

Scotland's
GARDENS
Scheme
OPEN FOR CHARITY

Market Research Information
Organisers sharing “How to” Advice

At the District Organiser's meeting last September, Fife, East Lothian and Angus shared their findings from their market research conducted over their 2015 openings. Perhaps more Districts have conducted surveys, or are planning to do so this year. It's a great idea to do market research because it can help you understand which of your promotional activities are working (or not).

At this time, we'd prefer not to require any specific formats for conducting market research, and instead leave it to you to consider what information you'd find most useful to manage your district. We'd then be very grateful if you could share a summary of your findings with Terrill at the end of the season so that she can further share with all of our Districts. As an example of how you might approach your market research, below please find suggestions and templates which will, or have been used by Fife, East Lothian and Angus.

Fife: from Catherine Erskine and Sally Lorimer

Why carry out a survey? To see which forms of promotion work best within the district and not all districts will be the same. Using this local information, a district can better manage promoting their openings to gain more visitors. An individual district can also evaluate the cost/benefit of each form of promotion. We think that if we are to drop a popular form of promotion (like advertising) it should be based on survey results and our garden owners should know why, in advance of their agreeing to open next year.

A survey form does get circulated to the Fife committee for ease of use (see attached); not all Committee garden nannies use this and do their own version but the information gained is just as helpful and gratefully received.

We ask our nannies to survey as many visitors as possible. I collect and collate the information gained and circulate to committee but this could be done by any district committee member (does not need to be the treasurer).

We also found last year that garden visitors (80% of those asked) would like to hear of our openings by email. Emails are easy to collect at the same time as carrying out the market research. Over 85% of visitors to our Sunday/ weekend openings are local to the district so a Friends of SGS Fife Newsletter was considered worth trying and we are trialing this year to see if such a local newsletter increases visitor numbers.

East Lothian: from Frank Kirwan

I attach the form which we have used in East Lothian during 2015 (see attached). We survey visitors to find out:

- which forms of publicity are most effective (flyers and posters worked best for us during 2015);
- to assess whether press advertising generates enough revenue to cover its cost (it didn't for us);
- and to establish whether folk who buy the newspaper see the SGS adverts (most didn't).

Our 'best practice' advice is:

- Keep the survey brief. It should take less than 90 seconds.
- Have enough interviewers to catch all visitors – three is usually enough for a big single garden opening; more will be needed for a village opening or where several gardens are involved. Get there before the gardens open.
- Spread your interviewers out in an arc 'downwind' of the entrance – don't try to combine the survey with selling tickets, it slows the entrance process down too much and irritates folk who stand waiting.
- If possible, don't prompt responses – use your common sense to allocate their response to the appropriate column. Multiple responses should be recorded.
- Make sure to survey both members of a couple who come together.
- Use a tool like Excel to analyse the data and one of the free mapping tools such as <https://batchgeo.com/> to map the postcodes of your visitors.

Angus & Dundee: from Terrill Dobson

Last year when we learned that paid national advertising was to be held back we decided to conduct market research surveys at all our gardens and with as many visitors as possible. What we wanted to know was how people learned about the garden opening to know which of our promotional activities were working. We were also interested in where our visitors were travelling from, to help us know just where we might put up our posters and leaflets. So we decided to have our committee members help with the gate tickets for each opening. As they were taking tickets we asked two questions:

- How did you find out about today's opening?
- Where have you travelled from today?

This actually worked very well and our visitors seemed to feel that we (SGS) were interested in their visit. We'd have 2 helpers and while one was handling the money the other asked the questions. Of course there were times when the influx was busy and we had to abandon the questions, but by and large we interviewed probably 80+% of visitors.

You can see from our questionnaire (see attached) that we have listed the most likely answers. For example, we provide press releases to our local papers (Johnson Press) and the Dundee Courier and we have started focusing on using an Angus Facebook page. We were also interested to know how many people had purchased guidebooks, seen our posters, or our leaflets. For distance travelled, we had found in past years that most people don't travel far. So for this we separate out our county,

our surrounding counties, and then elsewhere. For each answer we draw a line (eg IIII) and using four lines and a cross through as the fifth line, it's very easy to total at the end of the day.

I'd add that I think there is another advantage to having our committee members do market research at the gate. We are more visible to the public, and we can get a better feel for who our visitors are. And of course the garden owners' are very pleased for the help.

East Lothian's Example

<i>Respondent</i>	1. What is your postcode?	2. How did you hear this garden was open today?							3. Do you read the East Lothian Courier?				
		SGS Handbook	SGS website	SGS Poster	SGS leaflet	Newspaper			Word of Mouth	Other source	Regularly	Occasional	No
						SoS	S'man	C'ier					
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													
13													
14													
15													
16													
17													

Angus's Example

Sheet: _____ of _____

Scotland's GARDENS Scheme

Garden Name: _____

Date: _____

OPEN FOR CHARITY

How did you hear about this garden opening? (please tick)

Total

How did you hear about this garden opening? (please tick)		Total
Word of mouth, been last time, friends of garden owner		
Scotland's Gardens Guidebook		
Leaflet		
Poster		
Scotland's Garden's Website		
Newspaper	Local paper	
	Courier PR	
	Other (specify)	
Internet	Facebook	
	Twitter	
	Other (specify):	
Other: please specify		

From where have you travelled to visit this garden? (please tick)

Total

Locally: Angus & Dundee district		
Other Scottish districts	Perthshire	
	Fife	
	Aberdeen	
	Other (specify):	
Outside Scotland	With local friend	
	Own initiative	