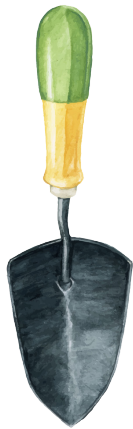


Loughborough in BLOOM 2024



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Welcome from the Chair...

Welcome to Loughborough in Bloom, and what a year it has been going from dry to very wet and windy.

We start our tour this year at the John Storer Community Allotment which is based at Mountfield Allotment's on Forest Road, we have a lot of interesting places for you to see before we get to the finish in Queen's Park.

This year we have also been invited to take part in what will be the 60th year of Britain in Bloom which is a great honour for the town to be asked to do so, we know this brings a lot more work for everyone but with everybody pulling together I know we will be ready.

This year did not get off to a good start with some parts of Loughborough being badly flooded back in January, February, this also included Queen's Park and The Forest Road Green Belt (both on the judging route).

My thanks go out to everybody who came together to help the local communities with the clean-up operation, Charnwood Borough Council, idverde, Serco, Love Loughborough (The Bid) Community Groups and many others too many to mention.

Also thank you to everybody who worked hard throughout the year making Loughborough such an outstanding place to live and work, and whose hard work culminates in our Bloom entries.

We hope you enjoy what you see.

Pat Cook

Chair, Loughborough in Bloom



Bloom chair Pat Cook

Horticulture

Tree-mendous giveaway popular in Charnwood

Thousands of people in Charnwood collected free trees during this year's giveaway.

Charnwood Borough Council handed out 3,500 tree saplings so local people could plant them in their garden as part of its commitment to plant trees and help the environment.

The offer was also open to community groups and parish councils in the borough.

People were able to choose up to 10 saplings with a choice of four varieties; wild cherry, hazel, hawthorn and dogwood. Trees were handed out in Birstall and Loughborough across three sessions.

The Council worked with its open spaces partner idverde to hand out the saplings during National Tree Week, a campaign run by The Tree Council.

It takes the total of free trees handed out by the borough council this year to 4,000 after 500 were given away at the Charnwood Sustainability Fair in September.

Further information and planting guides can be found at: www.charnwood.gov.uk/freetrees.



A collection of free trees available

Case study: Incredible Edible

The Incredible Edible Network has 148 groups in the UK and around 1,000 worldwide, growing free, healthy food for local people on local land, with minimal CO2 emissions and no damage to wildlife or soil.

Incredible Edible Loughborough have been going from strength to strength this year, transforming the Corner Garden in Loughborough by planting all manner of flowers and vegetables in the small park on Cambridge Street and Charles Street.

All members are volunteers and now the scheme has branched out to include green areas around Fearon Hall.

They hold a number of events throughout the year, and you can find out more on the IE Facebook page at www.facebook.com/groups/368547475219206, which has nearly 400 members.



Incredible Edible at Fearon Hall (left) and the Corner Garden (right)

Sustainability Fair at Queen's Park



Charnwood Sustainability Fair took place on Sunday September 17, 2023 and was organised by Charnwood Eco Hub, a Loughborough based community interest company. The event saw more than 20 information stalls and activities from local groups and organisations promoting sustainable living.

A repair cafe run by Transition Loughborough was also there and bike checks and repairs were offered by B-Buddies.

Entry to the event was free and people were also able to pick up one of the 500 trees which were given away by the borough council.

Loughborough University

Conservation Volunteers

Loughborough University Conservation Volunteers (staff and students) have been coppicing and creating dead hedges in Holywell and Burleigh Woods. Both are historical activities and tremendously important for sustaining woodland biodiversity.

Coppicing creates space for light-loving plant species that normally don't live in the woodland. This in turn attracts insects that feed on them, who in due course provide food for birds and small mammals. Dead hedging was traditionally used to stop animals eating the coppice regrowth.

However, as luck would have it, they provide amazing habitat for overwintering invertebrates. These also provide food for woodland animals. This important work is completely done by volunteers and we're very thankful for their time and energy.

Make a beetle castle in your garden

Many people have heard of bug hotels but what about a beetle castle? Many wood beetle species like to live in the soil for part of their lives. Therefore, partly burying logs creates an ideal habitat for beetles, which of course can be a great food source for garden birds. Making one is straightforward. Simply dig a big hole about 50cm deep and put a selection of upright logs in the centre. Backfill with soil, tamping it down. Finish the pile off with some deciduous bark chipping.

You can see ours at <https://w3w.co/detail.fled.studio>.

Leaving leaves

You may notice that we'll be leaving (pardon the pun) more leaves under trees this year. Leaves rot down over a couple of years recycling the nutrients back into the soil which can then be taken up by the trees again.

The leaves also act like a mulch, increasing the organic content and helping to retain more water in the soil. This will greatly benefit our campus trees by keeping them healthy and less prone to drought. Furthermore, leaf mulch encourages earthworms and microbial activity in the soil. This means the soils are healthier and therefore store more carbon – a win against global warming.

We will continue to remove leaves off and in the vicinity of paths, and ornamental grassy areas.



Conservation volunteers



Trees and why the university removes them. A little piece of history...

Some of you may have noticed that there have been a few larger trees removed over the winter. Particularly some oaks from the James France seating area.

We never fell trees for no reason at all and we give particular consideration to older specimens or trees from the original Burleigh estate.

The trees in question were planted as a group sometime between 1886 and 1903. They were planted in a pattern of 4 turkey oak in the centre surrounded by 4 pedunculate oak. The turkey oak are faster growing, and the plan was the whole group would soon form a rounded appearance. Eventually, the estate manager would remove the pedunculate oaks to leave a group of tall turkey oaks. This style of tree planting was very popular in nineteenth century estate planning and was used to obscure views and create an interesting landscape.

As this group was left intact (with the end of Burleigh estate), the turkeys outgrew the pedunculate oak and caused them to lean outwards (seeking light). The pedunculate oak were never expected to get this large and the risk of the trees toppling over has increased, particularly as one had basal decay. In the interests of good tree management (following the original estate manager's intention) and to ensure the trees didn't pose any risk to people or property, we took the decision to fell the under-planted pedunculate oaks.

One of the trunks has been positioned between two of the stumps to form a unique and natural bench and some of the spare wood was offset against the cost of the carved memorial bench in honour of former Loughborough in Bloom Chairperson Marion Smith, which can be seen in Queens Park.



Jarvest Harvest

The university held a two-day harvest festival on Friday 13 and Saturday 14 October themed around using jars to store food and more. Students, staff and the local community were all welcome to come and enjoy the edible campus and celebrate the harvest season.

All events were free and no booking was required. Events included apple pressing, a harvest produce swap and a chance to make your own dried herbs, foraged jams and jellies.

See the full event listing at www.fruitroutesloughborough.com/event/jarvest-harvest.



Visitors to the Jarvest Harvest events

Business areas & premises



Businesses within the Town Centre area are represented on the Bloom Board by the Love Loughborough BID (Business Improvement District) and the Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce. Love Loughborough play a big part in the promotion of Loughborough in Bloom to attract the public into the vibrant, colorful and diverse market town.

Gardeners' Fair creates a buzz in town

The Gardeners' Fair brings the joy of visiting a Garden Centre, Nursery and Artisan Fair to the heart of Loughborough!

Word is getting around and more and more horticulturalists are wanting to be part of Gardeners' Fair.

All three town centre squares have been filled with the colour and the heady scents of nature's beauty as Loughborough becomes a bustling 'Garden Centre and Nursery meets Artisan food and Craft Fair' on the first Sunday of every month from April to September.



There will be many interesting new stallholders both horticultural and Artisan, joining us to feed your senses and tempt your eye and palate. Our horticulturalists, old favourites and newcomers, are all bringing more this season - but remember 'early birds get the first pick... so see you at 10am every first Sunday until September 2024!

All our plant and flower growers and sellers are 'The Expert' in what they bring and will always be 'right there' (no searching for staff) to give you the best seasonal advice for your gardens.

There is plenty of easy parking, and many Shops, Cafés, Pubs, Restaurants, Cake Shops and Ice Cream Parlours will be open to keep you rested, refreshed and even give you your 'Sunday Lunch'!

Gardeners' Fair is brought to you by 'Love Loughborough' and it will, as always, be an excellent day out! Visit www.gardenersfair.co.uk for more details.



KickStart Market launches in Loughborough



Traders at the KickStart Market



A pilot market in Loughborough supporting new and young traders and budding businesses has had a successful first outing.

Loughborough KickStart Market took place for the first time on Sunday May 26, 2024 between 10am-4pm.

The new market was organised by Charnwood Borough Council's markets team.

A variety of stalls took part in the event offering homemade jewellery and accessories, retro sweets, plants, toys, guitar tuition and sports injury and physio equipment.

More information about the Loughborough Kickstart Market can be found at www.charnwood.gov.uk/kickstart.



Vegan market returns

Loughborough hosted the popular vegan market on Sunday February 25, 2024.

It was the first vegan market of 2024 following its success and popularity in recent years.

The event, run by Vegan Market Co. in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council, features a variety of vegan street food, artisan bakes, craft cheeses, handmade cosmetics, ethical clothing and jewellery, arts and crafts, and charity stalls.

All items are created by a handpicked selection of talented, ethical and sustainable businesses.

The vegan market runs from 10.30am-4pm. Gluten free options are available and well-behaved dogs are welcome. The event is also fully wheelchair accessible.



Vegan market trader

Canal improvements in Loughborough officially opened

A section of historic canal towpath in Loughborough has been officially reopened following a government-funded project to make it better for walkers, cyclists and visiting boaters.

Charity, the Canal & River Trust, has worked in partnership with Loughborough Town Deal to improve a popular 2km stretch of the River Soar towpath running between Moor Lane Bridge and Belton Lane.

The revamped puddle-free path provides a green, traffic-free route through the town, enabling people to spend relaxing time by water on the popular route to work, university and the shops.

To mark the official reopening of the path members of the Town Deal Board and representatives of the Trust gathered on Friday 1 December to walk a section.

The improvements have been funded by UK Government through Loughborough Town Deal, which awarded a £885,000 grant.

The towpath has been widened and resurfaced, making it suitable for year-round use by walkers, cyclists and those with buggies. Access points onto the path have also been improved making the route more welcoming and connecting with other local walkways.

As well as widening and resurfacing the towpath, the project has installed 24 additional moorings for visiting boats and strengthened a 100-metre stretch of canal bank between Moor Lane and Little Moor Lane.

With research showing that time spent by water can help people feel happier and healthier, and with more people looking for a local escape on their doorstep, the works make it easier and more appealing for people to get out and explore the local canals and other routes on their doorstep.



Loughborough's completed canal towpath

Environment & Biodiversity

Great British Spring Clean comes to Loughborough

Over 100 litter picking kits - including litter pickers, high-viz jackets and litter bags - were handed out to residents and community groups as part of the Great British Spring Clean, which took place from March 15 - March 31, 2024.

The Council's refuse partner, Serco, were on hand to pick up the bags of litter collected from the groups and individuals that took part.

Residents were asked to stay safe and seen at all times during their litter pick and not collect litter on motorways, dual carriageways and country lanes.

The Great British Spring Clean returned to Charnwood for its ninth year. It is operated by Keep Britain Tidy which this year celebrated its landmark 70th year of protecting the environment.



Residents out litter picking

Relaxed mowing trails

As part of the council's commitment to looking after the local environment, relaxed mowing trails are being created to help increase biodiversity in 16 green spaces across the borough. From May 2024, there will be a bit less mowing of grass in these specific locations in Loughborough: Land off Bramcote Road, Allendale Road, north of Maxwell Drive, Forest Road, adjacent to Holt Drive and Woodbrook Way and Epinal Way.

This will attract more wildlife, such as bees and butterflies and other invertebrates, which in turn attracts birds and mammals to the areas.

The trial will last for three years and the council will be monitoring biodiversity levels in these areas.

All the areas included in the trial are owned by the Council and were chosen following recommendations by an ecology consultant.

Information signs have been placed at the sites to make residents and visitors aware of the biodiversity project.

The Council will continue to mow around the trial areas to ensure that they do not become overgrown.

A decision will be made following the trial on whether it will be extended and expanded to further open spaces in Charnwood.



Allendale Road in Loughborough

Case study: Queen's Park

Queen's Park has had a tough time after being hit hard by the floods in January this year, but the council, alongside partners such as idverde, have worked hard to ensure that the park remains a beautiful place to visit.

In the past 12 months, the council carried out work to around 10 declining trees in the park, which will help increase biodiversity in the area.

Many of the trees which are being removed will be replaced by broadleaf species which is in keeping with the park when it was opened in 1899.

The trees identified for removal are either in decline or dead and could pose a health and safety issue if they are not removed. Some of the trees were removed in December 2023.

The Council maintains the award-winning Queen's Park and this work will help keep that high standard for years to come. Work to remove the remaining trees took place in January this year.

In May 2024, the council carried out work to the outdoor seating area at Queen's Park café, next to Charnwood Museum. The revamp includes improved access, a new all-weather canopy, landscaping, and furniture. The café entrance also features an illuminated archway as well as additional lighting. New shrub and flower beds also surround the seating area. Steps into the café have been removed and replaced with paving to make the seating area level and improve accessibility. The new canopy provides visitors more protection from the weather.

The improvements are part of the £2.87 million Living Loughborough project which is being led by Charnwood Borough Council, in partnership with Love Loughborough BID.



Queen's Park from above



Left: The new Queen's Park Cafe. Right: Flooding in January at Queen's Park.



Dawn Chorus Walk

Charnwood residents were invited to experience the magical sounds of the morning bird chorus at Dishley Pool in Loughborough on May 2, 2024.

idverde teamed up with the Charnwood Bird Ringing Club and the RSPB to host the free event.

It was an early start, with people being asked to join the walk from 6am. During the event people learned about the different birds at the open space while enjoying the sounds of a spring morning.

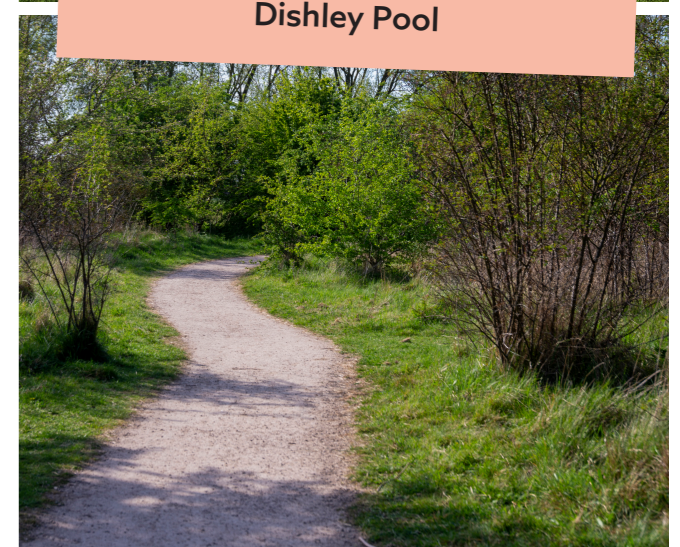
Nicola Clarke, community engagement officer for idverde said: "Last year's Dawn Chorus Walk proved popular with residents so we thought we would bring it back and give people a chance to join us once again bright and early.

"The walk offers a wonderful way for residents to engage with nature and discover the variety of wildlife at Dishley Pool.

"I would like to thank the Charnwood Bird Ringing Club and our partners RSPB and the Council for supporting this community event."



Dishley Pool



Big Garden Birdwatch

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) joined forces with idverde to host a Big Garden Birdwatch event at the Outwoods on January 28, 2024.

The event was free and encouraged people to take part in the RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch.

People interested in attending needed to book their free place online in advance and tickets were allocated on a first come first served basis.

There were two 90-minute sessions available and each session consisted of a self-led bird identification walk recording the birds around the woodland. This was followed by a session making bird cake to take home for your garden birds.



The Outwoods



Communities

A word from Community Participation Group Chair Mike Jones

"Our Community Groups continue to be the beating heart of Loughborough in Bloom.

Community Group volunteers can be seen throughout the year, working across the town, to enhance their local environment and make Loughborough a great place to live, work and visit.

The activities of the community groups are co-ordinated via monthly meetings of the "Community Participation Group" (CPG) to which representatives of each group can attend. This has a structured distribution network, through which group news is shared, including information from East Midlands in Bloom, The Royal Horticultural Society, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and various funding sources.

Most of our forty or so Community Groups enter "It's Your Neighbourhood" each year and following a suggestion made by judges some years back, are now increasingly working together on various initiatives. These include seed & plant swaps, cross volunteering, the building of bird & bat boxes and planters for each other and, this year making Bells to celebrate Loughborough's Bell Founding history and poppies to commemorate the sacrifices made during two world wars and more recent conflicts.

Finally, our CPG vice-chair, June Bush, and myself, wish to record our personal thanks, plus those of our excellent Statutory and Business Partners, to those many unsung heroes who continue to give willingly of their time to make Loughborough in Bloom such an valuable and sustainable initiative - Long may it continue!"



Community participation Group Chair Mike Jones

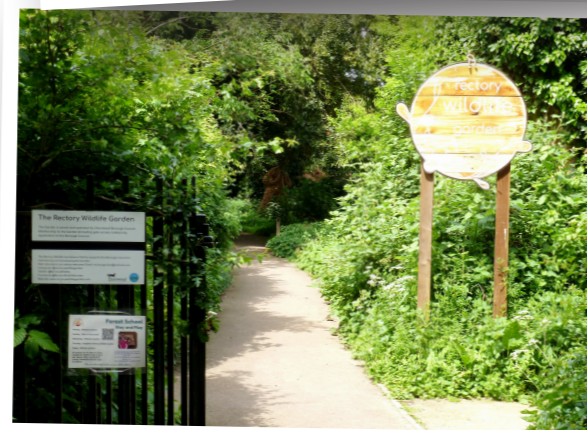
Rectory Wildlife Garden

This is now a thriving green space, adjacent to All Saints Parish Church and Fearon Hall, in the heart of old Loughborough's built-up area.

However, this was not always the case; as for many years it had been neglected, and had become overgrown, untidy and subject to anti-social behaviour. its rebirth is largely thanks to the efforts of a volunteer committee, which has supported Charnwood Borough Council to breathe new life into the garden.

The area has been cleared of unwanted growth and litter, and facilities provided to have School Outreach and Forest School classes, as well as many casual visitors. The project has proved so successful that a booking system has had to be introduced to cope with demand.

Our thanks are due to all involved.



Peter Le Marchant Trust

The Peter Le Marchant Trust is a local charity whose main purpose is to run boat trips along the Canal, often for elderly or disabled people.

It has always tried to provide an excellent visitor experience, but this has been improved yet further in recent years by the efforts of a volunteer gardening team, which has greatly enhanced landscaping on the site, including novel ideas like Recycle Michael and the Flower Boat.

Their efforts on this canal side site are appreciated, not only by workers and visitors to the amenity, but also by the many walkers using the towpath on the opposite side of the canal.



Seat in commemoration of Marion Smith

The bespoke bench commemorating former chair of Loughborough in Bloom, Marion Smith, who died after a short illness in 2020, was installed in Queens Park, in October last year.

Extensive fund raising over a period of time, had enabled a wonderful design to be commissioned from a local wood sculptor, and the seat, with its interpretation board, is now available to users of the park.

The unveiling was attended by Marion's husband and children, together with a large crowd of former colleagues and well-wishers. Rest in Peace Marion, we miss you.



Hanover Court Gardeners

This court, comprising mainly elderly residents, is a relatively new entrant to 'It's Your Neighbourhood'. This is largely thanks to the arrival of Brian Suter, a long time Bloom supporter, who saw the potential for gardening to improve the quality of life for the residents.

A gardening group was formed, following a talk by a Loughborough in Bloom representative, and this has led to a considerable number of residents displaying pot and planters outside their flats, and further residents working together to improve the external communal areas. The areas around the flats are now a joy to behold.



Knighthorpe Methodist Church

Volunteer gardeners of Knighthorpe Methodist Church, helped by local residents and volunteers from Student Action, have for a number of years, made the flower gardens at the front of the church a pleasure for visitors and passers-by.

However, an exciting new dimension has now been added via a partnership with Incredible Edible Loughborough (IEL) whereby vegetable beds have also been created, by the Incredible Edible volunteers.

The produce from these beds will be made available for local people, in accordance with the ethos of IEL, who also work at a number of other Bloom sites across the town.



Emmanuel Church Gardens

Situated on the main Forest Road into Loughborough, the front-facing element of the Church gardens is admired by many passers-by. However, the planted areas to the side and rear of the church site are also extremely well cared for by a dedicated team of church members supported by local volunteers.

Of special note are regular visits by volunteers from the Carpenter's Arms, which a local Christian charity supporting men who are challenged by homelessness, due to drug and alcohol addiction. Every effort is made to use sustainable techniques including the use of extensive multi-stage composters.



Top: The rear garden of Emmanuel Church. Bottom: The front of the church grounds.

Rainbows Hospice for Children and Young People

Rainbows Hospice for Children and Young People provides care for babies, children and young people with serious and terminal illnesses, as well as supporting their families.

The gardens are such an important part of the hospice and great efforts are made to ensure that those areas are welcoming and well cared for, in recognition of the benefits that this has for all concerned.

The young people are encouraged to take advantage of their surroundings and, where possible, to participate in planting and watering etc. Of particular note are the Eco Garden and the Mini Garden, where children can experience the sight and scents of various plants, and the Remembrance Garden which is of great comfort to visiting families.

Hospice staff are supported by volunteers from Loughborough Lions and from local companies, who help to maintain the garden areas as a whole.



Gardens at Rainbows Hospice for Children and Young People

Tenant garden competition

The council tenant and leaseholder garden competition opened between December 1, 2024 and June 30, 2024.

Categories included: Best House or Flat Garden, Best Pots and hanging baskets, Best Community Garden, Best Sheltered Court, Best Fruit and Veg Edible Garden, Best Newcomer, Best Young Gardener, Best Flower Display and Best Eco Garden.

All entrants are invited to an award ceremony later in the year where entrants are able to meet other and staff from the council.

Category winners will receive High Street vouchers. The prizes are £100 for first place, £75 for second, £50 for third for each category, and all other entrants who don't win will receive a small gift.



The winners from 2023's tenant garden competition

It's Your Neighbourhood awards presentations

Loughborough in Bloom's community gardening groups across the town, have recently received their 2023 It's Your Neighbourhood awards.

It's Your Neighbourhood is a non-competitive initiative run by the Royal Horticultural Society and administered locally by East Midlands in Bloom, to improve the local environment.

Certificates are awarded from level 1, Establishing, to level 5, outstanding. Of the thirty-one Loughborough in Bloom entries, seventeen achieved level five.

The awards took place in four local venues, the Forest Road Green Belt, Queens Park, Thorpe Acre Green and Fearon Hall. Together with their certificate, each entry received a small gift token.

East Midlands in Bloom Assessor, Helen Burgess, who assessed over twenty of the entries thanked the groups represented, for the warmth with which she was received at each site.

Loughborough in Bloom Community Participation Chair, Mike Jones, added "Our community groups are the life blood of Loughborough in Bloom and their volunteers do a terrific job to improve the local environment."



From top to bottom: Forest Belt Green Belt, Queen's Park, Thorpe Acre Green and Fearon Hall

Bandstand concerts return to Queen's Park

Queen's Park in Loughborough will host a variety of exciting concerts for residents and visitors to attend this summer.

The bandstand concerts made a triumphant return in 2022 following the coronavirus pandemic, and were hugely popular again in 2023.

Residents of all ages are invited to come down to Queen's Park and enjoy an afternoon of music on the following dates:

- Sunday May 12 - LSU Classical Concert Band
- Sunday June 2 - Charnwood Symphonic Wind Orchestra
- Sunday June 9 - The Junkyard Cats Jazz Band
- Sunday June 16 - Melbourne Town Band
- Sunday June 30 - Loughborough Concert Band
- Sunday July 7 - Charnwood Concert Band
- Sunday July 14 - Loughborough Male Voice Choir
- Sunday August 4 - The New Orleans Hotshots Jazz Band
- Sunday August 25 - Quorn Ukelele Orchestra

All concerts commence at 2pm and are free to attend.



Loughborough in Bloom awarded its twelfth gold award

The town was awarded the highest recognition at the awards ceremony which was held in Spalding on Wednesday September 20, 2023.

It is the twelfth time since 2011 that Loughborough has now received gold for its glorious open spaces.

Quorn in Bloom were also awarded gold for their wonderfully kept open spaces.

Pat Cook, chair of Loughborough in Bloom said: "We are delighted to have received the highest honour once again in the East Midlands in Bloom judging.

"A lot of hard work goes into our open spaces and I feel like this award is well and truly deserved. I would like to thank all the community groups and volunteers who help make the town look its best, year on year."

The judges for East Midlands in Bloom visited Loughborough in July 2023 and were toured around the open spaces in the town including Queen's Park, the Outwoods and Forest Road Greenbelt.



Contributors

- The Abbeyfield Loughborough Society Gardens
- Age UK Men and Women in Sheds
- Ashby Road Estate Green Fingers
- Chapman Street Gardeners
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Emmanuel Church
- Falcon Support Services
- Fearon Community Association
- Forest Road Green Belt Gardeners
- Friends of Queen's Park
- Garden Buddies
- Glebe House Work Skills Project
- Great Central Railway
- Green Gym
- Hanover Court
- Hardwick House
- Holt Green Gardeners
- idverde
- Incredible Edible
- John Taylor Bell Foundry
- John Storer House Thyme Project
- Knightthorpe Methodist Gardeners
- Loughborough Baptist Church
- Loughborough Lions Club
- Loughborough Student Union Landscape and Gardening Society
- Leicestershire County Council
- Leicestershire & Rutland Fire Service
- Loughborough Business Improvement District
- Loughborough Chamber of Trade and Commerce
- Loughborough District Scouts
- Loughborough Echo
- Loughborough University
- Loughborough United Reformed Church
- Marios Tinenti Centre Community Bloom and Grow
- New Springs Church
- Peter Le Marchant Trust
- Plantscape
- Primary Schools of Loughborough
- Rainbows Children's Hospice
- Rectory Wildlife Garden
- Ronald West Court
- Sacred Heart Church
- Serco
- Shelthorpe Community Garden Project (occupied by African Oasis)
- Stonebow Washlands Group
- Student Action Volunteers
- The Secret Garden
- Thorpe Acre Residents Association
- Transition Loughborough – Community Allotment
- Watermead Day Nursery

With thanks to Mike Jones, Pat Cook, June and John Bush, GROW Loughborough, idverde, Glebe House, Loughborough University, Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council for providing the images used within the portfolio.

