



## **A blooming good show!**

Residents from Sycamore Grange retirement housing in Golcar, Huddersfield have taken the top prize in Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing's (KNH) annual gardening competition.

The grange gardeners were also awarded the top prize in the most improved category for south Kirklees.

The judging panel, which included KNH board members and local gardening expert, Graham Porter, were particularly impressed by the garden's broad appeal.

Mick and Pat Brewster, who head up the gardening club, only started the garden earlier this year: "the existing garden was overgrown and not used so we decided to do something about it."

Helped by the KNH caretakers and by grants from KNH Excel, Age Concern, the By and Buy charity shop in Golcar, Mick and Pat have created a beautiful and useable space for everyone to enjoy. They even recently held their daughter's wedding reception there.

With accessible vegetable plots, seating and walking areas, an abundance of bright and colourful flowers and shrubs, bird feeders and even a resident rabbit, the garden has something of interest for all grange residents and visitors. One resident is using the garden for the first time in 13 years, something she credits to the hard work of all those who have made it such a beautiful place to relax.

Reacting to the top award, Mick said, "I genuinely did not expect to win. I'm absolutely blown away by it – it really makes all our work worthwhile."

The gardening club received £100 in gardening vouchers, as well as a gas barbecue, donated by Kenny Mann of Huddersfield Travel.

Head judge Graham Porter said: "This communal garden is the best we have seen in all the years of the competition; it is a truly communal effort by some very enthusiastic staff and residents.

"This year's competition has once again showed that individual, family and communal effort can make people's surroundings both beautiful and useful."

Cllr Shabir Pandor, the cabinet member responsible for housing, said: "I'd like to congratulate all those who took part in this year's competition. Their gardens bring pleasure to their neighbours and help make sure their estates are attractive places to live."

Paul Buckley, KNH's Director of Operations, said: "Many of our tenants work very hard in their gardens and their efforts deserve to be recognised. This competition is our chance to thank them for their work and to encourage others to start taking pride in their gardens."

KNH Excel Manager Helen O'Sullivan, said: "This is the fourth year we've run the competition and we've been overwhelmed by the quantity and quality of the entries."

"The standard has been amazing and the gardens are a real testament to the hard work of the tenants."

"We'd like to thank everyone who entered and hope that even more people will take part next year and help make their estates blossom!"

### **North Kirklees category winners**

Bill and Jackie Baxter from Church Road, Batley, won the prize for best individual garden (house or bungalow). In 2009, they won the most improved category and also were the overall winners for the whole of Kirklees.

According to head judge, Graham Porter, "Bill and Jackie's garden has the 'wow' factor. It's even better than last year and it continues to give a bright, colourful lift to the whole area."

The couple were delighted to have their efforts recognised for a second year and are hoping to enter again after making "a few changes" next year.

The award for best communal garden went to Rita King and the residents of Conway Crescent in Batley Carr. This is the fourth time that their garden has won an award, and it continues to amaze all of the judges as a wonderful example of community gardening.

The garden is continually expanding with the addition this year of a fruit and vegetable plot, developed on what was previously wasteland to the side of the gardens. The produce is shared amongst all the residents of the flats. With more younger children living in the flats than before, Rita and her team have also installed more facilities for them to enjoy, including a trampoline, paddling pools, sand pit and picnic table.

Rita said, "We're really pleased to win our category again. Everyone works hard on the garden so it's wonderful to get recognition for our efforts."

Kathleen and Michael Bates of Town Street, Earlsheaton, won the award for best use of small space.

Hidden away from the main street, their 'secret garden' is full of colour with a large variety of pots and hanging baskets, using every bit of space to its full advantage.

And finally, the top award for best fruit and vegetable garden went to Brian Oldroyd, Denham Street, Batley who won the best individual category last year. Brian has managed to continue to improve his superb garden, with help from his grandson and under the supervision of his wife, Betty.

Brian's organic fruit and vegetables are all grown in containers but produce enough to feed his family and his neighbours. He credits his home-made plant food with much of his gardening success.

### **South Kirklees category winners**

The award for best individual garden (house or bungalow), went to Jim and Jean Levitt of Oakes Avenue, Brockholes.

The judges praised their "fabulous" garden for its range of plants and thoughtful planning.

Jim and Jean have been gardening for more than 30 years, and were nominated by their neighbour, who wanted their efforts to be recognised. They were "very surprised and pleased to win" their award, they said.

Gordon Clingan accepted the award for best communal garden for the work he does at Pottery Street, Salendine Nook.

Over the past 15 years, Gordon has created a wonderful garden that benefits many of his neighbours. From immaculate lawns to an oasis of colourful flowers and shrubs, the garden is a credit to his hard work.

The best use of small space went to Keith & Barbara Picton and Anthony Hirst of Friar Place, Bradley.

Using as much space as they can, the gardening neighbours have created a riot of colour in tubs and containers, which delight everyone who sees them. Keith and Barbara have even built a container allotment on top of a concrete outhouse, which is absolutely full of produce.

And last but not least, Michael Foley of Longfield Avenue, Dalton won the award for best fruit or vegetable garden. In just one season, Michael has transformed a neglected piece of communal land into a garden, where he grows a wide range of vegetables for himself and his neighbours. His was recognised by the judges as a remarkable first time effort.

The gardening competition is part of KNH Excel, an incentive scheme that rewards and recognises good tenants and encourages others who might have rent arrears to clear their accounts. Other Excel benefits include an award-winning discount card, regular competitions and prize draws, community grants of up to £500 and good neighbour awards.

**Ends**

### **Note to Editors**

Graham Porter is the gardening correspondent for the Huddersfield Examiner and Radio Leeds, as well as a speaker, advisor and examiner for the Royal Horticultural Society. He has worked in horticulture for over 40 years.

KNH is a not-for-profit company (ALMO) that manages Kirklees Council's 23,500 council houses. The company gained an 'Excellent' rating from the Government's Housing Inspectors, who praised KNH for going beyond traditional housing management to engage with the people who live on the estates they manage and to genuinely listen to their views.

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