



**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**20th November**  
**Gardeners' Question Time**  
**Centenary Hall**  
**7.00pm**

**1st-2nd December**  
**Usk Christmas Festival**  
**Fundraising Stall**

**BLOOM COMMITTEE**

**Chairman**—Tony Kear  
**Treasurer**—Simon Eskell  
**Secretary**—Sarah Powell  
**Project Co-ordinator**—Carys Davies

**Flower Committee**

Kelly Weare  
Len Watts  
Alison Williams  
Sophie Brighouse—Jones  
Ruth Prince

**Nurseryman**

Russell Walker—  
The Willows

**Usk Town Council**

Cllr Brian Strong

**Usk Open Gardens**

Partnership—Janet Mundy

**COMMUNITY**

**PARTNERS INCLUDE:**

- Monmouthshire CC
- Usk Town Council
- Llanbadoc Community Council
- Monmouthshire Youth Service
- Usk Business Network
- Usk Church in Wales Primary School
- Usk Civic Society
- Usk Conservation and Environment Group
- Usk Open Gardens
- Usk Rotary Club
- Usk Rugby Club
- Usk Rural Life Museum
- Usk Women's Institute
- Usk Youth Group

**Summer into Autumn News**

**Who knew this time last year what amazing success was in store! What a Summer!**

The Town's outstanding public floral displays have now been seen, judged and recognised on the World stage as well as Wales and seen double success. (On the back of winning Britain in Bloom in 2017, the Committee intrepidly accepted an invitation to promote Usk on the World stage via the Canadian based **Communities in Bloom** competition. This international foray was the first since the 2005 smaller geographically based Entente Florale competition. It had been an anxious long wait since the all day judging on

June 27th when American and Canadian judges Karin Rindall and Berta Briggs thoroughly assessed Usk's entry via an incredible 67 separate categories! The Chairs of Usk in Bloom and Usk Open Gardens Tony Kear and Jan Mundy generously funded their own way to Edmonton, Canada to represent Usk at the combined National Canadian and International Award ceremonies held over 2 days on 28/29th September. The tough competition for Usk came from the communities of Birdhill, County Tipperary, Ireland; Fogo, Fogo Island Canada, Tirhany Hungary and Pomeretto, Torino Italy. In the tense Oscar like ceremony held in the local Edmonton theatre, Usk were dramatically announced winners of the International competition by the narrowest of margins. 1000 marks were up for grabs and Usk had totted up an amazing 882. In accepting that award, Tony Kear paid tribute to the remarkable all round Community efforts built around un stin t ing teamwork that saw Usk presented at its very best on judging day. The judges also recognised the incredible efforts of the Open Garden weekend this summer which raised £19,500 for local causes with over 2000 visitors that saw record trade for some Usk Business.



Tony & Jan receive the "World Trophy"

Tony Kear commented - " It has been a truly amaz-

ing experience. To see the hard work by so many to help achieve this result is just reward. Having the opportunity to promote Usk, Monmouthshire and Wales in front of an international audience has been a privilege.

With UK National coverage via the **BBC "Blooming Marvellous"** programme which saw over 1 million viewers, we have truly demonstrated how outstanding floral displays and volunteering working

**STOP PRESS**  
**Next Year 2019**  
**Planting Colours**  
**HOT—HOT—HOT**

as a team can positively promote Usk all Summer and for the longer term all for the benefit of the Usk Economy. It is vital we build on this success. The 2018 achievements have, of course, been 38

years in the making and we readily acknowledge that our Bloom predecessors gave us the solid building blocks upon which to achieve this success - we share this award with them and don't underestimate what they began back in 1981. On behalf of all who took part this Summer, I would like to extend thanks and gratitude for such warm and heartfelt congratulatory messages we have received".

This international success hasn't outshone the outstanding **Wales in Bloom** result which saw Usk once again achieve a strong Gold Standard. They beat off the stiff challenge from Saundersfoot to win the large village category for the 37th Year in a row at the awards ceremony which was held in Colwyn Bay on 14th September.

**Britain Bloom - Champion of Champions** result was announced on 19th October and volunteers travelled to Belfast under their own steam to anxiously find out if they had made it 3 wins out of 3 this Summer. Having made it to the final six vil-



Volunteers Jan, Kelly, Carys & Tony receive the Britain in Bloom Gold Award from Chris Bavin in Belfast



lages, towns and cities Usk were pipped at the post to as overall Champions of Champions but achieved a fabulous RHS Britain in Bloom Gold Award as 2018 Finalists.

**GARDENING TIPS FOR AUTUMN**

- **Rake up leaves for leaf mould** – pack leaves in to a **black bin** liner (dampen them if dry), tie the neck of the bag and stab with a fork, then stack out of the way. The process takes about 18 months, less if you chop them up with a mower first! This makes a good soil improver or mulch
- **Clean out ponds and water;** Remove leaves from the surface and cut back any overhanging foliage and marginal plants
- **Define the edge of your lawn** - Use a straight board as a guide. A half moon tool is great to give a crisp edge for winter
- **Mulch to your Flower Beds** -Once you have raked leaves off flower beds mulch with organic matter. Use any of the following : leaf mould, well rotted manure, seaweed, spent hops, spent mushroom compost (alkaline), compost from your compost heap/bin. Apply to depth of 5cm (2 inches). Don't apply too close to the stems of shrubs, or cover the centre of perennials or small delicate plants. Over winter the worms will work their magic and take the mulch down into the soil.
- **Untangle your climbers** if they are growing together. Cut them back a bit so you can see their framework and tie in any loose stems and branches.
- **Divide and replant perennials.** Gain more plants and fill in gaps in your garden by lifting and dividing using two forks back to back or subdivide into smaller pieces using a sharp spade or serrated knife.Reinvigorate soil with fresh compost if you are replanting. Pot up any unwanted “extras” as Open Gardens will be grateful for donations to their fund-raising plant sales.

**TOWN COMPETITION**

For those townsfolk who are unaware of the logistics, the Town Competition takes place each Summer with committee members making a preliminary reconnaissance of each and every Commercial and Residential property in Usk, looking at various categories : Front Garden; Hanging Baskets; House without Front Garden; Hanging Baskets; Tubs, Window Boxes and Troughs; Pollinator Garden; Most Improved Front Garden. An independent judge from outside Usk is then invited to assess and award Bronze, Silver, Silver Gilt and Gold within each category and the overall category winners and runners-up judging against the following criteria: initial criteria, colour scheme, use of space, imaginative use of plants and features; quality of plants and maintenance. Therefore as you choose your plants for next year you can bear these criteria in mind.



*Usk Scouts receive their Gold!*

The Town Competition judging took place early August and the Committee congratulate all who achieved success but especially those who achieved Gold standard and won their individual categories given the unusual prolonged hot weather. At the recent Town Competition Awards evening, kindly hosted by Usk Town Council at the Sessions House on 24th October, Mayor Alec Leathwood presented certificates to the worthy winners.

**PLANTS FOR YOUR WINTER GARDEN**



**Winter Jasmine** is a scrambling plant with yellow star-shaped leaves that can be trained easily with wires or trellis as a climber. Perfect for archways or just scrambling over low walls.

**Daphne**

This shrub has intensely fragrant flowers in winter and early spring. Grow near gates and doorways to take full advantage of its wonderful scent.



**Winter-flowering Heather** is a brilliant plant for low-growing texture. It also looks fantastic in pots. It comes with pink, white and purple flowers.

**Winter aconites** have lovely yellow flowers and are suited to growing underneath deciduous trees and shrubs. They prefer rich, moist soil.



**Hellebores** are often known as the Christmas Rose because they can flower in midwinter. There are varieties available in white, green and even dark red.

**Japanese quince** Also known as *chaenomeles*, this is a hardy woody shrub with thorny branches that bears cup-shaped flowers in winter and early spring



**HELP HEDGEHOGS IN YOUR GARDEN**

- *Leave a small gap at the bottom of your fence for access*
- *Leave areas of the garden 'wild', with piles of leaf litter and logs.*
- *Provide a home for winter hibernation. Making an artificial home can be as simple as placing a piece of board against a wall but never used treated or creosoted timber.*
- *Food and fresh water will encourage hedgehogs to return. Leave out foods like tinned dog or cat food (not fish-based) and crushed dog or cat biscuits– NEVER MILK—water in a shallow bowl.*
- *Check for hedgehogs before using strimmers or mowers, particularly under hedges where animals may rest. Check compost heaps for nesting hogs before forking over.*

**BE PART OF USK'S GROWING SUCCESS**

Financial stability remains a priority for the Charity and the volunteers are launching a second phase of “Friends of Usk In Bloom” where regular monthly donations can be made. £3 a month with Government gift aid can make a big difference. Watch out for the leaflet - Please help out if you can. Equally important along side funding is the help of the volunteers. The amazing teamwork seen against the backdrop of challenging spring / summer weather has been remarkable. The Bloom team have shown that non gardeners can make a huge difference alongside the local green fingered experts! It's clearly been fun and rewarding along the way too, so if you would like to help out and make Usk Bloom in 2019 please get on contact via - Tony Kear Chairman - Usk in Bloom



**For more information please contact: Usk in Bloom Chairman - Tony Kear uskinbloom@gmail.com 07824810182**  
**See Usk in Bloom on [www.uskinbloom.org.uk](http://www.uskinbloom.org.uk), facebook, and twitter. if you donate to charity why not consider donating to our cause via:<http://www.totalgiving.co.uk/charity/usk-in-bloom> Registered charity number:- 1152881**