

Shrewsbury in Bloom – New Judging Criteria

For the 2021 Bloom campaign, the Royal Horticultural Society introduced new judging criteria whilst still following the Bloom ethos of the three 'main pillars' of Horticultural Excellence, Environmental Responsibility and Community Participation.

Section A – Horticultural Excellence

A1 - Overall Impression

Are the overall design and materials used within the entry appropriate to the location and do they generate a positive image?

Innovation: Are new and creative ideas evident in the design, colours, themes, plant selection etc.?

A2 - Maintenance of Planted Areas

Are areas maintained to an appropriate standard including cultivation, weeding, feeding, pruning, grass maintenance, tree management and maintenance, including appropriate planting initiatives?

Areas that may be included:

Residential - Primarily front gardens/gardens in public view.

Communal areas - Shared residential & communal spaces

Allotments, Public Buildings (grounds of) - includes schools, town halls, libraries, community centres, churches etc.

Car parks.

May include irrigation considerations and thinning, trimming or pruning as appropriate.

Presentation: Are areas well-presented and maintained?

A3 - Plant Selection

Are the plants used in the planting schemes suited to their growing conditions and location and is there year round interest (where appropriate)?

Impact will be evaluated across the entry, in each area and as a whole.

Colours & Design - Is there a scheme or theme overall and/or in key locations? Are the colours/design suited for the location?

Appropriate choice of plants. Are there of too many/too few plants to enhance the area? Are the plants appropriate in terms of flowering period and habit? Is there sufficient variation, appropriate herbaceous plants? Are there appropriate varieties of both newly planted and recently (up to 5 years) planted areas (including mixes of trees, shrubs and herbaceous planting). Planting could be for foliage effect, bark effect etc. or for a specific purpose (i.e. conservation) or to provide flowering or other effects for a defined period.

Special features sometimes provided as a focal point, and may include structures or an intensive area of bedding.

Presentation: are areas well-presented and maintained?

Innovation: are new and creative ideas evident in the design, colours, themes, plant selection etc.?

A4 - Plant Quality

Are the plants vibrant and grown to their full potential? Are they free of all pests and diseases?

Section B – Environmental Responsibility

Each of these key areas will make up 10% of your overall score and be worth a maximum of 10 points.

Please bear in mind that judges will be considering environmental responsibility across all areas of your local campaign so, for example, if you have a fabulous floral display they will also want to know if you have achieved this effect with consideration for the environment. Although this section does outline the key areas of environmental responsibility please bear this important core pillar in mind across all of your Bloom activities and initiatives.

B1 - Local Identity

Is there a sense of place, with appropriate sense of heritage, art in the landscape, signage and interpretation?

Areas that may be included: Management and development of local heritage and/or identity such as natural heritage, community landmarks/icons, other heritage sites etc.

B2 - Natural Environment

Biodiversity including the protection and conservation of the natural environment and wildlife habitat. The provision of appropriate wildflower areas, aquatic and if applicable marine conservation sites, bat and bird boxes as well as insect hotels.

Efforts being made to preserve and maintain these areas? Activities to educate the community and encourage them to visit these areas? Activities or plans to re-introduce or restore these areas where they have disappeared or been damaged?

B3 - Hard Surfaces and Open Grass Areas (Including streets, open spaces and beaches if appropriate).

To include cleanliness, absence of litter, street weeds, graffiti, flyposting and chewing gum, water conservation and recycling initiatives, hard landscape, open spaces and street furniture maintenance and effective dog fouling control measures.

Section C – Community Participation

Has the local bloom campaign made efforts to engage and secure support from local government, the commercial/corporate sector and local businesses? Have there been activities to raise support and/or funds from the general public? Has sufficient support been secured to ensure the campaign is able to deliver its objectives? Is there a plan of action to secure sufficient continuing support for the development and on-going projects of the campaign?

Judges will also be very interested to see that young people and schools have been involved where possible and that care has been taken to make effective use of the educational opportunities which exist. Bloom is not just about spring and summer floral displays; it is about a year-round programme of activity to improve, enhance and maintain the environment around us and keep the community actively engaged in keeping things at their best.

C1 – Year Round Activity and On-Going Planning

Evidence of forward planning and year round activity highlighting any events that makes this entry unique and demonstrates the present strengths of the entry.

C2 – Communication and Awareness

Within the immediate area through local and regional marketing, involving all sections of the community. Communication and media involvement evidenced, including social media. Use of suitable interpretation, enabling learning and a greater understanding.

C3 – Funding and Support

Fundraising and on-going support from a range of businesses and organisations appropriate to the size of the entry making it viable and able to continue moving forward.