect to the town's development has been the increased and improved individual frontage planting to many residential and business properties. More recently, Uppingham in Bloom have supported the creation of two new freestanding mosaics and continue to make updates to the Uppingham Tree Trail.

Uppingham's success in the competition seems to have been with the active involvement of and benefit to many of its residents. **Good luck to you all in the National Finals!**



Bosworth in Bloom: 40 Years of Community and Colour

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Bosworth in Bloom, placing us among the 'veterans' in the village category.

It all began in 1985, the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth, when floral decorations were added to the village carnival as part of the celebrations. The positive response led to an unbroken tradition of participation in East Midlands in Bloom ever since.

The original driving forces were Dick Symonds and John Rawson, both hands-on leaders and tireless champions of the cause. Their retirement a decade ago left a question mark over the future, but a village hall meeting rallied new volunteers who have since kept this cherished tradition alive. Our current committee, though relatively new, works hard to maintain what has become an essential part of village life.

Our success relies on the incredible support from local organisations like the Rotary Club, W.I., Gardening Club, and our loyal 'Friends of Bosworth in Bloom.' This long tradition of volunteering was recognised last year when we were honoured with the King's Award for Voluntary Service – fittingly presented at the village Community Library who were also another deserving recipient.

While Market Bosworth's historic charm draws visitors, it's the active involvement of residents, schools, businesses, and the Parish Council that keeps our village blooming. Through visibility, communication, and fundraising efforts – like sponsored baskets and annual donation appeals – we continue to nurture not just our green spaces but also a strong sense of community pride.

Chris Hooker, Chairman of Bosworth in Bloom



Picturesque Market Bosworth



Dignitaries and volunteers at the presentation of the King's Award for Voluntary Service

IYN is growing stronger

Mention IYN to most people, even super-keen gardeners, and you can expect to see a blank expression. Even saying 'It's Your Neighbourhood' doesn't always help. So just in case you aren't sure, IYN is a thriving programme for community gardening groups of all shapes and sizes, co-ordinated by the RHS.

In recent years while council funding and support for In Bloom projects has declined, IYN has thrived. Some In Bloom Groups are submitting a series of IYNs instead of entering as one large project.

In EMiB we have more than 100 IYN entries ranging from a few cheerful planters in an otherwise bleak shopping centre to thriving community gardens serving lunches of home-grown produce and running wellbeing courses. The similarity is that all are run by volunteers and all are equally welcome to enter.

We know that belonging to a gardening group and working together is good for both physical and mental health. Whilst IYN is not competitive, last year the RHS introduced community awards open to both IYN and In Bloom groups, for the first time both competing on an equal footing. So, this is a good time to get involved.

Do encourage those small projects near you to consider entering IYN. Entry is free. They can expect a relaxed and informative visit from an assessor in July or early August followed by a constructive report and certificate, usually presented at a local awards ceremony where they can meet other like-minded gardeners or growers. And who knows, many In Bloom groups started as IYNs; nurtured and given time they flourished and well... bloomed !

Liz Alun-Jones, EMiB Management Team



Sedgebrook Gardeners IYN group, Evington

IYN news: Festival of Flowers at Oasis Community Gardens

The Festival of Flowers at Oasis Community Gardens in Worksop was an amazing two months of beautiful Spring blooms with lots of Open Days and opportunities for people from all over Nottinghamshire to come and see lovely flowers from snowdrops and crocuses through to the awesome displays of daffodils and tulips.

Many people came for the first time, not realising the Oasis project has been open for 15 years. All the gardening and bulb planting is done by community gardening mostly from people who are disabled, have additional needs and learning disabilities or are asylum seekers, homeless people or unemployed. The gardens are a real credit to all those who have worked so hard and put their heart and soul into the gardens.

Spring chicks, baby lovebirds, budgies and finches fill the air with beautiful songs and are added attractions for people to come and see. Every kind of spring bulbs were on show and people could take away bunches of flowers from Oasis cutting beds or pots of bulbs from Oasis Shop along with jars of jam or chutney. The first beehive has just been installed at Oasis and the lucky bees who might get high on the pollen from so many fruit trees and flowering plants are soon to take up residence in their new home.



Oasis Community Gardens - continued

Oasis has seen thousands of people visiting over the last months. Over 160 children and their families went on an Easter Bunny hunt and Easter egg hunt over the Easter weekend. As well as finding £800 of chocolate eggs they also found the golden bunny and a giant golden egg.

Oasis comes alive when people are onsite and people are happy learning from nature, growing, thriving and healing through the power of the natural world. You are always welcome to visit Oasis Gardens, and Steve and the team are always happy to give help and support to other community gardeners. You can see more in their Facebook sites or the Oasis website www.oasiscommunitycentre.org



Steve Williams



IYN National Certificate of Distinction for Treetops Hospice gardeners

The volunteer-led gardening team at Treetops Hospice are a group of 14, a mix of men and women who spend Tuesday and Friday mornings caring for the 12 acres of hospice grounds in Risley, Derbyshire.

This includes a large meadow which in the summer is full of wildflowers, a woodland, many different borders and flower beds of shrubs and perennials, an orchard and a rose garden.

We are all retired, with many having volunteered for more than ten years. The reasons for volunteering are mixed. For some it is following counselling and support after a bereavement, and for others they live locally and love gardening.

The hospice provides a real mix of support, including a wellbeing café for people looking for help and advice, and counselling following bereavement, including a specialist centre for youngsters, called The Saplings. This was built in 2023 by DIY SOS in support of Children in Need. Treetops also has a Hospice at Home team providing end of life care for people in their own homes.

Since 2019 the gardening team have entered the 'It's your Neighbourhood' awards and have been delighted to always receive a Level 5 Outstanding certificate. But last year we were also delighted to receive an 'It's Your Neighbourhood' National Certificate of Distinction, which we discovered is awarded by the RHS to groups who have done "consistently well over time." So we were thrilled to receive it and have our collective many years of gardening at Treetops recognised.

Rachel Hobbs



*Treetops
Hospice
gardeners*



*A recent addition to
the grounds -
Deirdre, made by
gardeners David and
Steve from old
chicken wire and
named by hospice
staff!*

Composting success at Emmanuel Church, Loughborough

Emmanuel Church is a Grade 2 Listed church, built in the 1830s on a busy road heading into Loughborough. I met up with the gardening team of John Burnard, who is a church trustee, Alwyn Lane and Vivienne Wood who were proud to show me their composting system which is well-labelled for all to understand and out of the way at the side of the church.

There are seven composting bins made of reclaimed pallets, two of which are put aside for leaf mould. Recently John has successfully harvested eight bags of well-rotted compost which the gardeners have been using in the memorial garden and other beds in the grounds. Twice monthly, volunteers from a local support hostel, the Carpenters Arms, help the regular gardeners, particularly with heavy jobs.

There are plenty of “browns” available in the church grounds in the form of twigs and dead foliage without the need to add paper to the bins. There are also two food digesters which are used for scraps and leftovers from the church kitchen.

This is truly a success story. Well done to the team at Emmanuel Church Loughborough, a story to celebrate during **International Compost Awareness Week 4th-10th May 2025**.

Helen Burgess



Looking for our next Bloom Sponsorship Co-ordinator

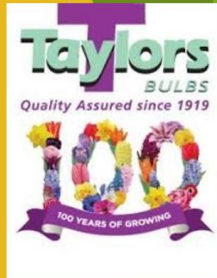


EAST MIDLANDS

Having been the main link for Sponsors and a Bloom Judge, I am sorry that I will soon leave my position and friends, as I am moving to Worcestershire to live closer to my family. There is therefore a pending vacancy opportunity on the Management Team to take over the Sponsorship role and work with our loyal and friendly companies who support EMIb each year.

Our Sponsors are a very important part of delivering the Bloom to our communities. The volunteer role involves encouraging new sponsors, maintaining regular electronic communication, distributing newsletters and obtaining an annual financial or a goods in kind commitment to sponsor a Bloom Award. You will also invite and meet our sponsors who attend our Spring Seminar and Annual Awards, together with encouraging them to have a sales stand. You do not have to be a judge or an expert as the most important thing is to understand the needs of each sponsor and maintain a strong friendly working relationship.

Thank you for your support



You will also be a valued member of the EMIb Management Team, to help determine the future direction of East Midlands in Bloom and IYN Competitions by encouraging wider participation. Our Management Meetings are held each month on Zoom to keep you in touch and support you in your role.

If you are interested in volunteering for this position ,or you have any questions, please contact me:

Peter Benham at sponsorship@emib.org.uk

or if you prefer you can contact **John Constable**, our EMIb Chairman, at chairman@emib.org.uk

Keeping in touch

- * Our website has lots of information for Bloom groups. Visit <https://emib.org.uk/> to pick up useful hints and tips to prepare for judging day, such as what to include in your presentation and your portfolio.
- * There's still time to enter IYN this year - the closing date is 31st May. The entry form is available on the website, along with lots of advice. And remember - it's free to enter.
- * Are you on Facebook? If so, please 'like' our new Facebook page, [Friends of East Midlands in Bloom](#) Please share your Bloom news with us!
- * If you would like to feature in our next newsletter, please let us know.
- * Any questions? Ask our Secretary, Julie Walker, by emailing secretary@emib.org.uk

We're here to help!



"A little bird told me . . ."

*Photo provided by Oasis
Community Gardens*



EAST MIDLANDS

Dates For Your Diary

Committee Meeting Wednesday 4th June 2025 - 7pm on Zoom

School judging 2nd June to 13th June

Bloom judging 30th June to 11th July

IYN Assessments 1st July to 30th August

Bloom Awards Presentation Wednesday 24th September - 2pm at Grimsby Town Hall

IYN presentation events To be confirmed

Committee Meeting Wednesday 12th November - 7pm on Zoom

STOP PRESS

Loughborough, Milford and Trusthorpe have successfully applied for grants from East Midlands in Bloom. More details in the Autumn newsletter.



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And finally . . .



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“It's really amazing how you can turn around a piece of derelict ground, just grass and brambles, to become such a useful place for the community but also such a place of biodiversity. Wish we could do it with the planet!”

Steve Williams, Oasis Community Gardens

Thank you all for your hard work. Together we're making a difference!