

Scotland's
GARDENS
Scheme
OPEN FOR CHARITY


**INFORMATION FOR
GARDEN OWNERS**

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5 Sutherland Crescent, Perth & Kinross. Photography Mike Bell

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 of your choice as well as those supported by SGS: Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres; Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland (District nurses); and Perennial (Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society). 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 Cancer Caring Centres: <https://www.maggiescentres.org>

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

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

The SGS team, consisting of your local organising committee and 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 help. We hope that the following information will assist you in achieving this – whether you are opening for the first time or are an “old hand”.

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, many less; and then of course the weather can work for or 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 SGS.

Planning your garden opening

- **IN WHAT WAYS WOULD YOU LIKE TO OPEN YOUR GARDEN?**

- Type of opening

- Category of opening

- **DATE(S) OF OPENING**

- **WHICH CHARITIES WILL BENEFIT?**

- **ADMISSION CHARGES**

- **SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AT YOUR OPENING**

- Teas and other refreshments

- Plants for sale

- More ideas

- Non-plant stalls

IN WHAT WAYS WOULD YOU LIKE TO OPEN YOUR GARDEN?

Type of opening

By far the most successful way to open your garden with SGS is on a **Specific date**, or on several dates. The most popular day is a Sunday, 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 particularly variable, such as early May. The well-received opening time is 2–5pm, though this is often extended – especially for village or group openings.

Some Garden Openers have regular openings over a **Range of dates**. These do not tend to attract as many visitors as specific date openings; even over the season, the total takings are usually less, as well. But this option may be appropriate for the needs of some.

You can also open **By Arrangement**, whereby visitors make a prior appointment to visit your garden. We have found that this type of opening does not bring many people unless a good amount of effort is made by the Garden Opener to reach potential visitors. But it can work well for group visits, such as the Women's Rural Institute (WRI) or gardening clubs, who like to arrange special visits for their members.

Note: many Garden Openers decide to choose a variety of the above open day types: for example, to be open on a Specific date(s) but also happy to have groups arrange to visit by appointment.

Category of opening

In most cases you will be offering a garden opening. However, another possibility is to open as an **SGS Plant Sale**, which should be coordinated with the local District. It is appropriate where the focus of the open day is very much on the sale of plants, and it differs from an opening that happens to offer a plant stall. There may or may not be a garden open at the same time as an SGS Plant Sale opening. And then, in more rare situations, you might be offering an event not related to either of the above, such as a workshop or lecture.

DATE(S) FOR 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. However, you must work closely with your District Organiser when selecting a date or dates, 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 day, but we try to ensure that there is a good distance between these. Linking multiple gardens into a group opening **4** when in close proximity can also be an option.

WHICH CHARITIES WILL BENEFIT?

The money raised during your garden opening can be distributed in several ways:

- You can nominate a charity(s) of your choice to receive 60% of your opening day's overall takings. This is a popular option. The elected charity(s) will often manage your teas during your opening, which could be invaluable.
- You can donate all the proceeds to SGS. In this case the money raised, net of expenses, will go to SGS Beneficiaries, who currently are: Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres; Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland; and Perennial.
- The third option – to make a donation to SGS – is available only for gardens that open for other periods and have their own overheads 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.

ADMISSION CHARGES

The average entrance fee for an SGS opening is £4–5. Small gardens tend to charge less (eg, £3) while larger ones and village openings ask for more (eg, £7–8). The appropriate amount can also vary by region across Scotland, so you should seek guidance from your 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 request that you avoid the complication of multiple prices (eg, a discount for OAPs).

SPECIAL ATTRACTIONS AT YOUR OPENING

Teas and other refreshments

A good assortment of homemade baking is always nice to offer to visitors, and it's often not that difficult to find people willing to do a bit of baking. You will find that, for some visitors, the main reason for coming is to enjoy the 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.

You might think it quite daunting to organise both the garden opening and the teas, yet often

your nominated charity(s) will manage your teas. Contact them and see if they would be willing to do this. If they do organise the teas, they will need to hand over the takings so they can be counted along with the income from admissions and any stalls. Your elected charity(s) will then receive 60% of the day's overall takings.



Teas at Glendoune House Walled Garden, Ayrshire. Photography David Blatchford

Occasionally, your chosen charity(s) may not be able to provide the teas: for example, where they have no local branch. In this case, contact your local District team or SGS Head Office, and we will try to find you support – from one of our Beneficiaries, for example. The remaining monies taken on your open day, net of expenses to promote and support your opening, will go to all SGS Beneficiaries.

If you are thinking of asking a commercial tearoom or caterer to organise the teas, please chat with your District Organiser first, to see if we can set up an alternative arrangement. However, we recognise that 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.

Teas can be quite straightforward:

- tea or coffee, milk and sugar;
- squash;
- a variety of baking, such as biscuits, scones with cream or butter and jam, cakes and perhaps sandwiches.

However, you could also offer soup and sandwiches if appropriate.

You must also think about food allergies and intolerances. Be sure to identify any baking that contains nuts, and consider offering gluten-free and/or dairy-free options.

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

Basic teas (tea and biscuit)	minimum £1.50
Homemade teas	minimum £3.00
Cream teas	minimum £3.50

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

Think about where you will serve the teas – a barn or outbuilding, gazebo, seated around the garden, even in 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 based on how long your opening will last, you can work out how many teas to prepare for: seats x number of 30–45 minute intervals. Ensure you have sufficient crockery, or paper cups and plates, to deal with such numbers. Your charity may be able to provide crockery, or else consider contacting a local church or village hall.

Inevitably, the weather will have a lot to do with your final number of visitors, but you can always sell off extra baking if you think you'll have leftovers.

Plants for sale

A plant stall is a tremendous way of raising more funds, and where possible it is recommended that one is always set up. Visitors tend to support such a stall very strongly. Plants are generally sourced by the Garden Opener, friends and the local SGS team and are an excellent way of finding homes for surplus stock. Your local SGS team, or other openers across our network, can assist in the pricing of the plants if required.

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

More ideas

You might also, for example, want to organise a raffle, tombola or activities for children. These may or may not be fundraising – a children's garden-based quiz would usually be free.

Selling SGS Guidebooks, particularly if you are opening early in the season, is helpful and also adds to your overall revenue. Tell your District team if you are willing to sell them; we are ⁷ happy to let the takings be added to your day's takings.

And finally we will, from time to time, participate in special festivals and/or celebrations. If you are a current Garden Opener we will invite you to join these events.



Storytelling at Tynningame House and The Walled Garden, East Lothian

Non-plant 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 stallholders with a site and, in some cases, an electricity supply, water, even a table. Stallholders should be charged a minimum fee of £25 (or £10 plus 20% of turnover). You need to check that each stallholder has appropriate liability insurance for themselves and their products.



Annual registration for your garden

- ENSURING YOUR INFORMATION IS UP TO DATE
- YOUR PRIVACY
- ENSURING YOUR INFORMATION IS RELEVANT ONLY TO SGS
- DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GARDEN
- PHOTOGRAPHS
- GROUP OPENINGS, VILLAGES AND TRAILS

ENSURING YOUR INFORMATION IS UP TO DATE

Every autumn, SGS collect the information about each opening for the following year. This may seem early, but we like to have our annual Guidebook available in good time for the late January snowdrop openings.

When you open for the first time with SGS, you will be asked by your local District committee to fill out the following:

- New Garden Registration Form
- New Contact Form
- Opening Dates & Times and Poster Orders Registration

This information will be added to our database, which powers our website, Guidebook and other related promotional activities. The District Volunteers will take care of this for you.

If, on the other hand, you have opened with us before, your local team will be in touch to check information for the coming year.

YOUR PRIVACY

At SGS we are committed to protecting your privacy. We will share information about your opening with the public, using our promotional activities unless you request that your opening remain private. We will share only the personal details you have chosen to publish. However, we may contact you to request permission to share your contact details with a journalist or party(s) interested in visiting your garden, but we will never release these details without first receiving your permission.

ENSURING YOUR INFORMATION IS RELEVANT ONLY TO SGS

Please note that **SGS will only promote your charity opening times**. This information is displayed in the Guidebook and website as well as in various SGS promotional materials. Thus, all the information you provide on the type of opening, dates for opening, catering and other features, and admission prices must be relevant only for charity. If you also open your garden for other purposes and/or times, these opening dates/times really are not appropriate under your charity listing.

DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR GARDEN

The **garden description** 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. Also when you fill out the new garden registration form we ask you to identify any **special features**, or descriptive tags, about your garden. These should be exceptional qualities and are “searchable” on our website.

And please add directions, as appropriate to find your garden.

Finally, provide information about additional features, including:

Wheelchair access (full/partial/none)

Champion Trees, if you have any

National Plant Collection, if you hold one

Whether you allow dogs on lead to visit

Whether your garden can be reached by public transportation (include details of this in your directions)

PHOTOGRAPHS

These 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 good resolution photographs of your garden, journalists will not consider offering you editorial features. Your photographs should work well with your **garden description** and **special features** (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.

GROUP OPENINGS, VILLAGES AND TRAILS

If your garden is part of a group such as a village opening or linked with other gardens your local District committee will help to coordinate these openings. Each garden involved in the group will need to fill out registration forms for their garden as well as contact information. Your group will need to agree an opening date(s), charity(s) and someone must agree to be the primary contact.



Promoting your garden opening

- **SOCIAL AND OTHER MEDIA**
- **POSTERS AND LEAFLETS**
- **NEWSPAPERS**
- **WORD OF MOUTH**
- **YOUR NOMINATED CHARITY(S)**
- **OTHER PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

SOCIAL AND OTHER MEDIA

In addition to your garden listing in SGS annual Guidebook (10,000 distributed each year), your garden will be described on our website (www.scotlandsgardens.org) and in Regional leaflets distributed by your local SGS team (over 65,000 in 2018). We also promote through our corporate Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/ScotlandsGardens/>), Instagram ([scotlandgardenscheme](https://www.instagram.com/scotlandgardenscheme)), Twitter (@scotgardens) and Pinterest (Scotland's Gardens Scheme) accounts, and we provide our garden open listings to a variety of digital "what's on" networks across Scotland (eg, The List: <https://www.list.co.uk>). Many Districts also manage their own local Facebook pages.

POSTERS AND LEAFLETS

Posters with your opening details are available in a variety of sizes from your local District committee. You should order these as part of your annual registration process, using the Posters Orders form. You will probably be the best person to decide where these are placed: consider local newsagents, libraries, garden centres and tourism centres.

NEWSPAPERS

Where possible, SGS look to promote our garden open days through press releases to local papers, in order to avoid the expense of paid advertising. After all, local papers are interested in local stories and your hard work to open your private garden to the public for charitable purposes is just what journalists 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 editorial stories, which can boost visitor numbers significantly. But, to do this, we must have photographs with good resolution of your garden. It's also very helpful if you make sure that, through your garden description and use of garden features (above), we are aware of any special features in your garden – quirky and unique qualities always interest journalists.

WORD OF MOUTH

Never underestimate the value of "word of mouth" as an essential reason why people 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 learnt of the garden opening through word of mouth (eg, the owner or a friend). So be sure to tell everyone you know that you're opening your garden for charity.

YOUR NOMINATED CHARITY(S)

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

OTHER PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

SGS will also arrange for a variety of additional promotional activities for your opening such as e-newsletter and website blogs. SGS send a monthly e-newsletter where we showcase a selection of garden openings via garden blogs and charity news. New openings are promoted on a monthly basis and other gardens are promoted by garden blogs. These blogs are usually collated around the gardens' theme (eg, coastal, roses, child-friendly activities) using your garden description and garden features (above), so make sure they are representative. A selection of these blogs are shown on the SGS home page of our website and are, therefore, the first thing a visitor will see when visiting the website. These blogs are swapped around weekly.



Before the visitors arrive at your garden

- **TOILET FACILITIES**
- **PLAN FOR HELPERS ON THE DAY**
- **ROAD SIGNS**
- **CAR PARKING**
- **MAP OF THE GARDEN/VILLAGE OPENING**
- **INTERNAL GARDEN SIGNS**
- **FLOATS**

TOILET FACILITIES

Especially when serving teas, you should consider how you might provide access to toilets and handwashing facilities. This can be especially important for more vulnerable visitors. If you are lucky, you will have a toilet 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. A Portaloo could be hired, but this will impact heavily on the funds raised.

PLAN FOR HELPERS ON THE DAY



Ayrshire volunteers on the gate at Netherthird Community Garden.
Photography Rob Davis

You are going to need one or two people to manage your entrance arrangements, and probably others to supervise the parking.

You will also require helpers should you offer activities, a plant stall and/or teas. Hopefully, your elected charity(s) will relieve you of the tea responsibility but, if not, think carefully about how you will manage the teas: expect helpers to serve, clear, take money and wash dishes.

ROAD SIGNS



Photography Kathy Henry

Is your garden easily found? The SGS annual Guidebook provides 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 road signs and banners, which will be supplied by your local SGS committee. These will include large yellow arrows and banners. Earlier in the week of your garden opening, put up an SGS sign or banner with Garden Open This Sunday, for example, to prompt **16**

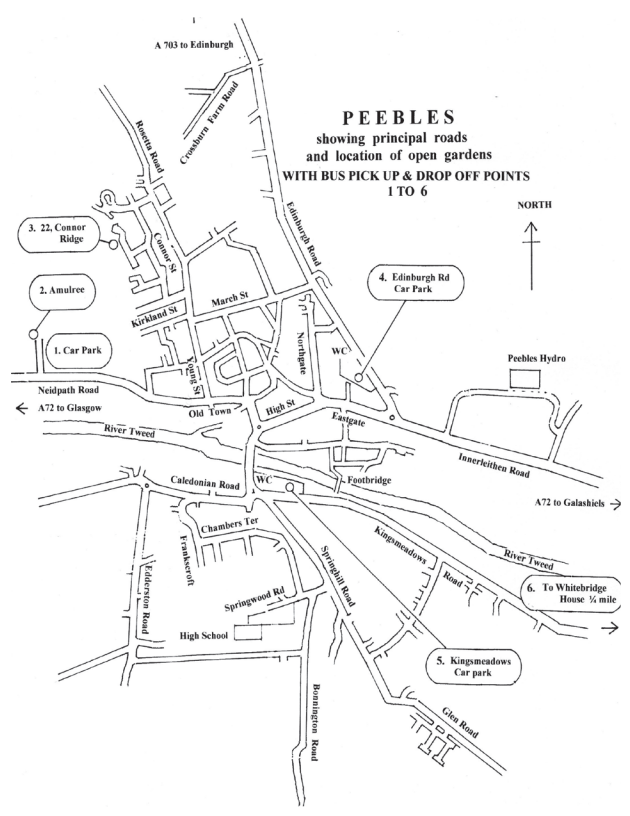
your local commuters to visit. Then, on the morning of your opening, place the other signs strategically at major local crossroads to lead visitors to your garden.

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 bottlenecks. It's also always worth having a contingency car parking plan for those days when the turnout exceeds your wildest dreams. In addition, do you need a Plan B for parking when the weather is very wet? And remember that you may require parking helpers.

You need to site the place where the entrance money is collected at a location which everyone has to pass to get into your garden. This might be at the entrance to your garden or to your car parking, or perhaps in a village/church hall in the case of a village opening.

MAP OF THE GARDEN/VILLAGE OPENING



A simple map of your garden, especially if large, can be useful for visitors. For a village or group opening, a map really can be essential, to help everyone get from here to there. Nothing elaborate is required; in fact, simple can be easiest for everyone. The SGS Office can create a ticket with a map for your opening and your local District team can assist by testing your proposed map before your open day.

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.

INTERNAL GARDEN SIGNS

Laminated signs within your garden will be provided by your local District team. These will include a selection of arrows and labels (such as entrance, car park, disabled parking, teas, plant stall, exit, no admittance), which you can place to help direct visitors appropriately

around your garden. The SGS team will also be happy to create any special sign(s) that you might need: for example, "slippery when wet" or "please keep off".



Signage at 42 Pentland Road, Edinburgh

FLOATS

In addition to the entrance float, you will need to arrange floats for each of the paid activities you plan to have "on the go": for example, teas, plant stall, non-plant stalls.

Remember to plan each float change to reflect the prices for that activity. The float at the entrance, for example, should relate to your admission price (and the inevitability of receiving several £20 notes in the first hour of opening). 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.

'Insuring' a successful day

- **RISK ASSESSMENT**

- **LIABILITY INSURANCE**
 - Public liability
 - Employers' liability
 - Product liability

- **SECURITY/THEFT/BREAKAGES**

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 be dangerous;
- what you can do to prevent this.

The following are examples for your list:

Things that could be dangerous	What you can do to prevent this
Children could go into your deep pond	Put up a special sign saying "Deep water, please keep children away"
If it's a rainy day, someone might slip on your bridge	Put up a sign saying "Slippery when wet".
A tree limb could fall if it's a windy day (or not)	Have a tree surgeon round before the open day to assess the health of all your trees
Children could get hurt on your climbing frame and trampoline	Decide whether to signpost each piece of equipment as "please keep off" or as "equipment used entirely at user's risk; parents must supervise children"; or else have the equipment supervised
Someone might get burnt by hot tea or coffee	Serve hot drinks to visitors only when seated at tables. Don't allow visitors to serve themselves buffet-style



When things go wrong, a broken gazebo before an open day at The Herbalist's Garden at Logie.

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

LIABILITY INSURANCE

It is, unfortunately, a symptom of our modern age that liability insurance is a topic that cannot be ignored. As such, SGS have arranged cover for Garden Openers and Organisers of plant sales.

The "liability" to which we refer is public, employers' and product liability. It is very easy to get over-concerned on the topic 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 SGS Office.

Public liability

This 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 therefore seek redress. That is why the majority of household insurance policies have a section that 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 situation where something may go wrong. A loose stone step in a path causing a fall ...

SGS 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 SGS, nor if the Garden Opener has other, more specific public liability insurance in place: for example, where a household, commercial or estate policy already provides cover for public garden opening.

Employers' liability

In the same vein, SGS cover extends to include employers' liability insurance in respect of Volunteers who help Garden Openers with the preparation of a garden opening or with its smooth running. This insurance also includes casual and occasional employees in so far as they have been involved with an SGS 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 product 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 – we are not talking here 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 so SGS policy provides such cover.

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

SECURITY/THEFT/BREAKAGES

It makes sense to follow the discussion of insurance with one on security. It is possible that a nefarious character or two may take the opportunity of being “invited” to your garden to “case the joint”. Therefore, some points to bear in mind include:

- identify the area to which you want the public to have access, as well as those 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 SGS 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

Each District has its own Treasurer, who manages the finances for each of its openings. Before your opening, you should be contacted by your local Treasurer with instructions on how to report and submit the money raised at your opening. Remember that you should forward all the money raised at your opening to the Treasurer, who will see that your chosen charity(s) is paid and that a proper receipt is received from said charity(s). So please do not pay your charity(s) directly, least our auditors' will begin to lose sleep ... If you have not heard from your local Treasurer by the time of the opening, please get in touch with your local committee or SGS Office for an introduction.

Useful contacts

If you need anything, please consult the SGS team who are there to help you.

YOUR LOCAL DISTRICT TEAM

District Organiser:

District Treasurer:

HEAD OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS

Address: 23 Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DN

Telephone: 0131 226 3714

Email: Info@scotlandsgardens.org

Office Manager: Hazel Reid (hazel@scotlandsgardens.org)

National Organiser: Terrill Dobson (terrill@scotlandsgardens.org)

Marketing Officer: Imogen McCaw (imogen@scotlandsgardens.org)

We are always interested in your feedback, if you have any notes or comment please contact us.