

## August 2014: Get out while you can. Here are some ideas...



The following day, Sunday 24th August, brings the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society's Demonstration Allotment Open Day at Bridgend. The event runs from 2.30 to 4pm. There will be hot drinks and home made produce for sale as well as a workshop on Summer Fruit pruning hosted by none other than television's George Anderson. Further details [here](#). The Demonstration Allotment blog can be seen [here](#). The following weekend, Damhead Nursery are having their Open Day and Plant sale on Friday 29th August. Aside from plants there will also be some sculpture exhibitions on site as well as local suppliers selling produce and pruning demonstrations. The Open Day and Plant Sale will get underway from 1pm and will finish at 5 o'clock. More information [here](#).

Further afield, the [Ayr Flower Show](#) and [Dundee Flower and Food Festival](#) are imminent. Click on the links for further details.

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# A Judge writes...

What an honour and a privilege it's been to act as one of the judges for this year's Edinburgh in Bloom competition run by the City of Edinburgh Council and FEDAGA. Myself and the other judges set out early on a beautiful sunny summer's morning to make our way around some of the allotment sites of Edinburgh, our aim - to look at the plots entered into this year's best plot competition. It was a long day and they say you can see a person's personality in their plot, well, by the time we finished we had seen so much personality in so many plots, our heads were spinning!

Our scoring categories were: Quality of Planting and Diversity of Use; Imaginative Layout and Crop Rotation; Green Issues; Visual Appearance and Cleanliness; Notable Features and Something Different.

The general standard of competing plots was very high with many different styles and flavours to compare. It's apparent nowadays that allotment sites don't just serve as places to grow healthy food with which to feed your family, they also serve as important areas of respite within our bustling towns, cities, lifestyles - our very own little plots of "The Good Life".

To all of you who entered, well done - you are an inspiration to us all, keep on digging.

## **A few comments on the runners up (in no particular order):**

**Jan Brogan, Saughton Mains** - Great use of matching tennis balls fitted onto the ends of canes to support netting over her beds. Game, set & match!

**Helen Rowley, Carrick Knowe** - A beautiful mixture of scented flowers, like walking into a sweet shop.

**Patrick Gibb, Dumbryden** - As well as some hefty perennials, we also found a selection of unusual & exotic plants including sea kale and honeyberry. Nice to see a break from the norm.

**Brian Sandell, Midmar** - An enormous, well established plot. Absolutely jam packed with goodies - something for everyone (including the birds and the bees).

**Lucy Hunter, Midmar** - A broad range of plants grown with good evidence of successional planting to ensure long harvesting periods.

**Peter Wright, Lady Road** - No nonsense to the extreme. Not a single square inch of wasted soil and some of the finest espaliers we've seen.

**Lesley McCarthy, Lady Road** - A Swedish themed plot with an adventurous exotic herb bed. Neat and jolly, with colourful nasturtiums growing alongside onions and leeks.

**Heidi O’Guntke, Claremont Park** - Good use of wood chip around blueberry bushes to keep the soil acidic. Scored highly in the visual appearance category.

**John Millen, Inchkeith Court** - More animals nestled amongst the plants on this raised bed than in a zoo!

**Gavin Hamilton, Inchkeith Court** - A very neat and tidy raised bed. Very healthy looking outdoor cucumber.

**Francisco Garcia, Inchkeith Court** - Good inter-planting and five stars for verticality.

**David Simson, Inchkeith Court** - A valued raised bed amongst the Inchkeith Court community.

**Louise Illingworth, Inchkeith Court** - Lots of interesting pots of plants surrounding this raised bed with a good mixture of both vegetables and flowers to attract some wildlife into this little urban oasis.

**Nadia Russell, Warriston** - Great polytunnel in which was growing a melon of significant size, amazing sweetcorn, three varieties of heritage tomatoes and lots more. Innovative use of plot by having regular visits from a local children’s nursery for growing and outdoor education. Just goes to show, you’re never too young to get involved in gardening.

**Stephanie Paxton, Inverleith** - A good balance of fruit, vegetables and flowers. A relaxing seated area under a wooden arbor in which to sit and enjoy the view.

**Felicitas McFie, Inverleith** - Lovely big lavender bush, interesting wooden archway, nice use of sunken tree trunk slices as stepping stones across the beds. A very pleasing architectural plot.

**And this year’s winners:**



**3rd Place**

**Pauline Valentine, Redhall** - A very calm and peaceful plot with particularly good use of ivy and other shade lovers all the way down one side of the plot to provide shelter for animals and insects. Scored highly in the green issues category due to excellent composting practice, use of homemade liquid fertiliser and water harvesting.



As well as having a good number of rotational vegetable beds, fruit beds and a well stocked greenhouse, there was also a large well established bed of soothing flowers, ferns and shrubs that provided a lovely soft focus to the edge of the plot.

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**2nd Place**

**Neiria McClure & Margaret Munro, Claremont Park** - So many good points to this plot. Superb to see plot holders growing and using their own bamboo canes. A lovely and practical feature was the use of sunken upturned glass bottles lining the pathways around the beds which harness the sunshine and act as radiators of warmth deep into the soil. A very well stocked greenhouse including the first aubergines we'd seen.



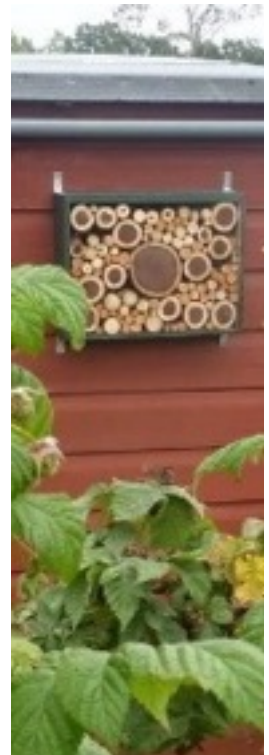
An almost secret pond that played host to plenty of flora and fauna. An enticing seating area to look out from with a wonderful splay of raspberries growing overhead like a grapevine. Good use of homemade compost. A plot that truly shows the more you put in, the more you get back out.





### 1st Place

**Lucie & Stuart McKenzie, Inverleith** - Full marks for quality of planting and diversity of use. A huge range of plants grown, both perennial and annual, all of which looked to be in tip top condition. There was so much to encourage beneficial wildlife - homemade insect hotels and a miniature caravan shaped bird box to heavily scented blooms of all sorts, areas of sedum growing between stepping stone slabs that ran between the beds to cool shady hiding places, this plot was alive! Equally, there were plenty of things to detract unwanted wildlife on the crops such as beer filled slug traps, a scare owl and pussycat and also lots of companion planting amongst the vegetables.



Marvelous composting techniques and plenty of evidence of sustainable practices being used were witnessed in the form of recycling, water harvesting wherever possible and green manure being grown. A nicely maintained seating area with grass and surrounding scented flowers offered us a place to sit and discuss our findings. This is a very productive plot that makes you smile as soon as you set any of your senses upon it. One of the first things we saw that made us smile as we approached the plot was a pair of old jeans standing upright with a hanging basket of flowers sitting inside the waistband, as far as the “something different” category goes, that’s certainly something we hadn’t seen on any other plots.



# Wildlife Report



Helen says: I found some pretty little creatures on my lavender bush today and when I googled them I discovered they are [rosemary beetles](#). Not very nice despite their pretty appearance (they look like metallic ladybirds) so please check your rosemary and lavender bushes and destroy any of the critters you find. I have reported their appearance to the RHS as they are monitoring their spread - I wondered if the hot summer lured them up north!

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# Vertical Gardening



Kathleen Jackson writes: I learned about vertical gardening at a recent workshop on [Ecovillage Design Education](#) at Findhorn. I have since found it in several books. We planted potatoes in the vertical garden we started, but you can plant anything that would grow in the ground in a vertical garden! Apparently carrots turn out a little wonky shaped, and I



would imagine other root veggies do too, but who cares about the shape if you have yummy carrots!

As a general rule, it would take 13 to 18 times more ground space to plant the same amount in a horizontal garden as you can in a vertical garden.

To make a vertical garden like the one pictured here:

Take a section of galvanized wire fencing with about 2" holes. Count out 36 squares, and cut the section. Wrap the fencing around to make a cylinder; secure the ends together with twistie ties (this way you can open it, and then re-use it next year).

From the bottom of the cylinder, you want to make four wings. Make three cuts, up about 5 squares (or 10") each, using the existing edge as the fourth cut. Bend the wings out so the structure will stand up. We buried these wings, but I'm sure they could be weighted down with rocks or something. They function to keep the whole thing stable and keep it from blowing over in the wind.



So, then you start by putting in organic matter. The great thing is, you don't need to put in soil! You can stuff it with compost or other dead material. We took four wheelbarrows into the forest and picked up stuff off the forest floor. Put about 8" of material on the bottom, and then place seeds/potatoes on top. Add another 6" of organic matter, another layer of seeds, another 6", more seeds, and so on. We actually then put another cylinder (without the wings cut out) on top to make a double-decker garden. It wound up to be about six feet tall.

We planted potatoes, by throwing in four whole potatoes per planting row. You wind up with 10-20 potatoes for every one you plant. Next

autumn the garden will be opened up, and will be full of potatoes. The leftover organic matter will fall to the ground and help to create topsoil, and the garden can be re-twistie-tied and used again.

That's it! Simple, space-saving, and productive. I hope you find this useful!

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## Half price bare root maiden whips

FEDAGA is looking at offering half price maiden whip fruit trees to members. If an order of 25 or more is made the price per tree drops from £15 to £7.50. Visit [Talatón Plants](#) website and see if there's anything of interest. Let [FEDAGA](#) know what you wish to order. Once we have enough orders to proceed we'll get back to you and arrange for payment.

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## Raising Spirits - Allotments, Well-being and Community



Judy Wilkinson writes: Jenny Mollison, Rona Wilkinson and I have written a book about allotments 'Raising Spirits - allotments, well-being and community' as part of the [Postcards from Scotland](#) series. These are small books edited by Carol Craig and published by [Argyll Publishing](#) and the [Centre for Confidence and Well-being](#).

Our book will be launched at the Trades Hall, 85 Glassford Street, Glasgow G1 1UH (thanks to the [Incorporation of Gardeners](#)) on Tuesday August 26th from 5pm to 7pm.

We wrote the book because we felt there is a need to capture some of the passion we feel for our plots, explain the benefits allotments bring

to all kinds of people as well as analyse the issues that we occasionally encounter.

We hope the Book Launch will be a celebration of allotments, give us all an opportunity to talk about our plots and also collect thoughts about the new allotments legislation that has just been introduced into the [Scottish Parliament](#)(first new law about allotments for 64 years!!) This will have an impact on the future of allotments in Scotland. The Launch is open to everyone and we would like plot-holders and other interested people to come on 26th August and take the opportunity to network and discuss issues, both horticultural and political.

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## And finally

It's official, it's definitely a great summer when you have a tomato plant growing in the gutter!

Presumably self seeded from a waste bucket or perhaps a discarded sandwich.



