



RHS
GROW
SOCIAL

2020

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WELCOME TO GROW SOCIAL 2020

Thank you for signing up to take part in Grow Social! We are delighted you are interested in bringing people together using the power of plants.

Loneliness is a major health concern in the UK, affecting many people. Through our work, we have seen how the act of growing and caring for plants has many benefits for wellbeing, as well as the environment.

Grow Social is designed to give you the opportunity to share what you love about plants with others in your community through an event or activity.

We hope this pack will provide you with some tools and inspiration to help you connect with your community, inspire people to try something new and empower people to get involved in what you do.

Inside this pack, you will find:

- Two posters, so you can advertise your Grow Social event, and raise awareness of the initiative
- Five conversation-starter cards
- A packet of sunflower seeds that you could use as part of your event to help spread a bit of sunshine around
- Stickers to use at your event

We also have a number of downloadable resources on our website, including:

- The Grow Social logo for use in your own promotions
- Sunflower bunting template for you to cut out and put up at your event
- An invitation to send to your guests
- A 'thank you' card template
- If you choose to raise money through your event, you may also like to download our 'we raised £...' poster template

We can't wait to hear how you get on!

Use #growsocial to give us a glimpse of how you're making our resources your own and preparing for your event. We'd also love to see lots of photos of your event in action!





HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

We know that plants, gardening and green spaces are a great way to bring people together. That's why we are asking you to hold your very own Grow Social event in April 2020. If April doesn't work for you, you can host your event at any time, or make it a regular occurrence.

Before your event, think about other groups or people in your community that you would like to get to know better, or those who could really benefit from meeting new people. Work out the best way to approach them with your event idea or ways you can advertise your event and then make it happen!

Sometimes, starting conversations with someone you haven't met before can be daunting, so we have included some conversation starter cards and 'happy to talk' stickers. We would like Grow Social events to be places where people feel they can come to chat, socialise and maybe try something new.

Your event could take any form you like, as long as it involves plants in some way.

Here's just a few ideas...

- hold an activity day to clear beds for planting, plant bulbs, build planters together, or sow seeds for the RHS Big Soup Share in autumn
- host an open day or garden party to showcase your garden, allotment or space
- raise valuable funds by selling produce or plants from your garden
- hold a skills sharing day where people can grow their skills by making something to take away
- launch a sunflower growing competition
- or just invite people round for a cup of tea and a chat

NEED SOME INSPIRATION?

Here are some examples of projects and partnerships that have been run by groups around the UK, which would make great Grow Social events and activities.

CREATING A MEMORY GARDEN

1

Volunteers at a Memory Café, held for people living with dementia and carers, have teamed up with the Garstang in Bloom group as part of their efforts to make Garstang a dementia-friendly community. The groups have worked together to plant up the front of the local library where the Memory Café meets, and have hosted seed planting activities for their members. There are now plans to create a new accessible community garden behind the library where they can host activities for all abilities and allow people a restful, safe space with sensory plants, vegetables and colourful borders.



2

COOKING HOME-GROWN PRODUCE

Erleigh Road Community Garden in Reading regularly opens up its doors to the wider community. Last year, they held a pumpkin carving and apple press day. For Mary, a former chef who was feeling isolated after the loss of her husband, the project was the ideal way to share her skills with others. She took part in after-school cooking sessions with local children, making use of their home-grown produce. She said, "It's just lovely seeing the children's enthusiasm, seeing them enjoy the fruits of their labour."

SOMETHING FOR A RAINY DAY

3

The Friends of Borough Park, in Redcar, North Yorkshire first came together in 2013. They felt austerity had affected the park and so they decided to do something to change that. Their volunteering days helped to turn the park around, but they found volunteers lost touch with each other and with the community in the winter months. To tackle this, they set up weekly coffee mornings that would run indoors until March and discovered that residents were keen to get involved and socialise with each other. They also received many suggestions for new projects, plant donations and new volunteers. They have also supplemented their gardening fund through cake and coffee sales.



USING A SCHOOL GARDEN TO INSPIRE ADULTS

Penrith in Bloom found food growing was the perfect way to bring the community together. They planted raised beds for St Catherine's School gardening club, and now pupils are able to use the beds to learn how to grow fruit and vegetables and how to cook the produce. The children shared some of their new skills with siblings, parents and grandparents, leading to many families doing more in their gardens at home. At the weekends, the school garden is open to the public so that others can join in or sample the tasty harvests.

4



FAQS



Who should we invite?

We are hoping you will make new connections with people in your community and support people who may feel isolated. This could be residents of a care home, a local food bank or charity, a school group, an allotment society, a carers group, or just local residents that aren't part of a group...the list is (almost) endless!

Think about the best way to invite people to your event. If you are looking to attract people who aren't part of a group and may be harder to reach, advertising in communal places such as the local shop, post office or doctors surgery could be a great way to raise awareness.

To help make your event manageable, we suggest you approach another group to work with to plan and co-host your event. There's no need to stop there though, hopefully this event is just the beginning and you are able to continue hosting events in the future!

How should we approach another community group?

Our digital resources include an email template that you could adapt and send to explain Grow Social, or you could pick up the phone to introduce yourself – whatever you are most comfortable with. The most important thing to do is find out who is responsible for the group you would like to host an event with and ask them to be your point of contact.

How do we do a risk assessment?

We recommend carrying out a risk assessment ahead of your event. You can find a template and guidance on our website: schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/growsocial

Any other questions? Email schoolgardening@rhs.org.uk

How can we make our event more eco-friendly?

Maybe encourage visitors to walk or cycle to your event and, if you are serving drinks, you could ask visitors to bring their own reusable mug.

If you are planning to serve food, locally grown produce will help to keep your food miles down, while helping to share the many benefits of community gardening.

If you are looking to run activities during your event, you could encourage people bring their own recycled containers for planting into or you could show people how to make eco-friendly products such as soaps, bath bombs or scrubs from plants and other natural ingredients.

An informal talk about your work and/or other environmental projects could also help to inspire people to take local action for the planet.

What if we have to cancel our event?

Some things are unavoidable, such as bad weather or illness. Don't worry if you have to cancel or rearrange your event – you're still part of something amazing. If April is not the best month for you, your event could also be held at another time of a year, just be sure to let us know about it and share your news and photos!



schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/growsocial
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