

Record breakers Bournemouth steal the show in Brighton

A record breaking year for Bournemouth in South and South East in Bloom saw the award of 12 golds and four silver gilts.

It was Dorset county winner and gold standard winner for coastal towns with a population of over 100,000.

To top it all off, a former Bournemouth parks manager, Susan Smith received the region's first ever lifetime achievement award.

The trophy haul at the awards ceremony at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton saw the Dorset resort's parks, open spaces and local community groups fare particularly well.

The triumphs were spread across the town, from the Townsend Together Team to the Kinson Nature Reserve, Springbourne and Swanmore Gardens.

Boscombe Overcliff Gardens, Bournemouth Lower Gardens, Hengistbury Head and North Cemetery all won gold in their respective categories while there were first time gold awards for Alum Chine and Stour Valley Nature Reserve.

There was also success in It's your Neighbourhood with community groups from Pokesdown, Moore Avenue, and Moordown all recognised.



Dorset county winner among Bournemouth's many awards.

The Friends of Boscombe Chine Gardens and of Roumelia Lane along with Springbourne in Bloom and Springbourne Pocket Park Community Garden also achieved success.

Councillor Lawrence Williams, Cabinet Member for Leisure, Tourism and the Arts, said: "These results are fantastic and show just what can be achieved when the council and the community join forces to improve our local environment."

"It fills me with civic pride to know we have created parks and gardens in Bournemouth of the highest standard that we can truly be proud of."



Susan Smith receives her certificate and special gift vase from chairman, Peter Holman.

Trustee and judge Susan Smith received the first ever lifetime achievement award to be presented by South & South East in Bloom.

Susan, a RHS Associate of Honour and former parks manager for Bournemouth, has held key positions in a number of fields within the horticultural industry, including the sciences, and has been a huge supporter of Bloom both regionally and nationally.

Her first involvement in Britain in Bloom was in 1986 and she joined the UK judging panel in 2001.

Hunt is on for a new sponsor

Major challenge for 2016 as
Southern Water ends backing

The hunt is on for a new sponsor for South & South East in Bloom. Chairman Peter Holman announced at the end of the 2015 awards ceremony that Southern Water was bringing down the curtain on its 15 years of support and sponsorship.

He thanked them for their "outstanding support" and made it clear: "This gives us a major challenge for next year."

A number of avenues are already being pursued and all options are open for discussion, including having several sponsors rather than just one.

"With Southern Water's support we have grown this competition to the extent that hundreds of communities across six counties willingly take part annually in a challenge to benchmark their efforts to make their corner of this part of the country a great place to live, work in and visit," said Peter.

"I have no doubt there are plenty of organisations who would wish to be associated with an environmental campaign such as ours which is not just the essence of something so quintessentially British but is fundamentally a means of bringing together people of all ages in a common cause."

Peter said there was no time to lose in trying to find a backer so that planning for the 2016 competition could go ahead without delay.

"I would like to hear from anyone who knows of, or works for, a business they think might be interested in supporting us," he said.

"It would be a crying shame if what we've built up over the past 15 years can't continue, so I would urge everyone to put on their thinking caps."

Special awards recognise the work of professional gardeners

Two special awards were made to recognise the work of professional gardeners.

The Horticultural Achievement Award went to Ian Roots, of Hever Castle, and Nick Gibbs, of contractor Glendale, who looks after Gostrey Meadow, Farnham.

"These two award winners could not work in two places that are more different," said chairman Peter Holman, who pointed out that their work helps maintain green spaces for people to visit and enjoy and, through their entries, support the Bloom.

Gostrey Meadow is an open plan park linking Farnham Maltings and the River Wey to the town centre. Nick's award came in addition to Farnham winning gold and best in category for its Large Town entry and gold for the Town Centre category. Its Victoria Garden earned an

'outstanding' certificate in It's Your Neighbourhood.

Ian's accolade came in addition to Hever Castle winning a gold (see story on page 4) and chief executive of Hever Castle and Gardens, Duncan Leslie, said: "This is a testament to his hard work and perseverance."

Experts give top advice at Crawley

A new South & South East in Bloom event gives participants the chance to build their knowledge at a gardening workshop.

Horticultural experts Jean Griffin and Ruth Growney are running an all-day seminar at Tilgate Park, Crawley, on 24 October (10.30am-4pm).

Learn from the Experts comprises a series of practical workshops covering four topics:

- planning seasonal bedding
- right plant – right place
- pruning shrubs and roses
- looking after herbaceous borders

The seminar costs £20 per person which includes morning coffee, afternoon tea and biscuits.

Delegates can either bring their own packed lunch or buy food at the Walled Garden Community Café in the Park.



Ian Roots: "A testament to his hard work and perseverance."

Terry makes best use of Ryde allotment space

Terry Clarkson declared himself "surprised and honoured" to discover he'd won a community champion award.

In the citation, Terry was described as "an officer of a council who goes above and beyond his remit in working with, helping and supporting his local community".

In his role as facility and allotments officer for Ryde Town Council, Terry has set about making the best use of limited space as part of the Recycle Ryde project.

"On the allotments there was space which wasn't suitable for plots," he explained. "It was overgrown with wild grasses.

"We supplemented these with wild flowers, created a flower meadow, a slowworm hotel; just things to make it look nicer," he explained.

"We filled another unused patch with sunflowers, it brightened up the view from residents' windows."

Terry gets the community involved whenever possible, and speaks passionately about numerous ongoing projects.

The Green Fingers initiative saw children with special educational needs design and build a small wild garden, and last year saw local schools invited to design a remembrance garden for a World War I hero from the island.

Key player Courtenay honoured for Ferring's 'outstanding support'

Courtenay Luscombe, of Ferring Nurseries, and Celia Worraker, of Five Oak Green each received outstanding achievement awards.

Courtenay had given "outstanding support to the Bloom both locally and regionally" said chairman Peter Holman and had been key to many award ceremonies over many years.

"No awards would be complete without Ferring Nurseries whose displays (as in the picture) make such a contribution to our events," he said.

Celia has been a leading light in her community for over a decade, and she also collected the coveted Chairman's Award on behalf of Five Oak Green.

Peter said it was the highest award given in the name of South & South East in Bloom and they and joint winners Wimborne in Bloom display the spirit of the Bloom in their ability to both promote the campaign and use it as a tool to bring their respective communities together.



Recognition for an "outstanding contribution" from Courtenay Luscombe, of Ferring Nurseries.



Chairman's Award recipients Five Oak Green collect their trophy and certificate.

Accolade for Janet's outstanding work with Banstead youngsters

Janet Marder earned an outstanding achievement award for her work with the children at Banstead Community School and its extremely popular gardening club.

She and the children also regularly work on projects outside of the school, to the benefit of the surrounding area and community.

Janet has been with Banstead for 11 years, working as a teaching assistant in the mornings before starting her duties as outdoor learning coordinator in the afternoons.

She previously worked as an officer manager for a print company, before taking a year-long college course to be a teaching assistant.

"I started the gardening club in 2005 when I noticed that care for the school's borders weren't contracted out," Janet explained.

"I suggested to the headmaster that the children might be interested in learning how to take care of some of the plants, so I took a day course in how to set up a gardening club and it went from there."

The club runs for two lunchtimes a week and, once they have parental permission, children are free to come and go as they like.

The school has added numerous green initiatives and wildlife areas over the years, and now includes 14 raised beds - one for each class.

"The children have total ownership of what grows in there," said Janet. "We germinate seeds in the classroom, before moving them to our plastic bottle greenhouse and finally into the beds."

"They definitely get a lot of joy out of it - they even complain when it



All smiles for Janet Marder and pupils of Banstead Community School.

rains and they can't go out to tend to the plants!" Classes often grow food, washing and eating it raw in class.

"Beetroot was a surprise favourite; nearly all of them wanted a second portion," she said.

Janet often hears that children have started gardening at home with their parents - and even start giving tips.

The school has a vine, and also grows apples, pears, and a plum tree.

"We have 60 children signed up at the moment. They see their friends doing it, enjoying it, and they want to give it a go too."

As well as the gardening club, Janet

and the children of Banstead have a long list of community projects they've been involved with.

This includes creating a wooden planter for the local high street (a partnership between a local college which made the planter in its wood shop class, a nursery which supplies the plants and the school which planted them), tidying the surrounding woodland with the Countryside Rangers, entering competitions with the Banstead Horticulture Society, being guardians of a high street war memorial and nearby war graves, and much more.



Mo news is good news

The volunteer work Mo Meadows has put in helping to transform an Isle of Wight church project earned her a community champion award, although she declared: "I really can't believe it."

Mo had no real garden of her own so when Aspire Ryde wanted someone to tackle an overgrown patch of land she grasped the challenge and turned the grounds into a veritable oasis of flowers, vegetables and fruit, all of which are used for lunches for the local community.

"They were busy renovating the building and had no funding left for the overgrown garden," Mo explained. "They gave it to me and just said 'Do what you like with it!'"

Now 18 months since Mo joined Aspire Ryde, that overgrown patch is overflowing with fresh vegetables. A weekly dinner is cooked for the older residents, and some of the ingredients go straight from the garden to the

kitchen, including chard, lettuce, courgettes and aubergines.

"We have a cafe and if someone orders a salad or a sandwich and we've got some of it in the garden, I'll go and get it right there and then," said Mo. "It's about giving people the freshest and healthiest stuff we can."

Mo had previously been travelling and living in a caravan for six years, and returned to Ryde to a flat with no green space. She sought out somewhere that her love of the outdoors could be of use, and was pointed towards Aspire.

"I had walked past the church so many times before Aspire took over and it had looked so neglected," she said. "It's been lovely for me. I just love going outdoors."

• George "Brummie" Rollason, of Ryde in Bloom, was also a community award winner; honoured for working tirelessly to help local people get involved in growing fruit and veg.

Julie collects East Grinstead champion title



Personal recognition for the driving force behind East Grinstead in Bloom was the icing on the cake of another trophy-laden visit to the South & South East in Bloom awards.

Julie Mockford declared herself "very, very, very pleased" to receive a community champion award.

As chairman of East Grinstead in Bloom, she was described in the citation as someone who has "brought about considerable improvement in her town and created a community that now challenges for the highest awards".

"The community feel is what it's all about for Julie. "It's the taking ownership, and the pride that comes with it," she said. "Then you have people talking, sharing knowledge."

As well as It's Your Neighbourhood, she takes a particular interest in getting schools on board with gardening projects.

World Garden's Tom collects a gold but Sir Harold Hillier is top heritage park



The World Garden at Lullingstone Castle, and above left, its creator Tom Hart Dyke receives his certificate from fellow presenter Chris Collins.

The brains behind The World Garden at Lullingstone Castle, Tom Hart Dyke, was both a recipient and a presenter at the 2015 awards.

He collected a gold award but, as with four others, he had to be content with a runner up spot in the Heritage Park category.

Top spot went to The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Romsey. Other gold awards went to Hever Castle and Gardens, High Beeches Woodland and Water Garden, Handcross; Parham House and Gardens, Storrington; and Reculver Country Park, Herne Bay.

Chairman Peter Holman declared: "It was my pleasure to be this year's judge and to see so many examples of excellent horticulture."

He told the awards audience: "If you have not done so, do give them a visit. You won't be disappointed."

Tom Hart Dyke joined 'resident' presenter Chris Collins on stage in the afternoon to share presenting duties.



All smiles as The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Romsey, take top spot in the Heritage Park category.



Jovial Jim becomes our patron

Later day TV celebrity and veteran horticulturalist Jim Butters has become patron of South & South East in Bloom.

The awards co-host, known in more recent times for his appearances as one of the judges on TV's *The Big Allotment Challenge*, Jim's knowledge and expertise concerning the Bloom is second to none.

"I am sure you will agree Jim will be a great asset to our organisation," said chairman Peter Holman.

Jim is a Royal Horticultural Society Associate of Honour and is one of only 63 holders of the Victoria Medal of Honour.

He has been at the forefront of the Bloom for almost 40 years, both as a regional judge, regional chairman, Britain in Bloom judge and Britain in Bloom chairman of judges.

Jim has also been a stand-out figure at Chelsea, Hampton Court and most of the other RHS shows wearing his famous bowler hat.

In more recent times, he has become a popular part of the line-up of judges on *The Big Allotment*



Challenge alongside presenter Fern Britton, floral designer Jonathan Moseley and cookery writer Thane Prince.

Jim also continues to deliver talks to clubs and societies about the three main elements of his horticultural life:

- superintendent of the Royal Parks (Green Park, Kensington Place Park, St James's Park and Hyde Park) for 25 years.
- the World Garden at Lullingstone Castle which he helped Tom Hart Dyke to develop, and which was the subject of a 12-part BBC TV series.
- his chairmanship of the Britain in Bloom judges.

A big welcome to Amberol

Amberol, the nation's leading provider of self-watering planters, was a welcome sponsor at the awards event.



Chris Boden displayed some of Amberol's range of products alongside one of the main lecterns in the Bupa lounge at the Amex, and was kept busy during the lunch break as attendees took a closer look at the latest devices.

For more information about Amberol take a look at their website amberol.co.uk or email chris.boden@amberol.co.uk