

## COVID FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR GARDEN OPENERS

We have collated some questions and answers about opening gardens during Covid-19 that we hope you will find useful. It goes without saying that we respect the decisions of Garden Owners to make sure that everyone feels supported and safe.

We will do our best to keep up to date with the latest developments and will update our guidance on the website too (link at the end). Please get in touch with Head Office if you have any suggestions to add.

There is a useful Risk Assessment available on [our website](#) and you should use this to help you plan your garden opening.

### ***I'm concerned about opening due to uncertainties around COVID. What advice do you have?***

Many of our gardens have opened since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic when we were able to do so and both Garden Openers and visitors had a good experience. Visitors know what to expect when visiting an attraction (and we have guidance on our website about what we expect from visitors) and we find that garden visitors are well-behaved and naturally give way to others and create their own distance. Some hints and tips to help with social distancing:

- **Signage** – Your District team can provide a range of signs for you to use to help with social distancing and to remind people of the rules.
- **One Way Systems** – consider creating a route with arrows (as above, these can be obtained from your District team) to direct people around your garden; one garden opener used a trail of pebbles to create a route around the garden, for a more natural effect.
- **Numbers in the Garden** – one garden had a basket with a fixed number of pebbles in it. People were asked to use hand sanitiser on entering and then take a pebble, returning it to a bowl of water with disinfectant as they left the garden. This helped the garden owner to know how many people were in the garden at any one time.
- **Payments** – We have several different payment options. Please discuss with your District organiser or with Head Office to find out which one(s) will work best for you:
  - **Cash Payments** - provide a bucket or container for admission payments/ donations. Place a sign by the bucket stating the admission amount and requesting exact change only.
  - **Counting the money:** Wait 3 days after your opening to count funds raised. Use good hygiene while counting – plastic gloves/ hand sanitiser. Coins can be placed in boiling water before counting.
  - **Going cashless** - we are hoping to pilot the use of 'Square', a cashless, easy to use payment method. Please speak to your District Organiser to find out whether this is available in your area.

- **Booking options** - We can organise a booking system for your garden opening through Eventbrite. Please speak to your District organiser if you would like to consider this option.
- **Leave gates open** - if this is practical in your garden, gates can be left open to invite people through and avoid handling.
- **Opening Times** – depending on the size and layout of your garden and your normal visitor numbers, you might consider expanding your opening times.
  - Traditionally gardens have opened from 2-5pm, however a longer opening time will enable your visitors to spread out their visit, for example, from 12-6pm instead.
  - You could also think about opening for an additional day, such as over a weekend (this can also help if the weather is poor on one of the days)

***Will I be able to offer teas? They're an important part of our fundraising income.***

As we can't guarantee what the government regulations will be when you are planning to open your garden, it's worth thinking about several different options.

Here are some ideas from Garden Openers who thought about alternative ways to offer teas and these were very successful – visitors were really grateful and delighted and the teas still made impressive amounts of money for charity!

- Operate as an outside take-away rather than a sit-down service. Visitors still find this approach very welcome and appreciate your efforts.
- Remember your masks and hand sanitiser and socially distanced queuing!
- Use disposable cups, cutlery and plates so you don't have to worry about washing up - or why not suggest that people bring their own mugs?
- Provide wrapped products such as biscuits or individual cakes
- Highlight seating areas around your garden or areas suitable for picnicking and encourage people to bring a rug
- Even if you don't wish to offer refreshments, you can identify picnic areas and encourage people to bring their own
- Have some bins at the ready so people can dispose of rubbish – or better still, ask them to take it home and recycle it.

You should feel under no pressure to offer teas if you're at all worried about it but we're happy to talk through ideas and suggestions.

Refreshments Guidance additional download sheet

## ***How about a plant sale?***

Everyone loves a plant sale! It's a wonderful way to encourage new visitors keen for a plant bargain, especially with all the new gardeners out there.

- **Plants for sale at your garden opening** - as an addition or alternative to teas, you might consider including some plants for sale as these are always really popular – save a few when you're doing your autumn or spring divisions or seed sowing and ask your friends to do the same.
- **SGS Plant Sale event** – why not organise a stand-alone plant sale. These have proved to be very popular in the past and have raised significant amounts of money.

Plant Sales Guidance additional downloads sheet

## ***What do I do when people arrive?***

- Have some hand sanitiser available at your welcome desk and ask people to use it.
- At the time of writing, wearing a mask outside is not essential but you might find it reassuring and it is perfectly acceptable to do so.
- Template posters are available to help you remind visitors about any guidance
- Track & Trace – at the time of writing, outdoor visits were not subject to Track & Trace requirements, however, should it be required, it can be as simple as filling in details on a paper sheet.

## ***What about toilets?***

- At this time the advice is not to provide toilet facilities. However, as community centres, pubs, cafes, restaurants, public toilets, etc. are allowed to open, this will change.
- Even when allowed to do so, you are under no obligation to provide toilets and visitors know not to expect them.
- However, it does happen that someone might need access to toilet and may ask you – if you feel able to offer this, it's worth having a plan ready, such as hand sanitiser available, disinfectant etc.

## ***What if I'm not sure whether or not to open this year?***

This is entirely understandable, and we can be very flexible to help you make a decision you're comfortable with.

## **Appearing in the Guidebook and Website**

- If you'd like to be featured in the Guidebook but don't want to commit to a single date, you could consider opening 'By Arrangement' over a period of time (need to agree this by the Guidebook deadline). Then if you wanted to have a special open day, we can create a Pop-up opening for you and promote accordingly.

- If you have agreed on a specific date to open but would like to change to a different date or become a 'by arrangement' opening after the guidebook has been published; we can change your details on our website but not in our guidebook. However, we will do our best to publicise the changes through Social Media and can give you posters to advertise the change.

### **Appearing on the Website only**

- If you decide not to open, but then change your mind after the guidebook has been published, we can add your opening to our website, and promote in PR and on Social Media. Visitor numbers are likely to be less than usual given the shorter notice and not being featured in the Guidebook.

### **Flexible ways of opening:**

- **Pop-up opening** – specific date events, can be added to the website and promoted with relatively short notice.
- **By Arrangement** – can be added to the website and promoted; very flexible and you can arrange visiting times to suit you.
- **Private opening** – you might consider restricting this to your friends and family and have a mini-fundraiser event; this wouldn't appear on the website, but we can help with arrangements.

### ***What if we need to cancel?***

We are able to cancel any listing with immediate effect and can also reinstate or change listings if you decide to open your garden at a later date. If you needed to cancel your opening, we can make people aware in the following ways:

- In our Guidebook, we always include a prominent notice asking people to check on the website for the latest news and updates for the garden they would like to visit.
- If you need to cancel your opening, please get in touch with your District Organiser immediately. Our website is very flexible and as soon as we have a notification about cancellation, we can update the listing as cancelled straightaway.
- We will promote the cancellation on our Social Media
- We can send you an A4 cancellation poster for you to print out and display nearby in case any visitors arrive and if there is time, we can send you a larger A3 poster from the office.

Remember, things change, and we have detailed COVID guidance on our website which we will keep updated here: <https://scotlandsgardens.org/covid19-resources-for-garden-openings/>

If Garden Owners have other questions not addressed here, please speak to your District Organiser or contact us at Head Office and we will do our best to help.

### ***Scotland's Gardens Scheme March 2021***