

A lifelong adventure with gardening

RHS strategy to 2030



***A lifelong* adventure with gardening – RHS strategy to 2030**

This strategy to 2030, *A lifelong adventure with gardening*, has been created through discussion with colleagues, trustees, committees, supporters, volunteers and friends. Our priorities build on the RHS's rich history and enduring purpose to encourage and improve the science, art and practice of horticulture. Through this strategy, our goal is to offer a sense of unified optimism that everyone can find joy and fulfilment in the personal and collective action of gardening.



Gardening in a changing world

Saving the world starts at our fingertips

Gardens root us to nature, to each other and to happiness. Plants are at the heart of any garden, and people nurture them wherever they are: rooftops, yards, back gardens, allotments, balconies, window boxes or living rooms. For many, plants and gardens provide their main connection with the natural world, offering respite from the stresses of a complicated world, and they bring pleasure and great joy. If you have plants, you are a gardener.

The world is facing multiple crises, from the climate emergency and dramatic loss of biodiversity to profound societal and economic upheaval, and gardening can be integral to addressing them. The opportunity to garden is not just a nice to have, it's fundamental to every life, and every society.

As gardeners, we can all make changes that will help to increase biodiversity, reduce pollution, save water, conserve plants and reduce flooding. With an estimated 28 million adults in the UK interested in gardening, a difference is already being made to our local and national habitats. For young people, gardens are a gateway to a life with nature. Every plant on every shelf, every flower on every balcony, every tree in every park, every sunflower in every school – it all counts.

Gardening creates a healthier nation. Spending time outside nurturing a garden promotes better physical, mental and social health and can transform someone's sense of achievement and wellbeing. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and with healthcare services under pressure, this has never mattered more. From the physical exertion of gardening and exploring green spaces, to the colours, textures and scents of plants acting on our emotional and stress responses, gardens actively promote good health and support people recovering from illness.

More than that, the horticultural and landscape industry plays a vital part in the economic health of the UK. It offers jobs across a range of areas including nurseries, public and private gardens, landscaping, design and retail. It includes everything from multinationals to family-run businesses and sole traders, and contributes over £28 billion to our GDP with the potential to grow to £41.8 billion by 2030.

For these reasons the power of gardening cannot be underestimated. Yet, when you ask someone why they do it, they'll usually describe the way it makes them feel. They'll talk about the quiet pleasures of sitting in a garden, being out in the fresh air, growing vegetables, designing new spaces, listening to birdsong, hearing insects buzz on a summer's day, sharing plants, tools and knowledge with others, and connecting us across generations, neighbourhoods, and to nature.

Few other activities bring so many benefits to so many people. That's why we firmly believe that from beginners to experienced horticulturists, from houseplants to national gardens, gardening plays a role in every life, and everyone should have the right for gardening to be a way of life. Saving the world starts at our fingertips.



A growing and changing RHS

Putting the RHS to work for people and planet

Since our formation in 1804, the RHS has grown from an idea into the UK's leading gardening charity, touching the lives of millions of people.

Perhaps the secret to our longevity is that we've never stood still. We've opened and closed gardens and flower shows, made fascinating discoveries, advised gardeners young and old, enabled community and school gardening, trained horticulturists, nurtured careers, and helped shape the world of horticulture.

In the last decade alone we've taken on the largest hands-on project the RHS has ever tackled by opening the new RHS Garden Bridgewater in Salford, Greater Manchester, and invested in the science that underpins all our work by building RHS Hilltop – The Home of Gardening Science.

We have committed to being net positive for nature and people by 2030. This reaches into every aspect of what we do, setting stretching sustainability targets for our own operations as well as providing a focus for our wider work. We are committed to being truly inclusive and to reflect all the communities of the UK, harnessing gardening to deliver more positive social impact. We continue to champion horticulture by working with partners and policymakers to support the growing green economy to provide jobs that benefit people and the planet.

Across our five RHS gardens at Bridgewater, Harlow Carr, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor and Wisley, we welcome more than three million visitors each year to enjoy over 34,000 different cultivated plants and over 30 national plant collections registered with Plant Heritage, and our story grows daily.

Beyond our permanent sites, events such as the world famous RHS Chelsea Flower Show, other national shows, our schools and community work, and partnerships such as Britain in Bloom, all spread the shared joy of gardening to wide-reaching audiences.

Throughout it all we've held true to our charitable core – to encourage and improve the science, art and practice of horticulture – guided by the deep knowledge and expertise of our colleagues and external advisers, and supported by our many members, volunteers, partners and friends, to share the love of gardening and the positive benefits it brings. Today, more than ever, it is time to put the RHS to work for the planet and the people who live on it.



Interior of the conservatory at the RHS garden at Kensington. The RHS created and ran the garden from 1861-1888. It was the centrepiece of 'Albertopolis', a cultural quarter that was the brainchild of Prince Albert.

A lifelong adventure with gardening

Becoming a gardener is a journey

Gardening is a universal language. It transcends borders and cultures to bring people together in a shared endeavour to create a better future. It can touch people in many ways throughout a lifetime: marking seasons, creating memories, celebrating life's big and small moments, and teaching us patience, adaptability and resilience. Involvement with gardening takes many forms, and being a gardener is a lifelong adventure. Everyone's adventure will be different and wherever and whenever it starts, the RHS will be there to support anyone, of any age or background, every step of the way.



Our approach

Make gardening your lifelong adventure

Our mission

Our vision is a world where gardening is embraced as a way of life – a source of joy and fulfilment, building healthier lives, stronger communities, and thriving environments. To achieve this, **our mission is to be there for everyone on their lifelong adventure with gardening.**

Our priorities

Six priorities will drive everything we do:

Open up gardening for anyone, anywhere

By engaging more people and being the 'go to' organisation for gardening

Grow our story to share the joy of gardening

By using our gardens, headquarters, heritage and collections to greatest potential

Build horticulture for the future

By strengthening education, growing skills and networks, and championing sustainable practices

Deliver science solutions for people, gardens and nature

By rooting science across all our work to meet our social and environmental goals

Champion the essential role of gardening

By influencing national policy to achieve changes to benefit people, the environment and the economy

Unlock our potential

By enabling the RHS to thrive and be a great place to work



Key shifts

To reach our goals by 2030, we will place added emphasis on activities across each priority which enable us to:



Be more urban

With over 80% of the UK population living in towns and cities, we will find ways to enable more urban dwellers to garden, especially where access to green spaces can be challenging.



Involve more young people

With childhood experiences vital to shaping our whole lives, we will find new ways to engage young people with gardens to create lasting connections to nature.



Support more beginners

With more people wanting to have a go at gardening, we will help to kick start a successful gardening adventure, offering more accessible and inclusive ways of getting involved.



Garden more sustainably

With more people wanting to garden sustainably, we will create gardens that are in harmony with the natural environment and share best practice.




Go more digital

With over 90% of the UK population online, we will create new digital content so gardening know-how can reach millions of gardeners, whatever their experience.

Open up gardening for anyone, anywhere

By engaging more people and being the 'go to' organisation for gardening




Open up gardening for anyone, anywhere

We believe that everyone can benefit from growing plants, and our ambition is to reach millions more people to help them grow their love of plants and gardening.

- Working with over 3,000 gardening groups, ranging from gardening clubs and allotments to specialist plant societies and our 200 plus Partner Gardens, we will support and grow our gardening network so it continues to be the largest in the UK and celebrate the heritage of great gardens through our Partner Garden of the Year competition.
- We will continue to support Britain in Bloom and our It's Your Neighbourhood community gardening programmes, which enable hundreds of thousands of volunteers to celebrate local gardening projects, share gardening expertise, and increase access to green spaces for communities across the UK.
- We will extend the successful Wellbeing Garden blueprint created with University Hospital Lewisham to enable the development of more community wellbeing gardens in different urban settings, such as healthcare facilities, schools or housing estates.
- We will look to develop more gardening opportunities for city dwellers – with new urban shows, advice and retail services, and urban garden spaces.
- We will enable every school to give young people early hands-on experiences with plants and gardening, building on our Campaign for School Gardening (which already includes over 29,000 schools, youth and other community groups), and reaching further with our new partnership with the Natural History Museum to create a National Education Nature Park. This will enable young people to develop more meaningful connections to nature, understand biodiversity, and make a positive difference by taking action to transform their school grounds.
- At our own RHS sites, we will create Young Garden Adventures for the under 10s that will spark curiosity and provide natural sensory experiences that create impactful, lasting memories. We will share our experiments and learnings from these new activities with others.
- We will reach out to new audiences across the UK to bring the RHS to people who do not know about us. We will develop more step-by-step advice for beginners, with simple timely tips that make it easier to get started on a journey with gardening.
- We will engage millions of people across the world by using our digital platforms, including new apps, podcasts and social media channels, to offer scientifically proven, planet-friendly gardening advice tailored for gardeners at different stages of their lifelong adventure.

Grow our story to share the joy of gardening

By using our gardens, headquarters, heritage and collections to greatest potential




Grow our story to share the joy of gardening

Our gardens, collections and world-famous flower shows will continue to be vital assets for sharing our work, promoting good causes, and supporting the wider horticultural industry. As well as drawing deeply from our heritage, they have also always thrived on innovation and will continue to do so as we focus on reaching and inspiring more people.

- Our five gardens share a single feature: horticultural excellence. As with the seasons they never stand still, experimenting with new methods and developments. But each garden is unique, and we will continue to highlight the individuality and experimental nature of each one:
 - RHS Garden Wisley, one of the world's great gardens, will transform its 11 acre orchard and surrounding areas into a diverse habitat that supports sustainable food growing. Other new projects include recreating the Piet Oudolf borders (with Piet Oudolf), opening a new Orchid House, and creating a new public space in The Old Laboratory, all of which will reveal more of our history, science, horticulture and creativity.
 - RHS Harlow Carr is restoring the Grade II listed Harrogate Arms to reconnect with the garden's past and the heritage of the nearby spa town of Harrogate.
 - RHS Hyde Hall and RHS Bridgewater will be living experiments, creating arboretums to find the trees best suited to a changing climate.
 - RHS Hyde Hall will become a wildlife haven across its wider estate, including the creation of a Coronation meadow using seed from a local nature reserve.
 - RHS Bridgewater, working with the Chinese community in Greater Manchester, will further develop its Chinese Streamside Garden to celebrate the huge contribution made to British horticulture by the introduction of native Chinese plants.
 - RHS Rosemoor will restore the leat and preserve the kilns where agricultural lime was once produced. This will safeguard local history, conserve wildlife and support sustainable water management.
- We will increase biodiversity monitoring and management so that wildlife can thrive across all five RHS Gardens, so they all provide a rich and diverse refuge.
- We will enable more people to visit our gardens by introducing accessible, green travel plans. We will offer free entry days for community groups on our doorstep, and provide new low-cost entry options for people on low incomes.
- We will research and share our collections to learn from history and explore gardening futures, creating a rich programme of exhibitions, debates and workshops, in person and online.
- We will reimagine Vincent Square in London, our headquarters since 1904. The building has hosted inspiring flower shows, horticultural meetings and historic events, as well as being home to the Lindley Library, one of the world's richest repositories for botanical, horticultural and gardening archives, artwork and publications. We will explore the potential to reinterpret this urban building for the 21st Century, particularly the opportunities within the stunning main hall and its 13-metre glass vaulted roof designed for showing plants.

Build horticulture for the future

By strengthening education, growing skills and networks, and championing sustainable practices



Build horticulture for the future

The RHS has been offering practical training in horticulture for over 200 years. Apprenticeships and studentships form the core of our work-based training programme, and we are proud to help nurture and train this talent of the future. Equally important are the millions of domestic gardeners in the UK who are passionate growers and on the lookout for fresh ideas, knowledge, and skills. With many ways to learn during a lifelong adventure with gardening, we will do more to open up learning to everyone – whatever their level or aspiration.

- We will make sustainable gardening the foundational principle of all our engagement and learning programmes. As our understanding of how to grow sustainably increases, we will continue to ensure it underpins all our horticultural, education and learning activities.
- We will deliver hands-on opportunities to learn about sustainable gardening across all our gardens. We will evolve our provision and create purpose-built learning spaces to enable everyone to experience how to care for the environment and create and maintain a thriving garden ecosystem.
- We will support the horticulture sector to accelerate the UK's transition to peat free gardening, providing specialist technical support for small nurseries, sharing knowledge with the public and profession, and leading a £1 million research programme on sustainable peat alternatives. We will remove peat from all RHS activities by the end of 2025.
- We will grow access to and reinvigorate provision of horticultural and 'green skills' through new onsite facilities and nationwide skills-development programmes. As a leading provider of training in the sector, we will expand this by connecting horticultural knowledge, innovators, employers, and training providers to develop the essential sustainable expertise for careers of the future.
- We will work with schools and other partners to show the broad range of exciting opportunities available through a career in horticulture.
- We will support the professional horticulture career path, providing qualifications and training for those entering the sector. We will enable more people to embark on a career in horticulture by growing our New Shoots initiative – a nationwide programme to grow the number and diversity of people choosing horticulture as a career – with new taster opportunities.
- We will increase our provision for Continuing Professional Development with new online offers and continue to provide bursaries to horticulturists to enhance their knowledge through study, visits, or conferences.
- We will develop existing horticulture networks of professional and amateur experts, working with our Plant Committees and specialist societies, encouraging innovation, and finding ways for more young people to get involved.
- Working with horticultural experts, we will share the outcomes from RHS Plant Trials – helping beginners and seasoned gardeners alike to identify the most reliable and best performing plants for their spaces – as well as translating knowledge in accessible ways through Plant Society-led events, nursery displays at RHS Shows, and using platforms such as the RHS website, social media, podcasts and *The Garden* magazine.

Deliver science solutions for people, gardens & nature

By rooting science across all our work to meet our social and environmental goals




Deliver science solutions for people, gardens and nature

In 2020 we set out an ambitious five-year science and collections strategy to become recognised as the pre-eminent research hub and global knowledge bank for horticultural science. A central plank of this ambition was to create a state-of-the-art science centre at RHS Garden Wisley. With modern laboratories, a new herbarium suite, learning and collaboration spaces, the RHS Hilltop – Home of Gardening Science, opened in June 2021, representing the single largest UK investment in horticultural science.

- With a core team of scientists, advisors and information specialists, PhD studentships and Postdoctoral Fellowships, RHS Hilltop is now the major centre of excellence in gardening science in the world. Working with other universities and research centres, we will continue to develop skills in, and promote the importance and relevance of, horticultural scientific research to encourage and inspire young people, support post-graduate studies, train established scientists and provide evidence to inform and influence government policy.
- We will focus our research on specific areas:
 - **Plant diversity** – we will realise the health and environmental benefits from the use and conservation of cultivated and native plants in UK gardens and provide a single authoritative source for the naming and classification of UK cultivated plants.
 - **Biosecurity and plant health** – we will monitor pests and diseases in gardens, improve their detection and identification, and research control and sustainable management strategies.
 - **Wildlife** – we will research ways to encourage good stewardship of nature in gardens and take an ecological approach to ensure a healthy and sustainable garden ecosystem.
 - **Environmental gardening** – we will enhance knowledge and understanding of how gardening nationally can make big environmental impacts through local individual and collective actions.
- **Climate adaptation, mitigation, and resilience** – we will advance understanding of how cultivated plants, gardens and gardening can respond to a changing climate and how we can harness the potential of plant diversity and soil to help regulate environmental conditions.
- **Social, physical, and mental wellbeing** – we will continue to discover and share the role of plants, gardens and gardening in improving human health in its broadest forms.
- We will develop our Plants for Purpose programme – based on the principles of ‘right plants, right places, right purposes’ – and use the outcomes from understanding the unique characteristics of each cultivated plant to help communities, schools, gardeners and the horticulture and landscape industry to deliver environmental and health benefits and future-proof gardens and cultivated green spaces.
- We will develop our community science projects in partnership with others as an exciting and rewarding way for people to contribute to scientific discovery. We will listen to and analyse the nation’s gardening questions to steer our research, ensuring the science we do is relevant and provides solutions for all gardeners.
- We will continue to grow, share and protect our RHS collections and databases, the backbone of our gardening heritage as well as the foundation of our future research, seeking new ways to unlock data and information and translate our scientific discoveries in the most accessible ways.

Champion the essential role of gardening

By influencing national policy to achieve changes to benefit people, the environment and the economy



Champion the essential role of gardening

Gardening is fundamental to every life, and every society. As such it must be part of the national conversation about education, careers, housing and health, as well as the environment and the horticultural industry. All too often it is not and we will work with our partners including industry leaders, Government leaders, the Environmental Horticulture Group and other national gardening and heritage organisations to champion the value and benefits of horticulture for people and nature.

- We will advocate for skills growth across horticulture so that it is recognised as a fundamental green skill, for gardening to be available in schools, for careers advice to be effective, and for horticultural skills pathways to be accessible, funded, recognised and relevant.
- We will champion the importance of cultivated spaces and how they enhance decisions on urban planning, physical, mental and social health provision, air quality or water management: green corridors in cities, urban allotments, and the ‘right’ plant selection, can all make a big difference to lives.
- We aspire to help developers and urban planners make informed decisions on the range of plants that best suit a local environment, to mitigate high air pollution and improve wellbeing, and provide solutions for local biodiversity, wildlife, and water management.
- We will raise the profile of the UK’s great garden heritage to support the tourist and creative industries, create jobs and contribute to the Government’s agenda of promoting the UK to international audiences.
- We will launch an Annual State of Gardening Report to map trends in UK gardening, gardens and gardeners over time, reporting on the natural, social and economic value, benefits and health of UK gardening. The report will capture long-term benchmarking data, monitor gardening practices, and provide evidence that can be used to inform policy and decision-making at local and national levels.

Unlock our potential

By enabling the RHS to thrive and be a great place to work



The success of our ambitions requires a supportive, empowering and inclusive culture, modern governance and management styles, internal collaboration and cooperation, making the most of technology and flexible ways of working to best serve and support all gardeners. Our people are our most important asset – they are passionate and committed and without them we cannot succeed. We will continue to harness the clear enthusiasm of our colleagues and volunteers for our major commitments to sustainability, diversity and inclusion, underpinned by training and development opportunities.

- We will deliver our diversity action plan to develop our organisation, our employees and volunteers, our brand, operations and marketing activities to be truly inclusive, reflecting all the communities of the UK.
- We will deliver our sustainability targets to be Climate Positive by 2030; Biodiversity Positive by 2025; Biosecurity Neutral by 2025; Water Neutral and Circular Plastic by 2030; and Zero Waste to Landfill by 2030.
- We will support our people so that they can learn from each other and collaborate across all our sites and operations.
- We will invest in and integrate simple and innovative technology solutions to improve capture, presentation and interpretation of our legacy, research and knowledge, and provide the mechanisms to share this information in new and improved ways.
- We will bring together the strength of technology and our people, to provide the best service and support for all gardeners who engage with us – as digital or in-person visitors, volunteers, learners, members and donors.
- We will ensure financial resilience for our work. As a charity, we need to raise funds through commercial income and charitable support to deliver our wide range of activities. We will continue to innovate and develop our financial models so they enable us to support a lifelong adventure with gardening. We will engage more people, growing awareness of the benefits of gardening and the RHS and building on the generosity of the more than 600,000 members and donors who support us year after year, by creating new membership and donation options to help us on our mission to engage more people across the UK.
- We are excited to work with funding bodies and grant-givers who share our passion to help the RHS scale our charitable impact and deliver the benefits of gardening to more schools, communities, and individuals across the nation. And we will continue engaging wider audiences through our existing offers such as shows, books, garden centres and online retail, food and beverage experiences and events, as well as developing new income streams – always with a focus on excellent service, innovation, and efficiency to deliver income to support our wider charitable goals.

Our ways of working

How we support a lifelong adventure with gardening

How we do things – whether creating new gardens, working with communities, developing commercial activities, introducing new initiatives, or forming new partnerships – will be critical to success. We will make sure every project or activity aligns with our new ways of working and have already used these principles to set a framework for how we behave in the workplace.

Sustainable by design

We will ensure sustainability plays a vital role in every aspect of our work, operations and decision-making, as well as in the horticulture supply chain and the actions gardeners and others can take to make positive impacts for nature.

Inclusive by instinct

We will develop our organisation, brand and activities to be truly diverse and inclusive, reflecting all of the UK. We encourage diversity of thinking, background and situation, and recognise the benefits this brings.

Engaging by nature

We will be as much ‘learning’ as ‘learned’, listening, and fostering an exchange of knowledge, ideas and collective working with our audiences. We are welcoming, showing kindness, care and respect so everyone feels valued.

Collaborative in spirit

We share knowledge, expertise and information. We combine innovation with collaboration to find new ways of thinking and engaging and learning from others. We are open to building relationships and partnerships.

Experimental in action

We are not afraid to test new ideas. We will use data, insight and knowledge to make decisions. We will learn, share and move on, accepting that failures are part of the learning journey.

Passionate about purpose

We show passion and ambition to do good for plants, people and the planet. We keep sight of our charitable aims. We respect heritage, sustainability, wellbeing and the benefits of gardening.

Please join us on a lifelong adventure with gardening and celebrate as it transforms lives and the world around us

Our vision is a world where gardening is embraced as a way of life – a source of joy and fulfilment, building healthier lives, stronger communities, and thriving environments. To achieve this **our mission is to be there for everyone on their lifelong adventure with gardening.**



Our ways of working

Sustainable • Inclusive • Engaging • Collaborative • Experimental • Passionate



Be more urban



Involve more young people



Support more beginners



Garden more sustainably



Go more digital



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