East Midlands in Bloom Autumn/Winter Newsletter 2026



BRITAIN IN BLOOM® with the RHS

EAST MIDLANDS

Message from the Chairman of EMiB, John Constable

In the spring I began my introduction to this newsletter with the claim that it was my favourite time of year. Now we are now firmly in my second favourite time of year, namely the autumn!

The spring probably encourages anyone with an interest in the outdoors to think optimistically about the year ahead and how we think our plans may develop for the new growing season. This summer stood a lot of those plans on their heads, and you can read evidence of that from one of our IYN groups on Page 8. However, in the latter part of the year I hope we can all look back with some satisfaction remembering how we managed the adversity of that unusually warm, hot and dry British summer. I know it's making many of us think about drought resistance and capturing more winter rainfall.

You can see from my picture (it's me on the left) that having spent a night away attending the 2026 Bloom awards at Rochdale Town Hall I succumbed to my dog Rubik's demands for a walk - in the rain! Luckily we live close to the Spalding Coronation Channel which was constructed after the floods of March 1947 when thousands of acres of the English east coast were flooded and which now provides - hopefully - protection from flooding for Spalding properties as well as very pleasant walks and a home for a large amount of aquatic life.

As you can imagine, the importance of our environment was mentioned often during the Britain in Bloom awards ceremony which I'm proud to say celebrated many achievements of our EMiB nominated representatives Bosworth, Edwinstowe and Grimsby in Bloom groups. These groups achieved two Golds and a Silver Gilt award respectively from the volunteer national judges - exactly mirroring their results from the EMiB volunteer judges earlier in the summer. In addition, Bosworth in Bloom won the Large Village category and one of their longstanding volunteers Peter Bailiss was amongst the nominated Community Champions. The Loughborough Rectory Wildlife Garden was also announced as winner of the RHS Gardening for Wildlife Award. WELL DONE to them all!

It was lovely to see so many of you at our own celebration event at the Over the Wall Camp in Ockbrook, Derbyshire, in September. Thanks for what you all do in your own areas of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland.

John F Constable
Chairman of EMiB





News from our sponsor Amberol:

Celebrating communities at East Midlands in Bloom



Alan Craddock from Amberol (centre) presents a Gold Award and the Best Small City trophy to Loughborough in Bloom.

Amberol **was delighted to attend the East Midlands in Bloom Presentation Event 2026, where representatives from across the region came together to celebrate the towns, villages and cities helping make their communities greener, more colourful and more welcoming places to live and visit.**

The event provided a fantastic opportunity to meet volunteers, local authorities and community groups, hear about their achievements, and discuss plans for future planting projects.

Our stand generated plenty of interest throughout the afternoon, with visitors particularly keen to learn more about our realistic Stone Trough Planter, alongside a selection of planting favourites including the Half Barrel Planter, Cup & Saucer Hanging Basket, Wicker Hanging Basket, and Half Barrier Basket.

Designed to create vibrant floral displays while helping reduce maintenance and watering demands, Amberol products are used by In Bloom groups and local authorities across the UK to enhance streets, parks and public spaces.

We would like to thank Julie Walker and the East Midlands in Bloom team for organising such an enjoyable event and congratulate all this year's award winners. It was inspiring to see so many communities working together to create greener, more attractive places that residents and visitors can enjoy.

Need advice for your next planting project?
Contact the Amberol team on **01773 830 930** or **sales@amberol.co.uk** to discuss the best solution for your community space.

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Discretionary Awards: the Judges' choice

Each year after judging is complete, the judging team meet to vote on the winners of the Discretionary Awards. Congratulations to this year's winners!



Most Improved Entrant – Thornton Curtis Village, pictured with John Evans from sponsors Taylors Bulbs (left).



Best New Permanent Landscape – Castle Park, Northampton



Horticultural Excellence in Parks – Jubilee Park, Woodhall Spa

Best Wildflower/Conservation Area - The Library Garden, Newark





EMiB Committee Award – Pat Cook, Loughborough in Bloom

Least Littered – Long Sutton



Celebrating the winners of our school awards



We are delighted that this year we had a sponsor for our school awards – H.W.Martin Waste, a company with its roots in Derbyshire and delivering services over many parts of our region. Stacey Parry and Claire Mathias from the company's Social Value team presented awards to the five schools attending our celebration event in Ockbrook.

We had a bumper crop of 16 entrants – some newcomers and some returners. We also welcomed a new schools judge, Matthew Wright, joining Emma Schofield, Joyce Slater and Judith Warner.

Please encourage your local schools to enter! The assessment criteria is written in line with the schools programme of the RHS. It is both supportive and progressive to help our schools on their gardening journeys. More details can be found on the website Best School Garden - East Midlands in Bloom or email schools@emib.org.uk to request more information.

Winners pictured (anticlockwise from top left) are: Best Nursery School – Watermead Day Nursery, Loughborough; Best School Garden for Fruit and Veg – Thoresby Vale Primary Academy, Edwinstowe; Best Senior School – Greenfields Specialist School for Communication, Northampton; Best Primary School – Swallowdale Primary School, Melton Mowbray; Best School Garden for Wildlife – Bleasby C of E Primary, Nottinghamshire.









Full steam ahead for railway awards

This summer marked the launch of a new category for East Midlands in Bloom – awards for Railway Stations and Transport Hubs. We were pleased to have 11 entries in this first year. We would like to thank East Midlands Railways for encouraging entries from their stations, and of course to congratulate each group that has taken part for making the journeys brighter for so many thousands of rail passengers in our region each year.

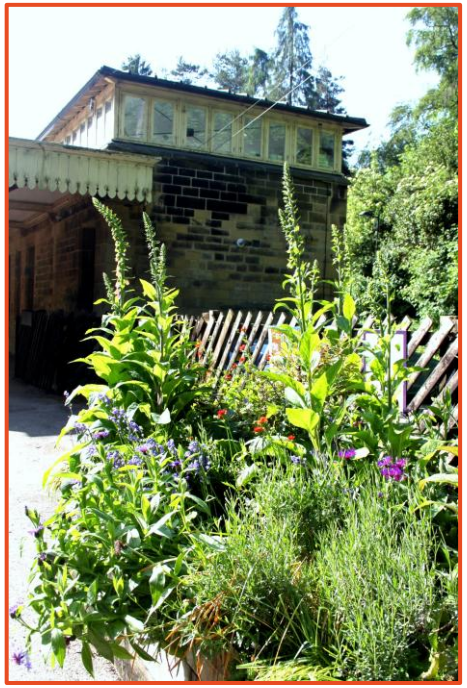
Thanks also go to David Harby – one of our IYN assessors – who is Chair of North Notts & Lincolnshire Community Rail Partnership and was a great help in setting us on the right track for this new category.



Dronfield



Barrow upon Soar



Cromford



Ambergate





Buxton



Spalding

RHS honours for East Midlands IYN and Bloom groups



East Midlands in Bloom was delighted to present Queen's Park in Loughborough with the RHS National Certificate of Distinction for Parks.
This iconic park, including the Carillon tower with bells that ring the hours, is the main green space in Loughborough City Centre. Each year it is a stunning centrepiece of Loughborough's entry into East Midlands in Bloom.
Several borders have been completely renewed into a more sustainable style, using perennials and grasses instead of annuals, fully mulched, without any loss of impact.
Sculpture features prominently, with the recent addition of Bing, a statue of a dog that was parachuted into Normandy on D Day. He helped locate Allied soldiers and enemy positions.

Six IYN groups from the region have been awarded a 2026 RHS 'It's Your Neighbourhood' National Certificate of Distinction. Each was nominated by an assessor who visited them this year. Congratulations to:

- **Knighton Wild, Leicester** – nominated by Judith Boston.
- **Harborough Woodland Community Volunteers** – nominated by Simon Lucas.
- **GraceWorks, Leicester**, nominated by Liz Alun-Jones
- **Worksop Oasis Community Garden** – nominated by Jeff and Irene Bates
- **C2C, Northampton** – nominated by Marian McClelland.
- **St Giles Community Group, Northampton** – nominated by Alison Grantham.



Huge congratulations to Rectory Wildlife Garden in Loughborough, winner of the RHS Gardening for Wildlife Award 2026.
Discover more about this very special place in the heart of town on their website
- Loughborough Rectory Wildlife Garden

Bulwell Forest Garden in Nottingham was our region's nomination for the RHS Community Gardening Award, which proved to be a particularly tough category this year.
All the winners can be found on the RHS website Winners of the RHS Community Awards 2026 announced / RHS

RHS Science Team Survey



Thank you to everyone who completed the RHS Science Team's survey into the effects of prolonged heat and drought on our gardens this summer. Wickham Road Green Community Group in Oadby, Leicester, took it a step further and gathered comments from neighbours. These have been passed on to the RHS. Did your group experience similar results?

- The extreme heat and extended drought this summer have made gardening very difficult, we are trying to adapt but it's been a struggle.
- Flowerbeds on the island are too large to water manually, rain is the only water! For months we have been unable to use hosepipes, so the majority of watering has been with grey water. We save grey from washing dishes, cold water from the start of showers/ cleaning teeth etc. We have buckets/ containers in bathroom & kitchen handy to pour any water into to use later on our gardens. Water from warming teapots, washing hands, every drop is saved. Never water grass.
- The grass hasn't grown for two months, is sparse, looks like hay, you can see more soil than usual allowing weeds to spread swiftly.
- Soil is rock hard so turning over the soil would have been difficult and risked disturbing the roots of wilting shrubs, have resisted until we get quality rain.
- Lime trees seeds & pod shed in masses very early. Difficult to rake off the grass as we didn't want to stress the grass. The area looked like a sandy beach.
- In 36 degrees it was also far too hot to rake. Instead, we left them to give some protection to the grass & shrubs from the sun. The tree branches were drooping down; they were so thirsty. Trees are shedding leaves weeks earlier than usual. A flowering cherry which was deteriorating last year had died!
- All onion / garlic / leek family struggled - crop very poor.
- Marrow / courgette family also struggled, even where they could be watered.
- Runner beans unsuccessful.
- Gladiolus didn't flower and Sweet Peas died.
- Crocosmia leaves grew but flowers were sparse and quickly died.
- Oriental Poppy flowered once and died – no second flowering which it always does.
- Foxgloves did flower and we have collected seeds. However, Foxgloves which would be next year's blooms have all died.
- Azaleas very poor. Skimmias poor.
- Buddleias flowered once, and although we pruned spent flowers, second flowering poor or failed. Some we completely cut back in the hope of saving it.
- Fuchsias' leaves and flowers very few, thin and frail.
- Dahlias' leaves burnt. Japanese Laurel, leaves shrivelled and died.
- Lavender did well, great harvest, as did silver grey leafed shrubs.
- Roses bloomed very well, with second and third flowering, but these were grey watered.
- Lobelia did well on grey water.
- Hydrangea in full sun unable to water, died.
- Everlasting Geranium one flowering only.
- **Escallonia - excellent blooms in full sun, bees loved it, didn't water. We will definitely plant some of these in our flowerbeds.**
- Abundance of Ladybirds.





Most Inspiring IYN Award 2026









Worksop Oasis Community Garden was chosen as the Most Inspiring IYN in our region this summer. Chairman John Constable presented Steve Williams and Mark Evans with their certificate and a plaque donated by our supporter The Art Department.

Assessors Jeff and Irene Bates, who nominated the garden, said: “Community engagement is phenomenal and unashamedly focuses on those in most need, whether due to physical or mental health issues or being unable to engage with their new surroundings. Astonishing is the word that best describes its achievements.

“Fifteen years ago, this two-acre site was derelict. Through the vision and drive of its leader it has flourished, becoming a haven for trees, flowers, shrubs, fruits, vegetables, wildlife and an important niche for the disadvantaged and asylum seekers.”

One of the many features of the site is a liquorice garden – pictured above right – one of only three nationally.

Other nominees for this award were: C2C in Northampton, The Secret Garden Volunteers at Glenfield Hospital in Leicester, and St Giles Community Group in Northampton.

Would your group like to visit Worksop Oasis Community Garden? Steve says: “We love having groups come to Oasis. They just book through me through phone or email. It's not a perfect garden but has a feel-good story.”

Email Oasiscentre-Steve@outlook.com
Or call 07795 194957
www.oasiscommunitycentre.org **Enjoy your visit!**

IYN Celebrations

RHS ‘It’s Your Neighbourhood’ certificates have been presented to 122 groups across the region, with many attending one of the six presentation events held during October. Thank you to them all for their work to improve their own corner of the East Midlands!





























Some of the groups from Leicester, Rutland, Notts and Derbyshire.

More IYN celebrations

























30 IYN groups in Loughborough





More IYN pictures in the next issue!

We invited you to send in contributions for this newsletter and we're impressed by what a creative bunch you are! If you're inspired by the two articles included this time, why not have a go too? We look forward to hearing from you. *secretary@emib.org.uk*

The Great British Summer by Alison Grantham, Northampton IYN Assessor



'Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it.'

So said Charles Dudley Warner, American novelist and friend of Mark Twain.

Well, it has certainly given us Brits some extra conversational fuel and whilst we can do nothing to influence meteorological matters, we will all certainly be rethinking our borders and pots for next year.

Any time we've gained from having no grass to mow we have surely lost again with all the watering, which reached new levels of physical strain as the hose pipe ban arrived and everything had to be watered 10 litres at a time!

Charles perhaps didn't realise the significance of his other quote 'What a man needs in gardening is a cast iron back with a hinge in it.'

I would suggest that we all deserve a well-earned rest now that the rain has arrived and should take heed of this gardening advice attributed to Charles Barr:

'The best way to get real enjoyment out of the garden is to put on a wide straw hat, hold a little trowel in one hand and a cool drink in the other, and tell the man where to dig.'

The Importance of a Geranium by Craig Doyley, Grimsby in Bloom

“What shall we put in there?”
“Just stick a geranium in.”
It’s a phrase heard more often than we’d probably admit at the Grimsby in Bloom Pavilion.
Need to brighten an empty planter? Stick a geranium in.
Need a splash of colour before judging? Stick a geranium in.
Need something that will survive the weather we’ve just had?
You guessed it… stick a geranium in.
The humble bedding geranium (Pelargonium) has become something of an unsung hero for community gardening groups. It might never be considered the most fashionable plant in the Garden Centre, but year after year it quietly proves why it has earned its place in our displays.
For us, it’s all about reliability.
Living on the east coast means our planting must cope with sunshine one day, sea winds the next, and volunteers trying to keep hundreds of containers looking their best. Geraniums rarely complain. Once established, they are remarkably tolerant of dry conditions, cope well with exposed sites, and continue flowering throughout the summer with surprisingly little fuss. Of course, they aren’t completely maintenance free. A quick deadhead every now and then encourages fresh blooms to keep appearing, rewarding just a few minutes of attention with months of vibrant colour.
And what colour!
Whether it’s brilliant scarlet, soft salmon, vibrant cerise, delicate pink or crisp white, bedding geraniums provide an instant impact. They are often the plant that ties a display together, filling gaps and providing strong blocks of colour that can be seen from a distance—something that’s particularly important in public planters and roadside displays. Their versatility is another reason they’ve become such a favourite. They work just as well in formal displays as they do in hanging baskets, troughs, barrels and large civic planters. Mix them with trailing plants, foliage, grasses or pollinator-friendly annuals, and they somehow always seem to hold their own.
That’s why they’ve earned such affection among Bloom groups. They aren’t glamorous. They don’t demand constant attention. They simply turn up, get on with the job, and keep flowering.
So yes, we may joke at the pavilion that the answer to every planting question is, “Stick a geranium in.” But behind the joke lies a genuine appreciation for one of the hardest-working bedding plants available.
Sometimes, the most dependable plants are the ones we take most for granted.
Long live the humble geranium!



Introducing our new sponsor: H.W.Martin Waste









- **H.W. Martin Waste is a leading UK waste management and recycling company based in Derbyshire. We provide a wide range of services that help households, businesses, local authorities, and contractors manage waste responsibly and reduce the amount sent to landfill.**
- We operate household waste recycling centres on behalf of local authorities nationwide, giving members of the public a safe and convenient place to recycle their unwanted items. We also manage large waste transfer stations where waste is sorted and prepared for recycling or further treatment.
- H.W. Martin Waste runs modern recycling facilities that process tens of thousands of tonnes of materials each year, including plastics, glass, paper, and other recyclable products. We have invested in advanced sorting technology to improve recycling rates and support a circular economy, where materials are reused instead of discarded.
- In addition to waste management, we focus on sustainability and community impact. Between 2024 and 2025, we generated more than £3 million in social value through environmental, educational, and community projects. Please read our Social Value Impact Report here: Putting the Value into Social Value - Impact Report 2024-2025 - The Martin Group of Companies
- **We were very proud to sponsor the Schools Category for East Midlands in Bloom 2026**

THANK YOU to all our sponsors and supporters



With thanks for sponsorship of the three Village categories



Thank you to Doug Stacey, Past President of East Midlands in Bloom, for sponsoring a Young Persons' Award, received by Scartho in Bloom on behalf of Scartho Junior Academy.

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

Taylors BULBS
QUALITY ASSURED SINCE 1919

MARTIN
WASTE MANAGEMENT

POSTCODE LOTTERY
POSTCODE PLACES TRUST

East Midlands in Bloom has gratefully received a £2,000 grant from the Postcode Lottery Grassroots Grant programme. Find out more about Postcode Lottery here: www.postcodelottery.co.uk

Richard Adams, our longstanding official photographer for Bloom presentation events, kindly took all the photos at this year's event at Over the Wall Camp, Ockbrook. Thank you, Richard!

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Dates for your diary

- **Committee Meeting** – Wed 11th Nov 2026 on Zoom
- **AGM and Seminar - venue tbc -** Wed 24th Feb 2027
- **Deadline for main Bloom entries** – 31st March 2027
- **Deadline for School entries** – 30th April 2027
- **Deadline for IYN entries** – 31st May 2027
- **Committee Meeting** – Wed June 2nd 2027 7pm on Zoom
- **School Garden Competition Judging** – Mon June 7th to Fri June 18th 2027
- **Main Bloom Judging** – Monday July 5th to Friday July 16th 2027
- **IYN Assessments** – June to mid August 2027
- **Presentation event** –Wed 22nd or Wed 29th September – date/ venue tbc
- **Committee Meeting** – Wed 10th Nov 2026

Information for Judges and Assessors :

- **Pre meeting for Judges** – Wed April 21st 2027 venue tbc
- **Post Judging meeting** – Wed July 28th – venue tbc
- **Online meeting for IYN Assessors** – potentially Mon 24th May 2027 on Zoom - tbc

Entry forms for the main Bloom competition, the Schools competition and It's Your Neighbourhood will be available early in the New Year 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 really helps with our planning. Thank you!

Spring Seminar 2027: Save the date!

We hope you will join us on Wednesday 24th February for our AGM and Spring Seminar. The event will be open to Bloom groups and IYN groups across the East Midlands.
Last February we had a fabulous day with almost 80 attendees enjoying a programme of fascinating talks on a wide variety of subjects.
The 2027 seminar programme is currently being finalised and we look forward to sending out more details soon.

Ranby in Bloom got in touch to tell us they had saved several hundred pounds on their insurance by becoming an RHS Affiliated Society. There are many other benefits too – find out more on RHS Affiliated Societies / RHS

Remembering Councillor Malcolm Wood

We were saddened to hear of the death earlier this year of Councillor Malcolm Wood, who for many years was the driving force behind Nottingham in Bloom.

Cllr Malcolm Wood

Do you have news or something interesting to share? Please send contributions for the Spring newsletter to Julie at secretary@emib.org.uk