

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

Preparing Garden Open Press Releases

Organisers sharing “How to” Advice

A number of Districts are trying to use press releases rather than paid advertising to promote their garden openings. Gillie Drapper in Stirlingshire and Jeanette Ogilvie in Angus & Dundee have been using free Press Releases for their garden openings with much success for several years now. Gillie managed a 2-page editorial spread recently in her regional newspaper The Stirling Observer and Jeanette boasts of 100% take up in 2015 by the national paper, The Dundee Courier.

From Gillie Drapper, Stirlingshire

Following is a bit of guidance from Gillie about how she prepares her Press Releases.

First, decide which papers you will target:

- Identify papers in your local area by using Google and choose Editorial or News contact details
- Research your local area for village newsletters and contact them.
- Don't just stay in your area for papers - go 30 mile radius of your district or within easy driving.
- Create an email distribution list. I do this in an EXCEL spreadsheet for easy copying and split it into two list: weekly and monthly papers.

Prepare your PR materials for the upcoming year:

- Contact Head Office and ask for an electronic listing of your garden information from the book/database. The garden email mail also be helpful.
- At the beginning of the year I copy all of Stirlingshire's garden open details, received form Head Office, into a WORD doc. (see Attachment 1). This is what I work from for each press release.
- I also create a WORD doc with Scotland's Gardens logo in the header and charity number and my contact details in the footer and use this for each press release (see Attachments 2 & 3).
- You will also need a selection of high resolution photographs (eg: 5MB) for each of your gardens. If you don't have these the office can help here as well.

Then, prepare your specific Press Releases:

- At the beginning of the year, I send the complete listing to all my papers letting them know to contact me for photographs (see Attachment 2).
- To local magazines/monthlies, I send at the beginning of each month the gardens that are opening in the following month plus photographs.
- For weekly openings, I send the Wed/Thurs the week before the opening and include 2/3 photos of high resolution (eg: 5MB) as an attachment (NOT in the press release) (see Attachments 3). If you use the text from the book you do not need to contact the owner to proof read but it is

courtesy to do so especially with a new owner. It also shows you are actively helping to get the public to their opening.

Sending Press Releases:

- I cut and paste the garden information into my headed paper
- From my EXCEL list of contact emails, I copy 15 email addresses into my email, being sure to use BCC for privacy (tip: Control K will make them reappear in an orderly fashion!).
- I then ensure that I give a useful and detailed title (eg: Kilewnan Cottage, Fintry garden opens on Sunday 31st May 2015 on behalf of Scotland's Gardens).
- And always thank the papers for their continued support!
- Once the email is in my sent box, I then can forward it – remove FW: from the title and your details and then copy the next batch into the BCC line.
- Don't hesitate to ring any of the papers and "chat them up" – if they know you are sending PR's on a regular basis they seem more amenable!

If you have any questions feel free to contact me and I will try to point you in the right direction – Good Luck!

From Jeanette Ogilvie, Angus & Dundee

My process for preparing Press Releases for Angus is probably quite similar to what is done by Gillie. On a rainy afternoon (we have a few of those, don't we) I sit down and prepare all my Press Releases for the season. I create a WORD document for each garden that will be open. In this I keep it simple and include only the information from the guidebook (see Attachment 4 for an example). I don't think it's a good idea to use too many words because I think this may keep the newspaper from finding a spot to fit in my release.

I then create a schedule for myself listing when I will need to submit the Press Release for each garden. I send to the local Johnston Press papers and also to the national Dundee Courier. They have different due dates: one is a weekly paper with a Monday noon deadline and the other is a daily and I submit the Thursday before for a Friday/Saturday listing. On the appropriate date, I email my prepared Press Release along with 2-3 high resolution photographs. So far this works very well.

I do try to have a reasonable relationship with these papers, for example we always invite them to our annual drinks party. Though I must admit, they don't always come.

Attachment 1: Example of Working Information

GARDEN	DATE/TIMES	DESCRIPTION
<p>WEST PLEAN HOUSE Denny Road, by Stirling FK7 8HA</p>	<p>Opening Times: for Snowdrop Festival Sunday 28th February 1:00pm - 4:00pm Disabled Access: Full Admission: £4.00, children free Charities: Scottish Motor Neurone Disease Assⁿ 40%, the net remaining to SG Beneficiaries</p>	<p>Beautiful woodland walks with snowdrops in February and March. This well established garden includes the site of an Iron Age homestead and panoramic views over seven counties. There are woodlands with mature rhododendrons, specimen trees, extensive lawns, shrubs and a walled garden with a wide variety of vegetables. Includes woodland walk with planting of azaleas and rhododendrons. Other Details: Tea or coffee available by donation; Plant Stall; Dogs on leads. Directions: Leave all routes at Junction 9 roundabout where M9/M80 converge. Take the A872 for Denny, go less than a mile, turn left at the house sign and immediately after lodge cottage. Carry on up the drive.</p>
<p>GARTMORE VILLAGE PLANT SALE The Village Hall Main Street Gartmore FK8 3RN NEW</p>	<p>Opening Times: Plant sale Saturday 7 May 10:00am - 12:30pm Disabled Access: Full Admission: £3.00, accompanied children free Charities: Crossroads Caring Scotland (West Stirling) 40%, the net remaining to SG Beneficiaries</p>	<p>Big plant sale to include plants from Gargunnoch House Gardens and other sources. There will be demonstrations in the Hall of how to present produce for Horticultural Shows. It is the 100th anniversary of the Gartmore Horticultural Society; they also hosted Gardener's Question Time in September 2015. Other Details: Please note this is a Saturday! Teas/coffees and homebaking in the Hall. Directions: Gartmore Village is accessed via a loop road off the A81.</p>
<p>MILSEYBANK Bridge of Allan FK9 4NB</p>	<p>Opening Times: Sunday 22 May 2:00pm - 5:00pm By arrangement 1 April - 31 May Disabled Access: Full Admission: £4.00, accompanied children free Charities: Strathcarron Hospice 40%, the net remaining to SG Beneficiaries</p>	<p>Wonderful and interesting sloping garden with outstanding views, terraced for ease of access. Woodland with bluebells, rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias, and many other unusual plants, including a big variety of meconopsis. This is a true plantsman's garden. Other Details: Teas at Lecropt Kirk Hall on 22 May only. Plant stall at Milseybank. Disabled parking only at the house, otherwise at the Kirk Hall or the Station Car Park. Dogs on lead; Homemade Teas; Plant stall. Directions: Situated on A9, 1 mile from junction 11, M9 and a ¼ mile from Bridge of Allan. Milseybank is at the top of the lane at Lecropt Nursery, 250 yards from Bridge of Allan train station.</p>

Attachment 2: Example of Start of Season Email



There are 5 new gardens which may be of interest for you to do a special feature on – if so, please contact me to arrange viewing

There are also new 2 events – Big plant sale at Gartmore Village (7th May) and Harvest Lunch Easter Culmore, Kippen (9th October)

Gardens opening for the Snowdrop Festival are: West Plean House; Duntreath Castle; Gargunnock House Garden; Tamano; The Linns.

Some gardens open on more than one occasion during the season – dates are listed within the garden information

Photographs are available for the majority of the gardens – please contact me direct

Most gardens offer stalls and teas: information included in the descriptions

13 gardens open by arrangement only - 4 of which also open on specific days

40% of the money raised at the Garden Openings towards the owners chosen charity, the net remaining to SG Beneficiaries

For further information please contact:

Gillie Drapper (publicity) for Scotland's Gardens Stirlingshire

Email: drapper@kilewnan.org.uk Home Tel: 01360 860 243 Mobile: 07748 183 239

Note that a full listing of gardens open is attached to this... (eg: list from Appendix 1)

Press Release ends

EMAIL: INFO@SCOTLANDSGARDENS.ORG
VISIT: WWW.SCOTLANDSGARDENS.ORG

Press Release Contact: Mrs GA Drapper (Scotland's Gardens Stirlingshire Publicity)
Kilewnan Cottage; Fintry; By Glasgow G63 0YH
Home: 01360 860 243 Mobile: 07748183239

Attachment 3: Example of Specific Press Release



Press Release

**NEW FINTRY GARDENS OPENING
FOR CHARITY**

Fintry, By Glasgow, G63

On Sunday 31st May, from 1.30 to 5.30pm, five village gardens are opening on behalf of Scotland's Gardens and Crossroads Caring Scotland (West Stirling Branch) including:

CAMALLT (William Acton and Rebecca East) with its old and interesting daffodil collection, bluebells, rhododendrons, herbaceous terrace and several water features including waterfall and burn.

DUN ARD (Niall Manning and Alastair Morton) This is a three acre garden started 25 years ago. Set within a formal structure are areas of perennial planting, meadows and vegetables.

KNOCKRAICH FARM (Katy and Robert Rodgers) Sheltered courtyard planting with a wonderful herb garden, fruit and vegetables and a large apple orchard.

BRIDGE END (Margaret and Bob Rowan) An informal country garden with spring flowering bulbs, mature rhododendrons and azaleas. Year round interest with witch hazel, heathers, meconopsis, primulas, roses and a small herbaceous border.

KILEWNaN COTTAGE (Chris and Gillie Drapper) informal garden set in 1½ acres with burns dividing the garden. Planting includes herbaceous borders, vegetable garden, small orchard and a woodland walk.

Other Details: Parking Knockraich Farm and a Shuttle Bus, with easy access, will run between all gardens. Teas at Knockraich Farm with Plant stall and Baking stall. Dogs on leads. Partial Disabled access. Disabled parking only at the gardens.

Admission: £5.00 Children free.

Directions: Fintry village is at the junction of the B822 and the B818. Follow the yellow garden signs in Fintry Village.

If you would be interested in opening your garden next year or being a member of the Stirlingshire Branch of Scotland's Gardens and the benefits it would bring please contact Gillie:

drapper@kilewnan.org.uk

Press Release ends

EMAIL: INFO@SCOTLANDSGARDENS.ORG

VISIT: WWW.SCOTLANDSGARDENS.ORG

Press Release Contact: Mrs GA Drapper (Scotland's Gardens Stirlingshire Publicity)

Kilewnan Cottage; Fintry; By Glasgow G63 0YH

Home: 01360 860 243 Mobile: 07748183239

Attachment 4: Example Press Release from Angus & Dundee

Note that the content is taken from the guidebook information and sent with 1-3 high resolution photographs.

3 BALFOUR COTTAGES

3 Balfour Cottages are opening their garden on Saturday May 7th 1.00pm – 5.00 pm

Small cottage garden packed with rare and unusual plants. It comprises various 'rooms' containing myriad plants from potted herbs, spring bulbs and alpines in a raised bed, to a 'jungle' with a range of rare bamboos. Many other interesting plants include primula, hosta, meconopsis, fritillaria, trillium, allium and a large display of bonsai and auriculas.

Admission £3.00, accompanied children go free.

The money raised will go to Plant Heritage and Scotland's Gardens designated beneficiaries.

For more information on the event and other garden openings in Angus please visit the Scotland's Gardens website at www.scotlandsgardens.org.