



HANDBOOK FOR ENTRANTS

**WELCOME TO
NORTHUMBRIA IN BLOOM
2025**



WELCOME

We have put together this Handbook to give you an overview of the competitions and campaigns run by Northumbria in Bloom. The Main Competition comprises Spring and Summer judging of city, town, village, urban community, city centre and coastal resort categories, and the results are announced at the Awards Ceremony in September to which every entrant is invited to send representatives.

The judging teams are made up of two to three people (a combination of experienced and trainee judges).

Depending on the size of the entry, the judging tour can take anything from one to four hours. The three sections that the judges are looking at are Horticultural Achievement, worth 40% of the marks, Environmental Responsibility, worth 30%, and Community Participation, also 30%. The new marking sheet and up to date judging criteria will be available on the website.

Within the main competition there are several Special Entry categories. You may enter up to 10 Specials from any of the categories, but only 1 from each category. Your Specials must be agreed with your judging team by 31st May.

The judging criteria for the Special Entry categories have recently been reviewed to bring them up to date and make them more relevant. More information and full details are available on the Special Entries page of this website.



LOTS OF INFORMATION TO HELP YOU DECIDE

The Royal Horticultural Society It's Your Neighbourhood (IYN) campaign is non-competitive and free to enter. This is assessed by Northumbria in Bloom volunteers for the RHS. You may have IYN groups that you would like to be assessed during the summer, and these need to be registered by the middle of June.

This year's competition will be launched at the Spring Meeting in March.

All Entrants will be invited to attend what we hope will be an interesting and informative event with a mixture of talks, presentations and workshops. The timetable for the year can be found at the end of this handbook.

We hope you find this booklet useful. If you want more help or advice please phone or email any of the contacts at the back of the book, or visit our website.

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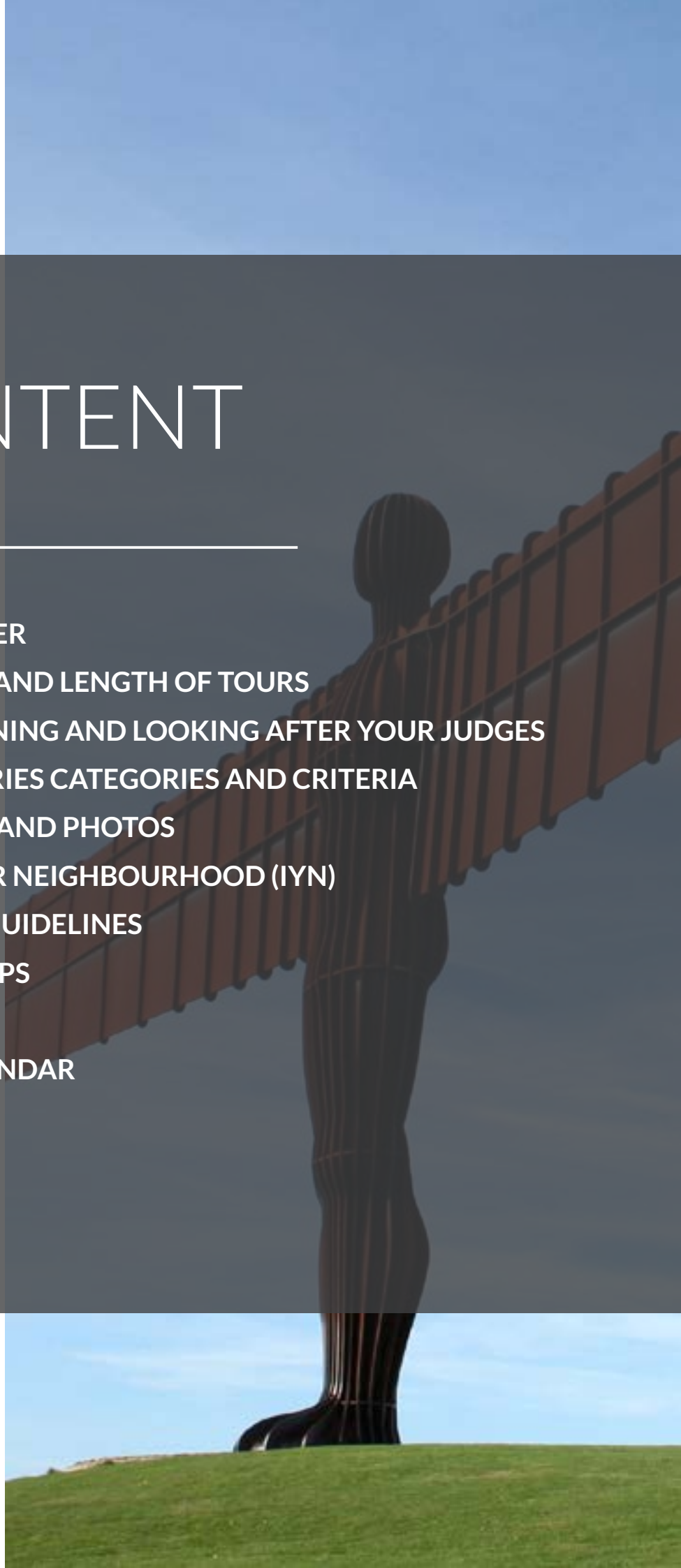
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HOW TO ENTER



WHO CAN ENTER?

Any Local Authority area (Metropolitan, District, Urban); any Parish Council or any 'In Bloom' group, formed with the aim of improving the appearance and environment of their village or town.

WHAT CAN THEY ENTER?

An entry should be a clearly defined area, falling within one of the categories below:

Class A:	Villages:	A1 Small Village	Electoral roll under 300
		A2 Village	Electoral roll 301 – 1,000
		A3 Large Village	Electoral roll 1,001 – 2,500
Class B:	Towns:	B1 Small Town	Electoral roll 2,501 – 6,000
		B2 Town	Electoral roll 6,001 – 12,000
		B3 Large Town	Electoral roll 12,001 – 35,000
Class C:	Cities	C1 Small City	Electoral roll 35,001 – 100,000
		C2 City	Electoral roll 100,001 – 200,000
		C3 Large City	Electoral roll over 200,000
Class D:		Urban Community	Electoral roll up to 25,000
Class E:		Coastal Resort	Electoral roll up to 35,000

The class to be entered is determined by the electoral roll figure, not the population figure.

Class F: City Centre 1km radius from a point chosen by you



CAN MORE THAN ONE ENTRY BE SUBMITTED BY A COUNCIL?

In many cases, a council area covers several categories – city, large and small towns, urban communities and large and small villages.

There is no limit to the number of entries which may be submitted by any one council. A council may enter separately as well as individual entries from the parish and 'In Bloom' groups within its boundaries.

HOW CAN ENTRIES BE MADE?

By completing the entry form to be found under Main Competition on the website: www.northumbriainbloom.com.

Here you will find all information concerning closing dates, how to enter and fees payable.



STILL UNSURE?

We are very happy to answer any questions you may have, and to visit you if required.

In the first instance, please contact :

Colleen Ashwin Kean, Entries Co-ordinator:
entries@northumbriainbloom.com or

Val Giles (Secretary)
01434 240462
valgiles1@hotmail.com





CATEG LENGTH TOURS

The length of time we allocate depends on the size of the community to be assessed - we allow more time for the bigger entries and slightly less time for the smaller ones.

We aim to be fair to everyone so we ask that you try to keep to time - indeed some judging teams may be judging two entries on the same day so we ask that you are punctual!

Plan your route to showcase your community in the time available - you may use transport if your area is large or spread out, and any areas you cannot take the judges to can be illustrated in your portfolio.

More information is available later in this handbook.

ORIES & H OF

Encouraging
community groups to
enhance their local
environment by
gardening together

VILLAGES

Small Village	A1	1 hour
Village	A2	1 hour
Large Village	A3	2 hours

TOWNS

Small Town	B1	2 hours
Town	B2	2 hours 30 minutes
Large Town	B3	3 hours

CITIES

Small City	C1	3 hours 30 minutes
City	C2	4 hours
Large City	C3	4 hours 30 minutes

URBAN COMMUNITY

D	2 hours 30 minutes
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COASTAL RESORT

E	2 hours 30 minutes
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CITY CENTRE

F	2 hours 30 minutes
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ROUTE PLANNING & LOOKING AFTER YOUR JUDGES

*Enjoy the experience;
this is your time to
show off your
community!*

All our judges are volunteers with an interest in gardening and communities. Some of them are also entrants in their own village or town so they know what you are going through! They are on your side and will advise and encourage.



- Enjoy the experience; this is your time to show off your community!
- Make sure your meeting point is easy to find - most of the judges will be new to your community. Perhaps put up some posters - it's also good publicity!
- Note the judging time allowed for the category you are competing in (see NiB Website). You may add 15 minutes for your Presentation.
- Special Entries – You can submit a maximum of ten nominations per entry.
- These must be discussed and agreed with your judges on their spring judging visit.
- You may allow up to 15 minutes per nomination as part of your allocated judging time.
- Review the marking sheet (available on www.northumbriainbloom.com) and ensure that all aspects of the judging criteria are covered. Make sure that you organise your tour relative to how the marks are allocated.
- Plan the route and walk through it at the time that your judges will be visiting.
- Please try to keep to time - your judges may be visiting another entry on the same day. Allow some extra time for the unexpected!
- The judges will need to be accompanied throughout the tour. Please keep this to a maximum of four people at any one time, each of whom should be able to answer questions.
- Consider which other team members you will have at each stop to meet the judges. We enjoy meeting everyone involved.
- Your entire tour route is subject to judging. Avoid 'grot spots' - we all have them - but if you need to drive or walk past them have an explanation ready.
- Try to avoid repetition – one example is often enough.
- Schools – do not underestimate this important resource. If you are unable to get the children involved on the day make sure you demonstrate their involvement in other ways.
- An itinerary should be provided to the judges at the start of their tour to help them as they travel around your community.
- The judges will expect that your campaign has considered your entire community and not just the High Street or the Village Square.
- The inclusion of pay-on-entry gardens or attractions is acceptable on the tour.
- If such sites are shown to the judges they will be judged within the commercial section of the marking sheet.
- Ensure that you show the judges a balance of seasonal and perennial planting, new and mature projects.
- Allow time in your tour for comfort breaks - your judges may have travelled some distance to reach you. Also have some umbrellas ready on rainy days.
- A cup of tea or coffee and some light refreshment would be greatly appreciated by the judges at some point during their visit.
- Make sure the judges have good sight lines from any vehicle you use smoked glass is difficult to see through.

SPECIAL ENTRIES CATEGORIES & CRITERIA



1 Business Parks and Out-of-Town Retail Parks

This award is open to entries from all business and out-of-town retail parks in the region including those in localities which are not in the main Northumbria in Bloom competition. In this case you will enter as a Stand Alone Special Entry - for further information go to the Special Entries page of this website.

2 Community Champions 2a, 19years and over; 2b, 18 years and under

For an outstanding contribution over several years by an individual, whether salaried or a volunteer, in support of Northumbria in Bloom. Nominations may be initiated by entrants (excluding the individual concerned) or judges, but it is the decision of the judging team as to whether the nominee is put forward for consideration of the award. If so, a written appreciation and an up-to-date photo of the nominated individual is required and should be submitted by the nominating entry to Colleen Ashwin Kean, Entries Co-ordinator: entries@northumbriainbloom.com by 24 July. Individuals may receive the award only once, and nominations are limited to one per entry. Once submitted, nominations will be considered by the Trustees, and awards made at their discretion. Awards will only be made to those individuals who have made a truly outstanding contribution over a sustained period, and will be limited to a maximum of five for each calendar year.

3 Schools

For educational establishments
(excluding colleges of further education and universities - see category 14).

4 Care/Residential/Convalescent Homes, Hospices and Day Centres

5 Religious Establishments

For grounds of places of worship, cemeteries and crematoria.

6 Commercial Premises 6a, Small; 6b, Large

Where a single business is carried out. Allocation between the two categories is at the discretion of the judges.

7 Pubs

Rear garden/beer garden may be included.



8 Hotels and Guest Houses

9 Conservation Projects

The conservation work should relate primarily to the natural environment and the majority of the site should be within the main entry boundary.

10 Bus/Metro/Railway Stations

Applies to platforms and clearly defined forecourts/station car parks.

11 Parks

12 Town Centre Retail areas and Business Improvement Districts

For shopping precincts, arcades and BIDs within a clearly defined area and under a single administration.

13 Private Gardens

For gardens visible to the public from a public thoroughfare.

14 Grounds of Hospitals, Universities and other Public Buildings

Including fire stations, police stations, town halls, etc.

15 Sports Grounds

Including bowling clubs, golf clubs, sports complexes etc.

16 Residential Communities

eg cul de sac, street.

17 Allotments

For sites with three or more individual plots on a single site.

18 Tourist and Visitor Attractions and Country Estates

For gardens at sites and buildings whose main function is as a tourist or visitor attraction, and significant country estates.

YOUR PREFERENCES

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PORTFOLIOS

This is your opportunity to showcase all that you do.

The portfolio is not judged; however it can be used to give valuable information to the judges prior to their arrival and the information it contains will be taken into account when your report is written. It is helpful to both you and the judges if you could indicate which category of the marking sheet the sections of your portfolio refer to.

It would be very useful if you could send your portfolio to your judges two weeks before the summer judging date. If you send it by email, please ensure that you have a hard copy to give to your judging team on the day of their visit.

Your portfolio provides a great opportunity to illustrate your campaign's year round activities and the things that you can't include on your tour. It does not need to be professionally designed or cost a lot of money; it's the content rather than the style that is important.

Please make it no more than 30 pages or sides of A4, but it doesn't have to be that long. Just make sure the information is relevant and helpful.

Content - these are suggestions only. It is entirely up to you what information you include:

- A quick introduction on your local campaign and your village / town / city.
- A copy of your diary of events showing year-round activities and projects.
- Use the portfolio to show the judges things you would like to include on the tour but can't due to time or other constraints.
- Names of key people involved and a list of sponsors / supporters.
- A quick insight into your future plans.
- Photos where you have them available, including displays and/or events from all the seasons e.g snowdrops and crocuses, autumn colour and berries, your Christmas social event!
- Record your volunteer hours. This can be important and help you to apply for grants or matched funding

Don't forget to upload one photo for your Main entry and one for each Special so that they can be displayed at the Awards Event in September.

You can take your photos at any time during the year - you choose when things are looking their best!

You should also upload one photo for each IYN.

RHS 'IT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD' (IYN)

IYN is open to all volunteer groups in the Region, not just in areas entering the main Bloom competition. It is non-competitive, free to enter and aimed at smaller, community groups greening their local area, but not at individual gardeners.

It could for example be a residents' group improving their street, a conservation group, or scouts or guides clearing scrub and planting bulbs.

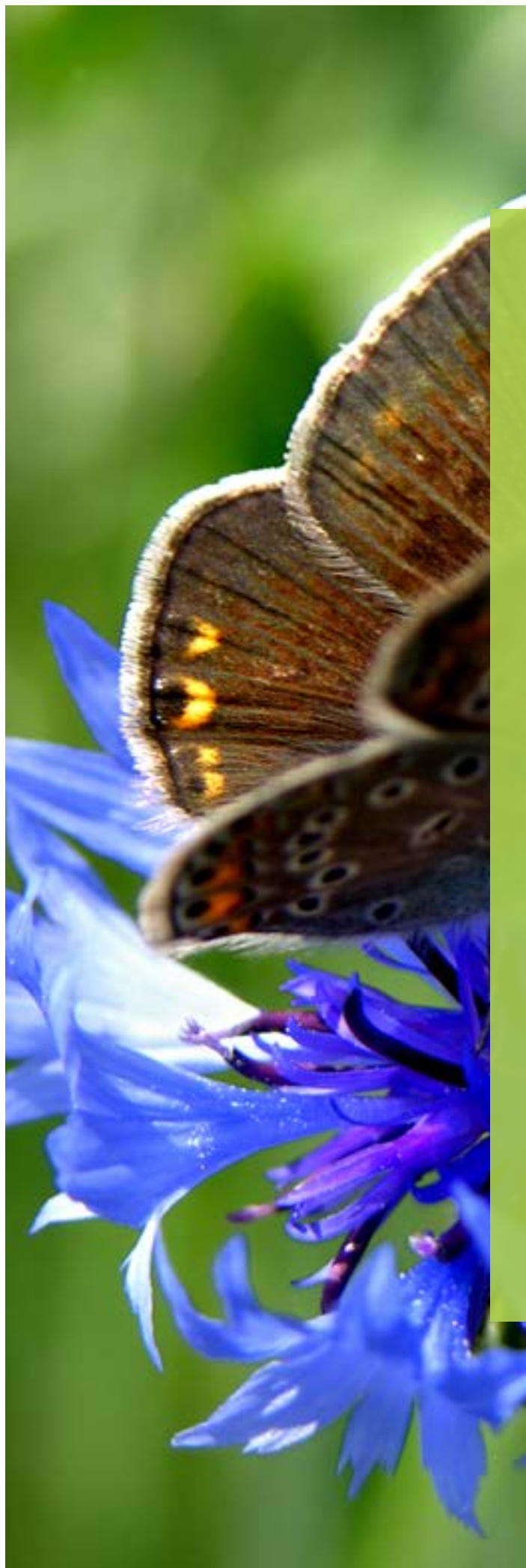
IYN entries must be made via the Northumbria in Bloom website after the 1st April and before the 9th June.

An Assessor will contact each group to arrange a visit between 1st July and 24th August to meet the volunteers, review their work and offer advice if appropriate.

For IYN entries which are within Bloom entry locations, it is important that, after discussions at the spring judging, entrants agree with NiB judges which groups will go forward for Special Entries and which will enter IYN.

You will find the RHS IYN Information Pack and additional information explaining the scheme, as well as an assessment form outlining the factors the Assessors will consider, on the dedicated IYN page of this website.

IYN's purpose is to acknowledge and celebrate volunteers' efforts in improving their environment, so assessments are approached positively, in a spirit of encouragement.





IYN's three Core Pillars of assessment are:

Community Participation	(40%)
Environmental Responsibility	(30%)
Gardening Achievement	(30%)

There are five levels of achievement:

Level 1	Establishing	0-35 points
Level 2	Improving	36-52 points
Level 3	Advancing	53-68 points
Level 4	Thriving	69-85 points
Level 5	Outstanding	86-100 points

At the Awards ceremony each entrant will receive an RHS certificate along with their assessment report.

NORTHUMBRIA IN BLOOM AWARD GUIDELINES



GOLD – EXCELLENT

- An exceptionally high standard demonstrated throughout.
- A consistent approach which demonstrates both best practice and sustainable effort.
- Meets all of the judging criteria and objectives of the competition and scores very highly in each section of the judging criteria.



SILVER GILT – VERY GOOD

- A high standard entry which meets the judging criteria and objectives of the competition, including sections of exceptionally high standard.
- Generally meets sustainable and quality thresholds, but these may not be entirely consistent throughout the area.
- Potential to be a Gold medal winner in the future.



SILVER – GOOD

- Considered to be an above-average entry which meets most of the judging criteria and objectives of the competition.
- The entry will include more than one section which demonstrates exceptionally high standards
- In particular, the entry will demonstrate good sustainable standards and the potential to progress to Silver-Gilt standard.



BRONZE – SATISFACTORY

- An average entry which meets most but not necessarily all of the judging criteria and objectives of the competition.
- The entry will include at least one section which demonstrates an exceptional standard.
- In general, the entry will meet acceptable sustainable standards and the potential to progress to Silver standard.

HINTS AND TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR MARKS

- Your co-ordinating judge will contact you initially to arrange the spring judging visit and will plan the summer judging dates with you on your spring visit. The spring visit is also the time to discuss your Specials.
- Presentation – you can include in your tour a presentation of an additional 15 minutes. This should focus on giving an overview of year round working, showing the judges the variety of activities you have been involved with. This can be an opportunity for your judges to meet volunteers who could not be included in the tour, and also view displays of areas that you were unable to visit due to time restrictions.
- Sponsorship or benefits in kind - think about what you need and how you might get it. Include evidence of all your sponsorship, benefits and fundraising in your portfolio. • Get the Press involved to publicise your events and on judging day.
- Your judges may take lots of photographs but don't worry - this is perfectly normal! It's just to jog their memories when they come to write your report. The campaign concentrates on three core pillars – Horticultural Achievement, Environmental Responsibility and Community Participation. Look at the marking sheet on the website to see how the marks are allocated between these three core pillars and the individual sections of each. Try to include examples of every section in your tour or portfolio.
- Northumbria in Bloom is not just about spring and summer displays, it is about a year-round programme of activity to improve the local environment and get the community actively engaged. The judges will want to see evidence of your year round programme of work.
- If transport is required vehicles should allow fairly unrestricted views - smoked glass is unhelpful!
- Plan for all weather conditions. In hot weather bottles of water or other drinks are greatly appreciated.
- On the Street – street furniture, signage and art in the landscape are important parts of the environment so take a look at where they are positioned and what condition they are in - do they need to be smartened up?
- As well as the horticultural aspect the judges will be looking for evidence of conservation and biodiversity, resource management (composting, recycling, water conservation) and the management of local heritage
- (including natural heritage), so ensure that you address these issues to gain high marks.

Northumbria in Bloom is intended to be an enjoyable, positive experience. So get active, be proud of your community and encourage as many participants as possible to join in. Above all, have FUN!

USEFUL CONTACTS

1

Andrew Jackson - Events, Mentoring, Trustee, Judge
jacksonandrew1967@gmail.com

2

Robert Germany - Chair, Treasurer, Trustee, Judge
robertgermany@hotmail.co.uk

3

Colleen Ashwin-Kean - Entries, Events, Trustee, Judge
entries@northumbriainbloom.com
events@northumbriainbloom.com

4

Peter Rodger - Website, Photo Uploads, Trustee
peter@anick.co.uk

5

Sabina Rose - IYN Co-ordinator
iyn@northumbriainbloom.co.uk

6

Sue Featherstone - Secretary, Trustee & Judge
suefeatherstone58@gmail.com

EVENTS CALENDAR

Northumbria in Bloom Calendar of Events 2025

1st November 2024

Entries open for the main competition

31st December 2024

Closing date for main entries

19th March 2025

Spring meeting for entrants

1st April - 9th June 2025

IYN Entries may be submitted between these dates

1st - 30th April 2025

Spring judging

1st - 31st May 2025

Special awards entries period

1st July - 24th August 2025

IYN Assessments period

23rd June - 20th July 2025

Summer judging

17th September 2025

Awards Presentation

1st November - 31st December

Entry period for 2026