

Scotland's  
**GARDENS**  
Scheme  
OPEN FOR CHARITY

INFORMATION FOR GARDEN OWNERS

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## Introduction

Thank you so much for deciding to open your garden for charity with Scotland's Gardens Scheme (SGS). Because of your hard work, you will benefit the charities we support (Maggie's Cancer Centres, The Queen's Nurses Institute of Scotland (district nurses), Perennial (the Gardener's Benevolent Fund) and the Garden Fund for The National Trust for Scotland) as well as perhaps your own elected charity. In addition, you will give a huge amount of pleasure to many visitors. You are joining a long tradition of community fundraising and we are pleased to welcome you.

For more information about our beneficiaries, see:

Maggie's: <https://www.maggiescentres.org>

Queen's Nurses Institute of Scotland: <https://www.qnis.org.uk>

Perennial: <http://perennial.org.uk>

The Gardens fund for the National Trust for Scotland: <http://www.nts.org.uk/Gardens/>

You would not be opening your garden with us if the organisers of Scotland's Gardens Scheme did not know that your garden was up to the mark and of interest. It is YOUR garden and you have every right to be proud of what you have achieved with it; whether you are opening for the first time, or whether you are an old hand!

The Scotland's Gardens Scheme team, consisting of your local organising committee and the SGS Office, have many years of experience which we are very happy to share with you. We will provide you with a range of marketing materials and will actively help to promote your opening. However, as in all things, a certain amount of preparation and understanding of what it takes to make a day go smoothly helps. We hope that the following information will assist you in achieving this.

## Planning your Garden Opening

### Type of Opening

By far the most successful way of opening your garden with Scotland's Gardens Scheme is to do so on a **Specific Date**, or several dates. The most popular is a Sunday opening, though Saturdays can also work well. Weekend openings are becoming more and more popular, and prove especially helpful during times of year when weather can be variable, such as early May. And the most popular opening time is 2-5pm, though this is often extended especially for village or group openings.

Some Garden Owners choose to open over a range of dates, or **Regular** opening. Such openings do not tend to bring as many visitors, even over the season the total takings are usually less than that of a Specific Date opening. But this option may be more appropriate for the needs of some.

There is also the option to open **By Arrangement**, whereby visitors make a prior appointment. We have found that this type of opening does not bring many visitors unless a good amount of effort is made by the Garden Owner to reach potential visitors. But this type of opening can work well for group visits, such as WRI or gardening clubs, who like to arrange group visits for their members. The SGS Office plans to look for more opportunities to reach out to such groups for our By Arrangement gardens.

Note that many Garden Owners decide to choose a variety of the above open day types, for instance to be open on a Specific Day but also happy to have groups arrange to visit by appointment.

There is also the possibility to open as a SGS **Plant Sale**. This is appropriate where the focus of the open day is very much on the sale of plants, and is different than an opening having a plant stall.

This type of opening should be coordinated with the local District. There may or may not be a garden open at the same time.

## Date of Opening

You will want to choose a time of year when your garden looks at its best, though for some gardens this can be quite flexible. You must work closely with your District Organiser to choose your date because he/she will be trying to create a schedule for all the garden open dates in the District with minimal overlap. Sometimes, depending on the size of the district, two or more gardens may have to open on the same date, but we try to see that there is a good distance between these. Linking multiple gardens up into a group opening when in close proximity can also be an option.

## Charity

There are several charitable options available for you to choose for the money raised during your opening. You may choose to have all of the proceeds donated to Scotland's Gardens Scheme. In this case the money raised, net of expenses, will go to Scotland's Gardens Scheme beneficiaries who are presently Maggie's Cancer Care Centres, Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland (QNIS), Perennial, and the Garden Fund for the National Trust for Scotland (NTS).

You may also nominate a charity of your own choice to receive 60% of your opening day's overall takings. This is a popular option. And this approach can offer the added advantage that the elected charity will often manage your teas during your opening. Please note that, constitutionally, the charities that we support must be registered within the UK.

There is also a third possibility, to make a donation to Scotland's Gardens Scheme, but this option is **only available for commercially based gardens** which have their own overhead to cover. In this case, a minimal donation is expected and the 60% elected charity may not be appropriate. Discuss this with your District Organiser if appropriate.

## Admission Charges

The average entrance fee for a Scotland's Gardens Scheme opening is £4.00. This can vary by the size of garden, with small gardens opening for less (eg: £3.00) and larger gardens and village openings charging more (eg: £5.00-£7.00). The appropriate amount can also vary by region across Scotland, so you should seek guidance on this point from your local District organising committee.

We recommend that you allow free entry to accompanied children as this will help make your opening more family friendly (basing child status on being accompanied by a parent will help you avoid the need to challenge guests and/or ask for ID, and certainly the prouder young person may insist on being counted as an adult!). We also recommended that you avoid the complication of multiple prices (eg: discount for OAPs).

## Special Features of your Opening

### Teas

You will find that for some of your visitors the main reason for coming is to partake of your teas; and often from the moment that they arrive! It is not compulsory for you to provide teas but it does make a big difference to the amount of money that you take. But as the Garden Owner, you might think it quite daunting to organise both the opening and the teas.

Normally the nominated charity will manage your teas, after all they will receive 60% of the day's overall takings. Contact your elected charity and see if they would be willing to do this. Occasionally this may not be possible, for instance where your chosen charity has no local branch. In this case,

contact your local District team or the SGS Office and we will try to find you support, for example from one of our beneficiaries. The remaining monies taken on your open day, net of expenses to promote and support your opening, will go to the SGS beneficiaries and they are often quite willing to help at individual garden openings.

But do remember that if your elected charity does help, they will need to hand over the event's tea takings to be counted towards the overall day's total, along with admissions and any stalls. They will then receive 60% of the total (which is really always more than just the tea takings).

In any event, teas can be quite straight forward – tea or coffee, milk and sugar. Squash for children. And a variety of baking, such as biscuits, scones with cream or butter and jam, cakes, and perhaps sandwiches. It's often not that difficult to find people willing to do a bit of baking, and a good assortment is always nice to offer on the day. But also think about food allergies and intolerances. Be sure to identify baking which contain nuts, and consider offering gluten-free and/or dairy free options.

The next question is how many teas to prepare for. Think about where you will serve the teas – a barn or outbuilding, gazebo, seated around the garden, even a front hall (though do be mindful of security when having visitors in your house). How many people will you be able to seat? Consider that you will turn over those seats every 30-45 minutes. Then think about how long your opening will last and then you can figure out how many teas to prepare for (seats \* number of 30-45 minute intervals). Of course weather will have a lot to do with your final numbers, but you can always sell off extra baking if you think you'll have left-overs.

And of course you will need to think of crockery, or sourcing paper cups and plates. Your charity may be able to provide this, or consider contacting a local church or village hall.

Price the teas simply with as few permutations of change as possible. As a guide we suggest:

- Simple Teas (tea & biscuit) minimum £1.50 (Teas)
- Tea + home baking minimum £3.00 (Homemade Teas)
- Cream Teas minimum £3.50 (Cream Teas)

You might also want to offer a discount for children. And remember that you will need to arrange for a cash float for your teas with change appropriate to your pricing structure.

We prefer to avoid the situation where the teas are provided by a commercial tea room/caterers. If you are tending towards this decision, please chat with your District Organiser to see if we can consider an alternative. There are situations where it is best to contract out the teas, and in this case a minimum of £10 plus 20% of the tea takings should be donated towards your open day.

Especially when serving teas, you should consider how you might provide access to lavatories and hand washing facilities. This can be especially important to more vulnerable visitors. If you are lucky, you will be able to provide a loo in an outbuilding. If not, you'll need to consider where nearby you can direct visitors or how you might provide safe access into your house. There is always the dreaded Portaloo, though this will have a heavy impact on the funds raised.

### Plant Stall

Organising a plant stall is a tremendous way of raising more funds. Visitors tend to support such a stall very strongly and where possible it is recommended that one is always set up. Plants are generally sourced by the garden owner, friends and the local Scotland's Gardens Scheme team and are an excellent way of getting rid of surplus stock. Your SGS local team will assist in the pricing of the plants if required.

On some occasions a plant stall may be provided by a commercial plantsman/nursery and when this occurs a minimum £10 plus 20% of the sales should be donated to your overall day's takings.

### Activities

You might also want to arrange for additional activities such as a raffle, children's activities or tombola. These may or may not be fund raising, for example a children's garden-based quiz would usually be free, but you might want to raise additional funds with a tombola.

### Other Stalls

You may wish, or be asked, to have additional stalls at your garden opening. These can increase the revenue from the day quite considerably, for little effort on your behalf. You need to provide the stall holders with a site and, in some cases, other requirements such as power, water, even a table. It is recommended that stall holders should be charged a minimum fee of £25.00 or £10.00 plus 20% of turnover. You need to be happy that the stallholders hold appropriate liability insurance for themselves and their products.

A supply of the Guidebooks, particularly if you are opening early in the season, is helpful and also adds to the overall revenue. Tell your District team if you are willing to sell them and we are happy to let the takings be added to your day's takings.

## Annual Registration for your Garden

Every autumn, Scotland's Gardens Scheme collects the information about each opening for the following year. This may seem early, but we like to have our annual Guidebook available in time for Christmas, and also in time for the January snowdrop openings.

If you will be opening for the first time with Scotland's Gardens Scheme, you will be asked to fill out the **Scotland's Gardens Scheme Registration Information**. The content of this form must be added into our database and you should check with your District to decide which of the following methods will be best for you:

- Many Districts are happy to complete the actual computer entry for their Garden Owners, OR.
- If you will complete your own garden's database entry, your District or the SGS Office will provide you with a login for this purpose.

After your first year of opening, you will continue to check your database details each year, either yourself on database, or with the help of your district.

Highlights of information required for your registration process, and not otherwise covered in this Information Pack, include the following:

### Permission (for Editorial Feature)

This section provides the SGS Office and your local team with the necessary permissions to prompt your garden opening. Please check which level of permissions you would like us to seek for promotional purposes:

- Please check **always** so that we have permission to pass on your garden open information to journalists for promotional and editorial feature purposes. Journalists usually require almost instant information, and this option allows us to be responsive. Newspaper and magazine features will always increase your visitors! We are sometimes also asked for contact details

from groups such as Beechgrove Gardens or specialist photographers and this will also fall within this permission category.

- Check **On request** if you require us to check with you before releasing any of your information. Note that depending on the nature of the request, we may need to miss your garden if we're under a tight deadline.
- Check **Never** if you do not want any promotion aside from the basic SGS marketing materials.

Please note that we will NEVER release your information or photographs to anyone for any other purposes than promoting your charity open day. From time to time we do receive requests from other interested parties and we will ALWAYS refer these to you directly.

### Open Type, Date, Features & Admission charges

These topics have been discussed previously. But please note that SGS will **only promote your charity opening times**. This information is displayed in the guidebook and website as well as various SGS promotional materials. All opening details in this section, therefore, are only for charity. If you also open your garden for commercial purposes and plan to keep the takings, these opening dates/times can only be described in the "Other Details" section. (Note that if you do open for commercial reasons, you may wish to look into membership with Discover Scottish Gardens [www.discovercottishgardens.org](http://www.discovercottishgardens.org) )

### Descriptive Information for the Guidebook

- The **Description of Garden** is very important and this will "sell" your garden to potential visitors. It should be both succinct and inspiring. This is no time to be modest! Tell the reader what is special about your garden – such as your plant collections, architectural features, views, etc.
- Use the **Other Details** to add information about your opening, such as facilities, entertainment, special stalls, features about your teas, additional opening dates/times.
- And please add **Directions**, as appropriate to find your garden.
- And finally, provide information about additional features, including:
  - National Plant Collection, if you hold one
  - Champion Tress, if you have any
  - Wheelchair access
  - Whether you allow dogs on lead to visit
  - Whether you offer B&B

### Photographs

Photographs are essential to promote your garden. A website garden open page with no photographs is a very sad page indeed! And if we haven't a photo of your garden, journalists will not consider offering you editorial features. Your photographs should work well with your **Description of Garden** and **Keywords** (above), displaying what has been described. Please note that journalists are especially interested in new gardens, so don't miss your opportunity to get a bit of newspaper coverage for your garden!

### Groups of Gardens

If your garden is part of a group, such as a village opening or linked with other gardens, you will need to identify this in your registration information. You must work with your District Organiser or the SGS Office to get your group **set-up** with a name and identifier on the SGS database. Once this is

done, then you should note this name on the registration form, or select it as you enter your details into the SGS database.

Group openings must have a primary contact, so be sure to see that the appropriate person selects this option. Note that it's not necessary to add details about each individual garden, and sometimes all the openers are not finalised at the time of SGS's deadline. But if the gardens are known, they can all be entered. There is a form – ***Scotland's Gardens Scheme Individual Registration for Garden Group Member*** – for this purpose. Nonetheless, do be sure to see that everyone opening in the group receives this Garden Owners' Information Pack.

## Promoting your Garden Opening

### Posters

With the help of the local Scotland's Gardens Scheme team, posters with your opening details are available in a variety of sizes. You will probably be the best resource to decide where these are placed: consider local news agents, libraries, garden centres and tourism centres. Let your local SGS team know how many, and what sizes of, posters you'd like. (There is also an opportunity within the ***Scotland's Gardens Scheme Registration Information***, under Special Instructions for Posters, to let us know if you'd like anything special for your poster, such as special information, or for us to combine any multiple opening days.)

### Newspaper Promotion

Where possible, Scotland's Gardens Scheme try to avoid the expense of paid advertising and instead looks to promote our garden open days through press releases to local papers. After all, local papers are interested in local stories and your hard work to offer your private garden to the public for charitable purposes is just what they are looking for. Speak to your District team to find out more about how your garden will be promoted as they manage the local press releases.

We also look for opportunities for editorials which can boost visitation significantly. But to do this we must have both good photographs of your garden, and your permission for editorials (see above). It's also very helpful if you make sure that we are aware of any special features about your garden, through your description information – quirky and unique qualities always interest the journalists!

### Word of Mouth

Never underestimate the value of "word of mouth" as an essential reason why people will come to your garden. When we run market research at openings, time and time again we learn that the majority of visitors are local (eg: come from within 30 miles) and they learned of the garden opening through word of mouth (eg: the owner or friend). So be sure to tell everyone you know that you're opening your garden for charity!

### Other Promotional Activities

Scotland's Gardens Scheme will also arrange for a variety of additional promotional activities for your opening. Your garden will be listed in our annual guidebook (10,000 distributed each year), on our website ([www.scotlandsgardens.org](http://www.scotlandsgardens.org)), and in districts/region leaflets distributed by your local SGS team (over 65,000 in 2016). We also promote through our corporate Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ScotlandsGardens/>) and Twitter (@scotgardens) accounts and many Districts also manage their own local Facebook pages. And we provide our garden open listings to a variety of digital "what's on" networks across Scotland (such as The List).

## How can your Nominated Charity help?

Your elected (60%) charity can also help you to promote your opening to their network of supporters, thus widening your reach. Ask them to advertise your opening on their social media (eg: Facebook and Twitter) and in any relevant newsletters. If appropriate, have them put up your posters and offer SGS leaflets.

## Before the Public Arrive at your Garden

### Road Signs

Is your garden easily found? The Scotland's Gardens Scheme's annual Guidebook will give general directions but you can never underestimate the ability of people to get lost, despite the ubiquitous use of satellite navigation! So plan to use the road signs and banners, which can be arranged by your local SGS committee. These will include large yellow arrows and banners. Place these signs, on the morning of your opening, strategically on major local crossroads to lead visitor in. You might also benefit from putting up a sign or banner earlier in the week with **Garden Open This Sunday**, for example, to prompt your local commuters to visit.

### Plan for Helpers on the Day

You need to site the place where the entrance money is collected at a location which everyone has to pass to get in to your garden. This might be at the entrance to your garden, or to your car parking, for perhaps a village/church hall in the case of a village opening. Nonetheless, you are going to need 1-2 people to manage your entrance activity. Remember that you will need a float for the entrance which corresponds with your entrance price (and the inevitability of receiving several £20 notes in the first hour of opening).

You will also need helpers should you offer teas, activities and/or a plant stall. And in the case of teas, think carefully of how you will manage everything and expect to have helpers to serve, clear, take money and to wash dishes. As mentioned above, hopefully your elected charity will relieve you of the tea responsibility.

### Car Parking

Think about where it will be best for visitors to park. Depending on your layout, it may be helpful to design a one-way system for traffic in order to avoid bottle-necks. It's also always worth having a contingency car parking plan for those days when the turnout exceeds your wildest dreams. Do you need a Plan B for parking when the weather is very wet? And remember that you may need parking helpers.

### Map of the Garden/Village opening

It can be useful to provide a simple map of your garden, especially if it is a large one. But it really can be essential for a village or group opening to help visitors get from here to there. Nothing elaborate is required, in fact simple can be easiest for everyone. Your local District team can help with you by testing out your proposed map before your open day.

### Accessibility

If your garden has wheelchair access, you must be prepared to explain particular aspects of this as well as offer the option of Disabled Parking. Help these visitors understand how best to visit your garden.

## Floats

You will need to arrange floats for each of the paid activities you plan to have “on the go” - for example: entrance, teas, plant stall, activities, and/or other stalls. And remember to plan your float change to be appropriate to your price – for example, lots of 50p coins will be needed if teas are priced at £3.50. Note: it’s quite nice to provide the tea float even if you have asked your charity to manage this.

## Internal Garden Signs

You’ll also need to plan for signs within your garden, and these will be provided by your local District team. Such laminated signs will include a selection of arrows and labels (such as entrance, car park, disabled parking, teas, plant stall, exit, no admittance, etc.) which you can place around to help direct visitors appropriately around your garden and it’s features. The SGS team will also be happy to create any special sign(s) which you might need, such as “slippery when wet” or “please keep off”.

## “Insuring” a Successful Day

### Risk assessment

It may sound a bit corporate, but it’s quite important that you run through a risk assessment of your garden. It’s really not as daunting as it sounds. You need to think about what sorts of things could go wrong where someone might get hurt, and then consider what you might do to keep that from happening. So sit down and make a list that includes:

- Things that could happen
- What you can do to prevent this

Following is an example:

Things that could be dangerous	What we can do to prevent this
Children could go into our deep pond	Put up a special sign saying “Deep water, please keep children away”
If it’s a rainy day, someone might slip on the bridge.	Put up a sign saying “slippery when wet”.
A tree limb could fall if it’s a windy day (or not)	Have the tree surgeon round before the open day.
Children could get hurt on our climbing frame and trampoline	Decide whether to sign post it as “please keep off”, or “equipment used entirely at user’s risk, parents must supervise children” or have it supervised.
Avoid the risk of someone getting burnt by hot tea.	Serve tea to visitors seated at tables. Don’t have visitors serve themselves buffet style.

We do not recommend charging for the use of equipment, such as children’s play sets, as this implies a degree of responsibility on your behalf.

## Liability Insurance

It is regretful but a symptom of our modern age that Liability Insurance is a subject that cannot be ignored. As such Scotland’s Gardens Scheme have arranged cover for garden owners and organisers of plant sales.

The “liability” to which we refer is – **Public, Employers and Product Liability**. Public Liability is essentially the duty of care, beholden upon all of us, to third parties. We are all expected to behave in a reasonable manner and take all reasonable steps to prevent undue hazard to others.

Even with the best will in the world things can go wrong. A person may get injured as a result of your alleged inadequacies and seek redress. That is why the majority of household insurance policies have a section which gives cover providing protection against these circumstances. In the case of a garden opening or associated events, it is quite easy to think of a circumstance where something may go wrong. A loose stone step in a path causing a fall...

The Scotland's Gardens Scheme public liability insurance covers all owners who open their gardens or hold plant sales for the Charity. However, this cover does not apply to garden openings that are not for the benefit of Scotland's Gardens Scheme, nor if the garden owner has other, more specific public liability insurance in place. Examples include where a household, commercial or estate policy already provides cover for public garden opening.

In the same vein the Scotland's Gardens Scheme cover extends to include **Employers Liability** insurance in respect of volunteers who help garden owners with the preparation of a garden opening or with its smooth running. This also includes casual and occasional employees in so far as they have been involved with a Scotland's Gardens Scheme event.

**Product Liability:** Producers have a responsibility for any injuries caused by their products. In the instance of a garden opening one possible area of liability is the provision of teas and the food sold. Providing teas and food is a potentially fraught area. It would be absurd for a volunteer who has provided scones etc. to take out a products liability policy, or even read every word on the subject produced by the Food Standards Agency. We would expect the word "reasonable" to come into play in any claim.

For example, we are not talking of a commercial enterprise such as a restaurant where different and perhaps higher standards would apply. All one can expect is that "all reasonable precautions" are taken to prevent injury to third parties. However, having the cover is a better option than not having it and Scotland's Gardens Scheme policy provides this cover.

It is equally important for stallholders to carry their own products liability insurance. If they do not and a product's claim does arise, you as the host may be targeted.

It is very easy to get over concerned on the subject of Insurance; trying to cross every "t" and dot every "i". Remember what is "reasonable" to expect. If in doubt, please feel free to discuss this with your local helpers or the SGS office.

### Security/Theft/Breakages

It makes sense to follow the subject of insurance with that of security. It is possible that a nefarious character or two may take the opportunity of being "invited" to your garden to "case the joint".

Some points to bear in mind include:

- Identify the area to which you want the public to have access and any area where access is to be restricted.
- Secure gardening equipment in sheds.
- Restrict access to the house, keep valuables out of sight and draw ground floor curtains.
- Secure the house as far as possible locking doors and windows where appropriate.

As Scotland's Gardens Scheme insurance does not cover theft or breakages we strongly recommend you to inform your own insurers that the garden opening is happening. Your insurers may simply note the fact or apply terms to your cover. Any terms may be unwelcome but it is better to have restricted cover than none at all.

## After your Garden Opening

Just before your opening, your local Treasurer should provide you with a Garden Owner's Donation Form to report your day's revenue as well as instructions for submitting the takings. Please complete this in a timely manner (eg: within 7 days). Your Treasurer will then send a cheque to your elected charity along with a receipt requesting them to acknowledge receipt of this donation on your behalf. Once this receipt is signed and returned, your Treasurer will notify you with a copy of this receipt.

Remember, it is your garden and you are doing a service by opening it to the public for charity. Some days there will be a flood of visitors; on others for no apparent reason hardly any; and then of course the weather can work against you. Do not be concerned about numbers. And do, please, enjoy your opening day. We are, for one, incredibly appreciative of your hard work. Thank you for opening your garden with Scotland's Gardens Scheme.

## Useful Contacts

If you need anything, please consult the Scotland's Gardens Scheme team who are there to help you.

### **Your Local District Team:**

*(please fill in the local contact details)*

### **Scotland's Gardens Scheme Office contact details:**

Address: 23 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DN  
Telephone: 0131 226 3714  
Email: [Info@scotlandsgardens.org](mailto:Info@scotlandsgardens.org)

Our Office Manager is Hazel Reid ([hazel@scotlandsgardens.org](mailto:hazel@scotlandsgardens.org)),  
National Organiser is Terrill Dobson ([terrill@scotlandsgardens.org](mailto:terrill@scotlandsgardens.org)), and  
Marketing Office is Imogen McCaw ([imogen@scotlandsgardens.org](mailto:imogen@scotlandsgardens.org)).