

DUNSTABLE IN BLOOM 2025 PORTFOLIO



Blooming Together on Life's Journey

Caddington Grove Care Home residents gardening with children from St Marys Primary School to create a Wheelie Fantastic barrow together



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Portfolio key

Icons seen throughout the portfolio to represent the three pillars of our Anglia in Bloom campaign



Horticultural Achievement



Environmental Responsibility



Community Participation



Foreword

Our town's In Bloom campaign is a partnership between Dunstable in Bloom and Dunstable Town Council. The campaign brings together many volunteer groups operating throughout the town, with the aim of undertaking projects which promote Dunstable and improve its green spaces and wider environment. The Town Council manages many of the town's green spaces and floral displays with support from a wide range of volunteers.

Our In Bloom journey began in 2010 with our first entry to Anglia in Bloom when we achieved Gold for our town and Best New Entry. We have participated in the regional campaign each year since and we are now in our 16th year. Our greatest achievement came in 2022 when we won the Best Large Town category in the RHS Britain in Bloom finals and were awarded a Gold medal.

In 2025 we are building on last year's theme of friendship and community noting that the judges were very complimentary about our various collaborations with community groups and the strong sense of community pride in our town.

We hope that you will enjoy your visit to Dunstable.

John Crawley
Chair of Dunstable in Bloom



Young gardeners meeting the 2024 Anglia in Bloom judges

Theme for 2025

This year Dunstable in Bloom has adopted the theme '**Blooming Together on Life's Journey**' which seeks to encourage the ongoing positive collaborations that we have among our community groups, and instilling a strong sense of community pride. The word 'journey' also gives a nod to 200 years of train travel and a time when Dunstable had a branch line railway and station, which now serves as a guided busway.

Over many years, Dunstable in Bloom has brought people together, helping to forge life-long relationships and enriching lives; and this carries on in 2025.

Our In Bloom community and our many volunteers work together, enjoying each others company, and sharing a love of gardening.

We hope to continue this good work in the years to come, for the benefit of our whole community because, as every gardener knows, gardening just makes you feel better about life's journey!



Dunstable W.I plant up their dedicated bed in Grove House Gardens

Dunstable in Bloom

Dunstable in Bloom is a group of committed Dunstable residents and other partners including:

Dunstable Town Council, local residents, Promoting Dunstable, Don't Let Dunstable Die (DLDD Trust), Friends Groups, The local Wildlife Trust, Men in Sheds, Dunstable Gardening Club and Incredible Edible.

The group meets monthly to plan, develop, organise and promote In Bloom activity across the town. This core group acts as a focus and link for many more partner organisations who support our campaign including schools, local businesses, pubs and restaurants, litter picking groups, community gardens, youth organisations, care homes and church communities.

Our Committee members:

John Crawley – Chair

Sarah Woodruff – Secretary and Promoting Dunstable

Chris Sullivan – Treasurer and DUG Volunteer

Pam Ghent – Volunteer Coordinator

Liz Jones – Fundraising and Publicity and Promotion

Mary Chapman – Medieval Physic Border and Volunteer

Anne O'Donaghue – Medieval Physic Border and Volunteer

Shauna Dyke – Friends of Priory House and Gardens and Volunteer

Glynn Ellis – Men in Sheds

Sharon Warboys – DLDD Trust

Margaret Denty – Volunteer

Ian Le Gallais – Volunteer

Simon Basford – Local Photographer

Katherine Doyle – Dunstable Town Council

Jack Adams-Rimmer – Dunstable Town Council

Rachel Connor – Dunstable Town Council

Grant Walpole – Dunstable Town Council



Our Town

Our town has a rich heritage and is linked to key historic events of national importance.

- The location of Dunstable was fixed when the Romans built their new road, Watling Street, across the old Icknield Way. The resulting crossroads was a natural place for a market and Henry I established our market town, making it the oldest 'Charter Town' in Bedfordshire.
- The body of Queen Eleanor rested here in December 1290, on its way to Westminster Abbey for burial. Edward I subsequently erected a cross here, one of twelve to mark the route of the cortege.
- In 1533 Archbishop Thomas Cranmer came to Dunstable and on 23 May proclaimed that Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon had never been legally married. This was the beginning of the split with Rome making Dunstable arguably the birthplace of the Church of England.
- Today Dunstable is famous for Dunstable Downs and Blow's Down located at the edge of the Chilterns. Our specialist markets are thriving helping to revive our High Street economy and our extensive free events programme from April to December each year is enjoyed by thousands of our residents. With four Green Flag sites in the town and many colourful flower displays throughout, Dunstable is working hard to be a great place to live, work and visit.



A snapshot of our In bloom year – July 2024 to June 2025

July 2024



Full Bloom in Summer



New trees thriving at Mentmore



Anglia in Bloom judges visit a rainy Dunstable

August 2024



Wildflower meadow at Blow's Down



Plants for pollinators in Town Centre Rain Gardens



Tapestry floral planting in Priory Gardens

October 2024



Pupils planting bulbs at Bennett's



Dunstable Wombles Green Lanes litter pick



Autumn in Grove House Gardens

September 2024



Local In Bloom competition awards



10 new sponsors announced

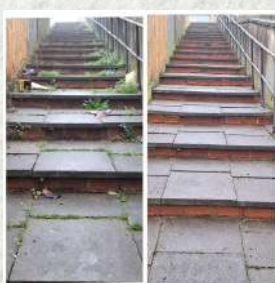


Gold again at Anglia in Bloom

November 2024



Priory Gardens on a snowy day



Town Rangers clean up



Men in Sheds make habitat boxes

December 2024



Five local IYN awards presented



New bins installed across all open spaces



Staff wellbeing day at Mentmore

A snapshot of our In bloom year – July 2024 to June 2025

February 2025



Electric box public realm artwork



Wildlife Youth Rangers – assisting at Mentmore



Local competition launched with new online entry form

January 2025



Snowdrops in January



Queensbury School launch new conservation project



Call out for more In Bloom volunteers

March 2025



New schools project – Daffodils blooming



UKSPF funded Living pillars installed

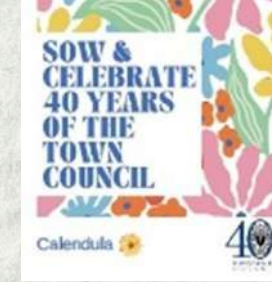


Beecroft Academy litter pick

April 2025



New heritage pergola installed



Free seeds for Council's 40th Anniversary



Heritage sculpture trail installed

June 2025



New pole planters on lights in Priory Gardens



Barrel planting at the Quadrant shopping centre



Planting a new rose scheme – Priory pergola

May 2025



Dunstable in Bloom joins Community Lottery to raise funds



In Bloom plant stall to raise funds



Lowther Rd Pick and Grow dates announced



Horticultural Achievement

A1 – Overall Impression

In Dunstable we recognise the importance of how good our town looks all year round and how important it is that our visitors and our residents have a positive impression of the place that they choose to live in, work in, and visit.

We aim to achieve this in many ways, but also by ensuring that our green spaces, our planted areas, our town centre, and our neighbourhoods are well designed and well managed to a high standard.



Spring Crocus at the War Memorial



Drought tolerant and pollinator friendly planting in car parks



Thousands of peat free summer bedding plants arrive at the Council depot – ready to create floral tapestry displays throughout the town centre



Well managed mature and successional trees



New solar powered Living Pillars on the High Street

Facts and figures

- 20,000 Summer, winter and spring bedding plants each year
- 120 hanging and pole baskets, flower towers and troughs installed each year
- 82 new permanent town centre planters added in last 6 years
- 35,000 naturalised spring bulbs with a further 17,000 planted by volunteers in the last 7 years



Horticultural Achievement

A2 – Maintenance of planted areas



Ensuring that our planted areas and green spaces are maintained to a high standard relies on the ongoing commitment of the Town Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and the many volunteers who freely give up their time to assist with this work.

In addition, the range of techniques employed to maintain these areas includes feeding with organic fertilisers, hand weeding and hot water weed treatment, differential mowing and strimming to create 'island' meadows, pruning at the correct time of year, hedge cutting before and after the nesting season and managing the tree stock.



Former annual bedding beds now planted with drought tolerant perennials



Permanent and annual planting in Town Centre planters, borders and parks



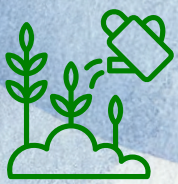
Differential mowing in the cemetery



Facts and figures

- Over 30 volunteer gardeners and dead-headers working an estimated total of 1,400 hours per year.
- Dunstable Town Council manage and maintain 1,200 parkland trees.





Horticultural Achievement

A3 – Plant Selection



Dunstable's soil is predominately chalky with a thin layer of topsoil over a bedrock of semi weathered chalk. The choice of trees and shrubs planted in borders takes account of this soil type. The trees planted for the Queens Jubilee Tree planting in 2022 and 30 additional trees in 2023 were chosen with this soil type in mind and included Alder, Great White Cherry, False Acacia and Scots Pine. These tree species are also considered to be resilient to climate change. Similar choices will be made when selecting 40 new trees as part of the Town councils 40th Anniversary celebrations.

Plants grown in large street planters, bedding and raised borders and rain gardens are chosen for their impact, colour, foliage, year-round interest and open flower nature to be both visually pleasing and support pollinating insect populations.

Six of the annual flower beds around the town and at the entrances to Dunstable have been replanted with drought tolerant perennial planting. Plants have been chosen for their resilience to climate change and the benefit that they bring to pollinating insects with their open flower habit.



Trees and perennials chosen for pollinators, climate resilience, and our chalk soil



Facts and figures

- Over 100 species of open pollinated perennials, shrubs, and flowering trees planted within the last five years that are beneficial to wildlife.
- 650 whips and maiden's, and 80 standard trees planted in Dunstable schools, and in the public realm in the last 36 months.





Horticultural Achievement

A4 – Plant Quality



Choosing good quality well grown plants is essential to successful establishment, ease of maintenance and future plant vigour and health. Plants are sourced from reputable British suppliers including Barcham Trees, Amethyst Horticulture, and Bovingtons, Howards, and Cottage Farm Nurseries, and other local growers. All use sustainable methods of production such as peat free and peat reduced composts, biological and organic controls, field grown stock, natural fertilisers, and recyclable containers.



Floral tapestry planting display



High quality planting throughout the town all year round



Winter flowering Mahonia's providing nectar for pollinators during the leanest time of year



Tower planters offering summer colour

Facts and figures

- Our plants are sourced from British nursery growers wherever possible.
- We incorporate our own composted leaf mulch into our beds and borders to maintain our soil health.
- We feed our container plantings using organic fertilisers.
- We use a combination of organic wildlife friendly foliar feed and biological nematodes to manage box hedges pests.



Spotlight on Priory Gardens

Priory Gardens is situated in the historic centre of Dunstable adjacent to the Priory Church of St Peter and Priory House, both of which are listed buildings. The Gardens form part of a Scheduled Monument and the area has a rich and varied history with strong associations with Henry VIII.

The gardens are an attractive and well maintained open space offering visitors the opportunity to relax in pleasant historic surroundings, admire the wonderful spring and summer floral displays and enjoy a cream tea or other light refreshments in Priory House. Easily accessed on foot, by car, by cycle, or public transport, the gardens are used to hold events including cultural days, a classic motor rally, Priory Pictures and Proms in the Park film and TV event. In 2025 a new Soap Box Derby event will also be held here.

Visitors are made to feel welcome and safe with good access to information about the gardens and the wealth of history to enjoy. In 2025 a new 'Walk Through Time' pergola has been installed depicting key moments in the history of the site. The remains of the Augustinian Priory are marked out adjacent to the Church to illustrate the original footprint of the Priory.

Managed by Dunstable Town Council, the gardens are maintained to a very high standard. Local people help to maintain specific parts of the gardens and raise funds through the Physic Border volunteers and the Friends of Priory House and Gardens. The educational Physic Border displays medieval plants used for medicinal purposes with good interpretation about their uses.

The croquet lawn is used regularly by the local club in summer and is a wonderful venue for playing croquet, In 2024/25 a solar bench with WiFi and device charging points, and a water refill station were added through UKSPF funding.

The Priory Churchyard, which forms part of the site, is maintained as a closed churchyard with parts being left as long meadow grass to create biodiverse habitats. The war memorial is also situated in the gardens, and forms the centre piece of the town's annual commemorations each November. It was fully refurbished in 2018 to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1.

Priory Gardens has retained a Green Flag since 2011 and was awarded Green Flag Heritage Status in 2022.

John Crawley, Head of Grounds and Environmental Services, DTC



The Priory –
Spring
bedding &
Mature
treescape

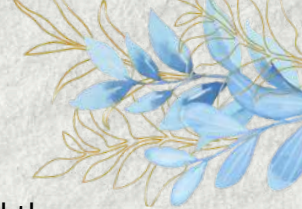


Elecampane, a staple in medieval medicine,
flowering in the beautiful and educational Physic Border.
The Physic Border has been diligently maintained by volunteers since
it was first planted in 2013



Environmental Responsibility

B1 – Local Identity and Pride of Place



Sitting at the foot of both Blow's Down and Dunstable Downs, which are part of the Chiltern Hills, Dunstable has developed around the crossroads of the ancient Icknield Way and the old Roman road. With a rich natural and social history, Dunstable is proud of its local heritage as an early settlement and market town. Dunstable has not rested on its laurels, seeking to diversify and embrace change at every opportunity as the need arises.

Dunstable is proud of its history and its heritage green spaces. Partners work hard to ensure that the town is clean, well maintained and a vibrant, enjoyable place to live, work and visit.



The refurbished and iconic clock tower



Sustainable planting at the entrance gateways



Heritage Cemetery



The swan jewel sculpture

Facts and figures

- 4 full time Town Rangers dedicated to 'see it, sort it' street cleaning, graffiti removal, pavement and furniture washing, gum, fly posting and fly tipping removal
- 54 listed buildings
- Over 65 Anglia in Bloom awards and nominations since 2010
- 4 Green Flag sites including 1 Green Heritage site at Priory Gardens
- 15 sculptures and art pieces on public display
- Fortnightly programme of Middle Row Markets, including many local food producers
- 7 days per week cleaning and bin emptying at all parks and open spaces
- In excess of £5 million investment in Dunstable High Street Improvements
- Over 40 events are held within our green spaces and town centre every year
- 22 educational interpretation boards



Environmental Responsibility

B2 – Natural Environment

The town and its partners are committed to an on-going programme of planet friendly practices for the sustainable improvement of the natural environment. Excellent progress continues to be made by the local Wildlife Trust on the biodiverse chalk landscape at Blow's Down, which boasts a prolific wildflower meadow, grazing Red Poll cattle, chalkland butterflies and rare chalkland plants. The Trusts continue their outreach work with local communities and they have established a Youth Ranger group.

The Town Council have introduced differential mowing regimes to all its parks and recreation grounds and the practice is now in its third year. Surveys of flora and fauna at Dunstable Cemetery have recorded many plant and animal species. Indicator species, such as Pyramidal orchids now flourish at Mentmore Recreation Ground.

The Council has recently adopted a Biodiversity Policy and will seek to ensure, where possible and applicable, that its actions and projects do not harm wildlife habitats and will actively seek to enhance and increase biodiversity.

Dunstable in Bloom encourage participation in the RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch, and extensive tree planting has been undertaken by Central Bedfordshire Council on its verges and highways.

The guided busway transport corridor has become a haven for wildlife and wildflowers. The existing small community orchard at the base of Blow's Down is maintained in partnership with the East of England Orchard Network..



Red Poll Cattle grazing at Blow's Down



Ox-Eye daisies on grass verges and the busway



Blow's Down Orchard – Information board



Facts and figures

- Two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) covering some 275 ha (SSSI).
- Some 70 wildflower, shrub and tree species and some 35 bird and mammal species recorded at Dunstable cemetery.
- 3.6km of wildflower verges on the guided busway.
- The local Men in Sheds group makes bird and bat boxes for use in local green spaces, parks, schools and private gardens.



Environmental Responsibility

B3 – Environmental Management

Dunstable is embracing sustainable and ecologically friendly horticultural and maintenance practices as well as introducing climate change mitigation through urban design and regeneration projects.

Rain Gardens are now a prominent feature of the Dunstable High Street regeneration works as part of a sustainable and connected rainwater drainage system. Innovative tree planting on verges and highways include the use of slow release tree watering bags, biodegradable hessian tree ties, and specially constructed tree pits. Grounds staff use battery operated trimmers and blowers to reduce noise and carbon emissions and electric vehicles are carefully considered when replacing older maintenance vehicles. Open space car parks have been identified for future electric vehicle charging points.

Leaves from parks and open spaces are composted for reuse as soil conditioner and woody green waste is chipped for use as mulch in parks and open spaces. All other green waste is composted. Herbicide use is significantly reduced to a single application and only where absolutely necessary. We are working towards the elimination of herbicide use in our parks and green spaces. Hot water and steam treatments are used along with hand cultivation and good cleaning regimes at all Green Flag sites. Biological, organic and cultural controls are used wherever possible to treat pest and disease issues.

Green roof bug-friendly bin stores have been introduced in the town centre area as a creative way of managing domestic waste.

Green living pillars with a solar powered irrigation system, also include nest boxes, have been installed on some of our High Street lighting columns.

Green roof and bug hotel bin store



Hot water weed treatment



Soft planting surrounded by staggered block edges to utilise rain fall and allow drainage

Facts and figures

- Green roof planting on bus stops and bin shelters in the town centre.
- Town Council working towards Carbon Reduction by 2030 – baseline study updated in 2024.
- Pots used to grow bedding plants returned to supplier for cleaning and reuse.
- Display containers include water reservoirs and water retaining gels.
- Floral displays fed with organic liquid and pellet based feeds.
- Peat free and peat reduced composts used to grow floral displays.
- Chemical Free Gum Removal.
- 6 of the town's annual floral displays have been changed to perennial drought tolerant planting using open pollinating flowers.



Community Participation

C1 – Year Round Activity and Future Commitment

Our In Bloom campaign is active throughout the year as highlighted in our portfolio on pages 5 and 6, a 'Snapshot of our Year'.

We have numerous established projects in Dunstable and continue to develop new initiatives, all of which are connected to Dunstable in Bloom. These activities range from regular litter picking sessions, Friends Group working days and Men in Sheds workshop sessions through to seasonal activities such as tree planting, floral basket and container making, come and grow days at Incredible Edible and autumn bulb planting in verges and open spaces.

Looking to the future, our projects will include:

- Ongoing development of Management Plans for all our Parks and Recreation Grounds in consultation with local residents.
- Planting more trees for our 40th Anniversary.
- Installing composting toilets at two of our allotment sites.
- Continuing our free basket scheme to local businesses.
- Local Front Garden and Floral Display competitions.
- Growing our inclusive volunteer base and Dunstable Urban Gardeners (DUG).
- Seeking additional and ongoing sponsorship.
- Queensbury Academy project to create green nature spaces.

These projects will be promoted, encouraged, and supported by Dunstable in Bloom and its many partners.



Barrel planting at
The Quadrant
Shopping Centre –
engaging with
shoppers –
promoting
Dunstable in Bloom



Barrel plants for the
Quadrant – grown
by a local supplier



DUG Volunteers
rose pruning at the
Physic border



Visiting American
students annual
help with new
hedgerow
maintenance



Friends of Dunstable Cemetery



Community Participation

C2 – Communication, Education and Awareness

Dunstable in Bloom uses a variety of means to regularly communicate with the public to promote and celebrate the campaign, encourage participation and share best practice and good ideas.

Dunstable in Bloom also has a dedicated Facebook page to share news and ideas and encourage participation, www.facebook.com/dunstableinbloom. We have a total of 1,418 followers. At our busiest time in April to June 2025 we made 64 posts which were viewed 36,346 times – up 22% on the previous 3 months. We also went live at the plant sale stall at the Around the World event with 1,311 views.

The Town Council's Talk of the Town magazine regularly features a story or promotion for **Dunstable in Bloom**. Four publications per year to 16,000 households. Regular articles are also published in the local Vine magazine.

Each year Dunstable in Bloom runs a local garden and floral display competition with seven categories for people to enter. An awards evening is held each September in a local school when the Town Mayor gives out trophies. Everyone who takes part gets a certificate. In 2025 the In Bloom team enlisted new sponsors to fund the purchase of garden centre vouchers, which will be awarded to category winners.

Various members of the In Bloom team regularly give talks to local organisations and groups as well as sharing best practice with other In Bloom groups and mentoring other towns and villages.

Leaflets, posters and pull up banners and flags are also used for specific activities including plant stalls and the local competitions and encouraging more High Street floral displays by local businesses.

Dunstable in Bloom runs stalls at local events and the Dunstable Middle Row Markets to promote the campaign and sell plants to raise funds.



Dunstable in Bloom plant stall at the Around the World Event – Priory Gardens – May 2025



Volunteers wanted poster



Dunstable in Bloom Garden Competition entry form



Community Participation

C3 – Support and Funding

The Dunstable In Bloom campaign is a collaboration of many different groups and organisations who work together to make Dunstable a great town. Dunstable Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council are committed to maintaining parks, open spaces and the street scene as well as the provision of the towns many floral displays. Other groups, organisations and volunteers undertake many activities and provide assistance to improve and maintain our town's environment.

Dunstable in Bloom raises additional funds through sponsorship, plants sales, securing grant funding, and delivering talks and presentations about the In Bloom campaign.

Supporters and sponsors include:

- ♦ Bedfordshire Wildlife Trust – maintenance and development of Blows Down and outreach work
- ♦ Businesses – supporting Dunstable in Bloom Local Competition and funding community initiative's such as the Church St Phone Box Planter.
- ♦ Central Bedfordshire Council's Sustainability Team – grants for tree planting and floral shop displays.
- ♦ Don't Let Dunstable Die – provides sponsorship of floral displays and shields for the local competition.
- ♦ Dunstable Community Churches – providing support from American student volunteers.
- ♦ Dunstable Methodist Church – garden renovation project in the town centre.
- ♦ Dunstable Town Council.
- ♦ Dunstable Wombles – Monthly litter picking events.
- ♦ Earthwatch – Tiny Forest.
- ♦ Friends of Dunstable Cemetery – volunteer gardening.
- ♦ Friends of Priory House and Gardens – heritage talks, town guides, and fund raising over £13,000 for the new pergola.
- ♦ Incredible Edible Dunstable – community growing area.
- ♦ Men in Sheds – Bird boxes and trophies
- ♦ The Quadrant Shopping Centre – floral displays.
- ♦ Woodland Trust – tree planting materials and grants.

earthwatch
EUROPE

Dunstable
Wombles



QUADRANT
SHOPPING CENTRE

Wildlife Trust for
Beds, Cambs
& Northants

DLDD
TRUST

Don't Let Dunstable Die
Don't Let Dunstable Die



Deakin & White – Headline Sponsor
for Dunstable in Bloom – 2025



Friends of Priory
House
and Gardens



Special Awards

Best Community Project – Dunstable Community Halls Growing and Garden Space

Dunstable Community Halls (DCH) is situated in the heart of Dunstable. Since taking on management in 2022, we have been enhancing the spaces around the site to create gardens that lift the spirits and bring people together. Our aim is to create spaces where anyone can feel welcome and enjoy the benefits of gardening.

In our first year, we created 'Lily's Garden' – a food growing garden, enabling people to learn gardening skills and grow fresh food. It features wheelchair accessible raised beds, a greenhouse, potting benches, seating and a striking mural that gives a nod to the use of the site – past and present. Today, the garden is a focal point for the weekly Wellbeing Space, a drop-in where people can enjoy company, refreshments and activities.

The following year, we expanded our garden areas to include new raised beds at the front of the halls and a Wellbeing Garden in a small courtyard, created to be a calm, relaxing and inclusive space. Plants were chosen for their fragrances or for their relaxing colours of whites, pinks and purples. The garden includes a water feature, and discreet signage encouraging people to mindfully connect to nature through paying attention to what they notice in the garden.

This year, we have further enhanced the outside areas by focusing on wildlife friendly garden features, including flowers to attract pollinators, plants to provide food for birds and insects, log piles and bug hotels and bird boxes. We have also included signage to let others know how we support wildlife. We estimate that at least 500 people visit the halls each week, with many others walking past, so we hope to inspire some to support wildlife in their own gardens!

We practise and promote sustainable gardening including using peat-free compost, composting leaves and garden waste, being chemical-free, and harvesting rainwater. In our ornamental planting choices, we aim to use low maintenance and resilient planting, including drought-resistant perennials, native plants and self-seeders.





Special Awards

Best Community Project – Dunstable Community Halls Growing and Garden Space – Continued

Since the start of the project, community volunteers of all ages have been absolutely key to creating and tending the gardens. They include young people involved in the National Citizenship Service, and students with additional needs who are learning horticultural skills, to older residents using their expert skills to help us build the gardens. Some of our volunteers have been signposted to support their mental health through social prescribers, others have contributed during the weekly Wellbeing Space – making gardening activities available to those who may not have otherwise have considered being involved.

During our garden sessions, we encourage everyone to give something a go – it doesn’t matter if things don’t work out as we can always try something else – no one needs to be a garden expert. Many of our gardeners have never gardened before or don’t consider themselves a gardener. Being part of the project makes a difference in so many ways; from increasing confidence, learning new skills and feeling useful, to simply lifting the spirits. As one volunteer recently mentioned “I now understand why people garden, I feel really happy here.”

Special Awards

Best Commercial or Industrial Area – Woodside Industrial Estate and Community Garden

The Journey

Woodside has developed over the past thirteen years into a distinctive, landscaped site within an industrial estate, thanks to a dedicated on-site team of three led by me, Tony Parker, in my role as Landscaping Manager.

The Garden

The Garden initiative was inspired by the ongoing and visible transformation of the site; the idea was to further improve biodiversity and give hard working tenants a peaceful space to relax and meet outdoors. The project was supported by the Landowners, Legal & General, JLL, Savills, and Bellrock, and was designed by Cherryfield.

Before its transformation, the area that was to become our garden was an undefined woodland with low trees and little structure. A pit was used as a dumping ground for routine green waste, and an old shed served as a basic storage space.

Considerate construction of the garden began a year ago on 15 July 2024. A winding path, seating for an outdoor meeting area, and many wildlife-friendly features were built and woodland shrubs and perennials were planted; it was wonderful to see the new garden come to life. Not one of the existing trees were lost during the entire project from start to finish. The official launch was held on 5 September 2024 to celebrate our unique achievement.



Before the work began



The new path takes shape

Special Awards

Best Commercial or Industrial Area – Woodside Industrial Estate and Community Garden – Continued

Nature & Wildlife Highlights

Over the past two years, Bee Orchids – a rare wildflower usually found in East Anglia – have appeared at Woodside, thanks to our selective mowing regime. These Orchids have returned each year in different spots around the site. A botanist visiting from Bristol was left speechless after seeing them on an industrial estate. The landscaping team carefully work around the Orchids during the mowing season to allow the flowers to set seed.

31 bird boxes have been installed across the estate to encourage more birdlife, and the estate is now home to many different songbirds such as, Robins, Blackbirds, Starlings, Tits, Sparrows, and the Goldcrest. There are also 11 bug hotels which we hope will attract new residents!

Green Recycling and Sustainability

A new recycling facility was added in 2024, replacing the old storage area within the Community Garden. Cuttings and green waste from the estate are now sorted and stored here – with up to 60 tonnes collected per season. Grass is separated from larger branches, all of which are sent off for composting.

Woodside also works with ZSL (Zoological Society of London), supplying Whipsnade and London Zoo with logs, branches, and foliage. These are used as food, bedding, and climbing structures for the animals – a successful partnership that began through a local tree surgeon's recommendation.

Future plans

The garden that you will see on your judges visit is just starting to evolve, and we have many more exciting plans for 2025, including applying tonnes of recycled mulch to the woodland garden, planting sunflowers, introducing beehives, and providing local schools with the opportunity to use our garden as an outdoor classroom. The possibilities for Woodside are endless.

Tony Parker – Landscaping Manager Woodside Estate



The outdoor seating area



The Woodside Garden



A bug hotel on an industrial scale



Special Awards

Best Gardening for Wildlife and Biodiversity Project – Mentmore Recreation Ground

Mentmore Recreation Ground is a much-loved park on the doorstep of the Chiltern Hills. The park is owned and managed by Dunstable Town Council and in recent years it has become the focus of an ambitious biodiversity project, led by the Council, that is all about giving local wildlife a helping hand.

Since 2021, the Council have partnered with community members, ecologists, and organisations including, Central Beds Sustainability Team, the Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, and Earthwatch Europe, to create a thriving haven for wildlife, and to support people to connect with the nature in their local park.

Now, in 2025, the park is already greener and wilder. Together the local community and the Council have planted 50 climate-resilient trees for chalk soils, a 260-metre native hedgerow, that is perfect for birds, invertebrates, and small mammals, and a “tiny forest” that is making a “big” impact!

The Council implement a wildlife-friendly mowing regime to allow native plants to flourish. Species like the striking Pyramidal Orchid, a known indicator of biodiversity, are now a common sight.

Budding citizen scientists are helping to track the progress of the tiny forest with Earthwatch, and as the park continues to mature into a mosaic of habitats, volunteers assist the Council with seasonal, low impact maintenance techniques, including hand weeding and mulching.

The community have been at the heart of the success of this project from the start and going forward the Council will continue with its commitment to Mentmore’s wildlife and people.

Katherine Doyle – Dunstable Town Council Parks & Green Space Development Officer



Dunstable Urban Garden Volunteers – tree planting



The tiny forest is thriving



Community volunteers having fun mulching the hedgerow



The tiny forest educational panel

Special Awards

Best Sustainable Planting – Town Centre Rain Gardens and Borders

As part of our most recent Town Centre improvements we have installed rain gardens as landscape features. The borders provide attenuation of surface water run-off before discharging to the public sewer.

The use of open kerbs diverts highway run off towards the border to help reduce the risk of flooding. Each border is made up of different layers of free draining material, membranes and pipe work to filter and slowly release captured water. Granite chippings are used as a decorative mulch.

The species planted in the rain gardens have been chosen because they are urban and climate resilient and many are pollinator friendly. Trees, shrubs, grasses, and herbaceous perennials include, *Betula jacquemontii*, *Prunus avium* 'Plena', *Pyrus* 'Chanticleer', *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima', *Sarcococca hookeriana*, *Ajuga reptans*, *Geranium* 'Rozanne', *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty', *Inula hookeri*, *Iris sibirica*, *Persicaria* 'Firetail', *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster', *Molinia caerulea*, and *Carex testacea*.

New seating and 'Corten Steel' type planters have been added to create further interest and provide space for more trees and perennial plant displays. The positive impact of this project includes reduced flood risk and impact on businesses, alleviating traffic pollution, improved biodiversity, greener and more pleasant surroundings and increased civic pride.

In addition to these works the Town Council has also changed 6 borders, that were planted out with annual bedding each year, to permanently planted drought tolerant borders using open pollinating plants. This is a much more sustainable approach to floral displays. These important landscape features are maintained by the Town Council with support from The Dunstable Urban Gardeners (DUG) volunteers.

*John Crawley – Dunstable Town Council
Head of Grounds and Environmental Services*



Sustainable border planting



Sustainable planters



Special Awards

Best Floral Display by a Community – Wheelie Fantastic!

Wheelie Fantastic is one of Dunstable’s inclusive and creative community gardening initiatives, delivered by Dunstable Town Council in proud partnership with local volunteer group Dunstable In Bloom. This fun, town-wide competition invites schools, community groups, businesses, and individuals to transform everyday wheelbarrows into vibrant, blooming works of art.

Participants are encouraged to decorate the outside and plant up the inside, turning each wheelbarrow into a unique celebration of nature and creativity. Where possible, participants are asked to reuse an existing wheelbarrow, supporting the project’s sustainability goals. For new entrants who don’t already have one, Dunstable Town Council provides a wheelbarrow, which they are then encouraged to keep and reuse in future years.

The 2025 theme, “Blooming Together on Life’s Journey,” celebrates community, gardening, and creativity – inviting participants to reflect on personal growth, shared experiences, and how we support each other along the way. With entries proudly displayed across the town, the project brightens public spaces and sparks positive conversations among residents and visitors alike.

Importantly, Wheelie Fantastic opens the door for children and adults who may not have access to a garden or the chance to learn how to plant and grow. It offers a hands-on, accessible way to connect with nature, often through teamwork in schools, clubs, or community groups. These collaborations nurture not just plants, but also valuable life skills like creativity, cooperation, and problem-solving.

*Jack Adams-Rimmer – Dunstable Town Council
Senior Neighbourhood Development Officer*



Wheelie Fantastic is fun, colourful and inclusive!



The Methodist Church Community Garden embracing the 2025 theme ‘Blooming together on Life’s Journey’



Staff from GoBowling creating their colourful barrow



Special Awards

Best Sheltered Housing or Independent Living – Priory Park

We are a development of 55 one and two bedroom flats and bungalows, designed for independent living for over 60s. We have communal gardens all around, which are looked after regularly by our gardeners.

Every flat or bungalow has a small amount of their own outside space. Many of the residents enjoy looking after their little patches. They plant flowers or shrubs directly into the ground or have lots of pots and tubs, which look very colourful.

We have coffee mornings every day in the residents lounge, where everyone is welcome and we have a social committee which meets every month. We visit a local garden centre, have coach trips to places of interest and often go out for lunch.

During Covid, when we couldn't go out, if the weather was good we sat out in the central garden and this helped us all enormously. We have obviously quite a lot of residents who are unable to do their gardens, some in fact are housebound, so other residents that are able, try to help them out from time to time.

In good weather you will find a lot of us sitting out, under parasols we purchased from funds raised. We are also very blessed with lots of wildlife including Squirrels, Badgers, Foxes, Muntjac and multitudes of birds. Some of our residents have bird tables and birdbaths and regularly feed the wildlife. One of our ladies in particular has a special feeder which is supposed to keep out the pigeons.

Our resident manager Sharon is always very supportive of all our efforts and we have entered the Wheelie Fantastic Competition and won our category for the last two years.

Lia Newman – Priory Park Resident



Hanging baskets, Wheelie Fantastic barrow, and residents front gardens

Special Awards

Best Grow Your Own – Incredible Edible Dunstable

Incredible Edible Dunstable was started in 2013 through the inspiration and leadership of Sahira Ward and a few volunteers, some of whom are still part of the core team. The vision was to turn a piece of waste ground into a vegetable and fruit garden available to all for work, rest, harvesting and friendship. The garden has turned into a special place for all to use in many ways and is open 365 days a year.

We have developed the garden, including a specially designed area for disabled and wheelchair bound gardeners, to cater for all age groups. We are also on Bedfordshire’s Wellbeing and Nature centres’ list to offer both short and long-term support to others and develop friendships through gardening.

Our regular core team members each take responsibility for an area of the garden and other ‘friends’ from the local community also help out. We meet once per month as a team, which we call ‘Come & Grow’ sessions. Because people come to help from all over Dunstable we have turned being friendly into real friendships.

Alongside our many growing features and planted areas we have benches much appreciated by young people and our residents who lunch in the garden.

We use the Charles Dowding ‘No Dig’ method and each season a team goes to the local stable to collect as much horse manure as we can to top up the beds. We have experienced problems with pumping water collected from the shop roofs to our storage tanks, so we have now invested in new pumps.

Beverley Alger – Incredible Edible Dunstable



Bug hotel



Come and Grow Event



Planting out

Special Awards

Best Young People's Project Under 12 years – Ashton St Peters School

When we were visited by Anglia in Bloom judges last year, our wildlife garden was very much in its infancy. We had developed it alongside our original school garden, as that one had been inhabited by badgers!

Setting up an eco-committee at our school, and fundraising to purchase night vision cameras, was just one of the ways we embraced the new members of our school community. Filming the badgers and their cubs, and being able to share the footage with the whole school, has been a very special experience.

In 2024, the eco-committee drew up some plans for a new garden area, where the children could still grow and learn, alongside the badgers. We purchased a polytunnel and this has become a bit of an outside classroom, where the children enjoy experimenting with seeds, cuttings and plants. Last year, the successfully grew runner beans, tomatoes, carrots and sunflowers, all from seed.

In a bid to make the garden eco-friendly, many of our garden planters have been created using recycled materials, such as pallets. This year, the children have focused on making the garden more sustainable. In September, when they came back to school, they gathered some of the last of the runner beans hanging on the plants and dried them out over Winter in the poly tunnel. They had intended to do the same with the sunflower seeds, but the squirrels gnawed the whole heads off the sunflowers, and carried them off!

In February this year, when we had some bad storms and very high winds, the poly tunnel was ripped in several places. The children are organising a fundraising event to buy a new poly tunnel cover. The plants have still grown in the poly tunnel, just a little more slowly as we haven't been able to maintain temperatures. The children have discussed with the site manager ways to make the new cover safer.

The latest creation in the garden is a large bug hotel, this is following the original plan. The children have worked with the site manager to create this, even drilling holes in wood using a drill press.

Some of our year 6 children have made bird houses in their DT lessons. They researched birds and designed and created them using various materials, some of these are now in our wildlife garden. The children are currently enjoying the pond full of tadpoles and so many enrichment opportunities have come from their work in the garden, and there is scope for so much more.

Lisa Bird – Member of Staff

Our original plans for the garden



Our pond



The poly tunnel – an outdoor classroom



Our new bug hotel





Special Awards

Best Local Authority Floral Display – Town Centre Floral Displays

Priory Gardens and Ashton Square form the centre piece of the town’s main floral displays with many other borders, hanging baskets and planters also located throughout the town. The colourful displays are a real highlight for visitors in the summer months and regularly attract positive comments and thanks from local residents.

The colour theme for 2025 is hot bright colours. In our display borders we have moved from block planting to a matrix of 6 to 8 plants planted in a random pattern to create a bright and colourful tapestry effect. Our three tier planters, baskets and troughs provide a similar random tapestry mix complimenting the borders. All displays include a good mix of drought tolerant and open flowered plants the latter benefiting pollinating insects.

Plants are sourced from two commercial growers who use peat free composts, water retaining gels and biological control methods throughout the growing process. All plastic pots and trays, used for delivery, are collected and reused by the suppliers. All containerised displays have water reservoirs to reduce watering and plants are fed periodically with liquid feeds throughout the summer. Organic matter, including leaf mould from Autumn leaf collection, is added to borders periodically.

Dunstable In Bloom help with deadheading and some weeding to keep the displays looking at their very best throughout the summer.

John Crawley – Dunstable Town Council Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

Planting for year round interest



Hot bright colours for Summer cheer





Showcasing Local Groups in 2025

With a wealth of local projects and initiatives, we have too many to show the judges in the time allocated so we have decided to highlight a few each year in our portfolio to recognise the great work they do. This year we are focusing on Dunstable Men in Sheds, Lowther Rd Shops Community Garden, The Bennett's Summer Litter Pick Scheme and the Community Involvement & Environmental Education – First Year of School Bulb Planting Project.

Dunstable Men in Sheds

Dunstable Men in Sheds is a registered charity and a member of the UK Men's Sheds Association. Each Shed is local and independent – there are currently some 900 Sheds in the UK.

Ours was started in 2017 in what was a storage facility for Dunstable Town Council – but has recently undergone a major refurbishment. After much fundraising it was formally reopened on Friday 12th May 2023.

There are currently around 28 members. Although the project is aimed at men aged 50+ we have recently welcomed our first female member. Membership encourages social activity and can also improve health and well-being through pursuing a hobby and learning new skills.

Mostly wooden items for the home and garden are produced – bug hotels, hedgehog, bird and bat boxes, planters, trugs and decorative items. We are delighted to continue supporting Dunstable In Bloom in many ways including making trophies for the local gardens competition.

Nigel Skinner – Chair of Dunstable Men in Sheds



Lowther Rd Shops Community Garden

This project was started in the early months of 2023 with initially, four of us involved – we are now five. We have been supported by the charity Don't Let Dunstable Die (DLDD Trust) and the Town Council.

We have four raised beds at the shopping precinct, this project covers two of them. Paul, one of our team, had previously looked after one plot and planted a good range of herbs including rosemary, thyme, sage, and mint. The second plot is where we grow most of the vegetables.

The first year we grew runner beans and courgettes as companion planting. Also, lettuce, leeks, beetroot, sweet corn and tomato plants. The second year we focused on perennial planting, e.g. strawberries, raspberries, plus leeks and kale.

We soon realised that we had to accommodate climate change, planting thirsty, young plants was not sustainable as all watering is by hand. This year we are planting artichokes, dwarf beans, and walking onions. We grow our own plants from seed, some donated by DLDD.

Recently, we installed a pond, an upturned dustbin lid lined with stones. We have started monthly sessions on Sunday afternoons. We hope to introduce local people to the availability of fresh produce and swap plants and seeds.

*Debbie and Bessie –
Volunteers at Lowther Rd
Community Garden*



Showcasing Local Groups in 2025

Summer Litter Pick Scheme – Bennetts Café and Community Hub / Splash Park, Dunstable

This summer, we are launching a community litter pick scheme at Bennett's Café and Community Hub, located next to the popular Splash Park in Dunstable.

The initiative is designed to encourage visitors of all ages to take a few minutes to help keep the area clean and welcoming for everyone. Inspired by the national #2MinuteLitterPick campaign, we will be setting up a dedicated litter pick station stocked with litter pickers, reusable bags, and clear instructions on how to get involved. Visitors are invited to borrow a litter picker, spend just a few minutes collecting litter, and then responsibly bin or recycle any rubbish collected. Afterward, equipment is returned for the next person to use.

The aim is to promote environmental responsibility, reduce waste, and instill a sense of community pride in the local area. With high footfall at the café and Splash Park during the summer holidays, this is an ideal location to engage families and young people in taking small but meaningful actions to care for their local environment.

This initiative supports Dunstable's ongoing commitment to cleanliness, sustainability, and community involvement – all key values reflected in our Anglia in Bloom efforts.

*Jack Adams-Rimmer – Dunstable Town Council
Senior Neighbourhood Development Officer*



Community Involvement & Environmental Education – Schools Bulb Planting Project

In autumn 2024, Dunstable Town Council and Dunstable in Bloom launched a brand-new initiative to involve local schoolchildren in enhancing their town through horticulture. For the very first time, pupils from four local schools – Ardley Hill Academy, Ashton St Peters Academy, Priory Academy, and Icknield Lower School – took part in a large-scale community bulb planting project.

The aim of this new scheme was to connect young people with their environment, raise awareness of seasonal planting, and contribute directly to the town's visual appeal in spring. With support from teachers, council officers, and Bloom volunteers, hundreds of spring bulbs were planted in public green spaces across the town.

By spring 2025, the first results of the project came to life – colourful displays of daffodils, tulips, and other blooms appeared, bringing brightness and cheer to residents and visitors alike. The displays were not only a visual success, but also a symbol of what can be achieved when community and education work hand in hand.

This first year has laid strong foundations for what we intend to make an annual tradition, fostering environmental awareness and community pride from an early age. Plans are already underway for further school involvement in bulb planting activities for autumn 2025.

Future and Special Projects



Dunstable In Bloom and Dunstable Town Council are constantly striving to deliver new and special projects that support and promote In Bloom activity. There is always something in the pipeline for the future. We have an exciting new school initiative which we hope to show the judges next year, and we have recently completed a special project that involved many groups from our community.

Queensbury Academy

Queensbury Academy is a secondary school with around 1,150 students aged from 11-18 from across the Dunstable area.

In December 2024, the school launched a new, long-term conservation project. This has the twin aims of restoring an existing wildlife area and pond within the grounds, and transforming some unused grass tennis courts to build an allotment, and create an orchard and wildflower area. The project enables students to explore new interests, learn about plants and wildlife, and engage constructively with the outdoor environment in a way that many would not normally have access to.

The project is supported by volunteers from Dunstable In Bloom, who are providing advice and hands-on assistance, including joining weekly sessions with Alison and the students, providing fundraising support, and helping foster links with other local organisations such as the Wildlife Trust. Together, we are building wildlife-friendly spaces that serve students, staff, and the wider community.



The Red Phone Box Project – Church Street

The Council recently purchased the the last remaining red phone box in Dunstable for the princely sum of £1.00 (inclusive of VAT). An iconic listed structure the phone box has now been refurbished by a specialist restorer and houses a new defibrillator.

The Council partnered with Sarah Pyatt and the Charity, SADS UK, (Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome), to secure a defibrillator for the phone box in memory of Sarah’s son, Jake, who sadly died aged just sixteen from SADS.

Dunstable In Bloom decided that the project would also benefit from a floral planter to make the whole area more attractive. Funding was secured from local businesses, and a large colourful planter has now been installed between the red phone box and the adjacent red post box. The phone box has been saved, a new crocheted top hat has been created for the post box, the whole area is much improved, and crucially the new defibrillator will provide a life line in case of emergency.

Dunstable in Bloom Local Competition Sponsors

This year Dunstable In Bloom has secured £1,450 towards the cost of running the local competition. The headline sponsor is a local estate agents Deakin-White. Eight other sponsors are sponsoring the prizes for the local competition to encourage more people to get involved.

Some of the funding has also been used to create promotional banners and flags, and new branded clothing for our volunteers.



Dunstable In Bloom 2025 Headline Sponsor

Deakin-White

Deakin-White Estate Agents are thrilled to be the headline sponsors for Dunstable in Bloom.

"We believe that vibrant gardens and well-maintained green spaces are essential not only for enhancing the beauty of our homes but also for uplifting our local community. Beautiful gardens and parks contribute to a sense of pride and connection among residents, making Dunstable a more inviting place to live and work. By supporting this initiative, we hope to inspire a love for gardening and showcase the importance of greenery in our high streets and neighbourhoods, ultimately fostering a healthier and happier community."

Taylor Barnes, Partner, Deakin-White Estate Agents



Best Front Garden category for 2025 is sponsored by

MID BEDS TYRES

DLDD TRUST

Mid Beds Tyres is delighted to support Dunstable in Bloom to enhance its community presence, promote environmental sustainability, and align its brand with local culture. This sponsorship fosters goodwill, boosts visibility, and strengthens relationships with residents through a positive, eco-friendly initiative.

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 headline sponsor **Deakin-White**



Best School Garden category for 2025 is sponsored by

NEVILLE FUNERALS

"At Neville Funerals Dunstable we are very happy to be sponsoring the young peoples and school's category. As a company that has operated for 150 years in the local community, we understand how important education and development is. We hope that in another 150 years along with our sister company Neville Special Projects we are still offering opportunities to young people in the form of employment and apprenticeships."

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 headline sponsor **Deakin-White**



Best Commercial Premises category for 2025 is sponsored by

Rotary Dunstable

"Supporting Dunstable in Bloom is just one way The Rotary Club of Dunstable supports town wide events. We are pleased to have been asked to sponsor this event this year as we enter our 80th anniversary of giving back to the community. New members are always welcome."

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 Headline Sponsor **Deakin-White**



Best Care Home / Independent Living category for 2025 is sponsored by

Guideline Publications

HOSPICE AT HOME VOLUNTEERS

We have two sponsors for this category. Chair of Hospice at Home Volunteers said "It's great to be involved in this years competition and supporting Dunstable in Bloom, our clients benefit immensely from the beautifully kept parks in our town".

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 headline sponsor **Deakin-White**



Best Community Garden category for 2025 is sponsored by

COCONUT GARDEN

DLDD TRUST

"Coconut Garden have been engaged in the Dunstable community for over 30 years as we like to support voluntary groups as much as we can. Sponsoring the best Community Garden in this years competition continues our pledge of doing just that. We wish all those that enter the very best of luck".

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 headline sponsor **Deakin-White**



Best Container, inc. Hanging Baskets category for 2025 is sponsored by

Stoten Gillam

chartered accountants
chartered tax advisers

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 headline sponsor **Deakin-White**



Best Allotment category for 2025 is sponsored by

VANTAGE

INDIAN RESTAURANT

DLDD TRUST

"Vantage is pleased to support this year's competition. Engaging in the community events brings opportunity to work with others and to support the volunteers who do so much for our town."

Dunstable in Bloom 2025 headline sponsor **Deakin-White**



Wheelie Fantastic 2025 is sponsored by

amber paving .com

"As a local Landscaping Company Amber Paving is well aware of the joy that beautiful outside spaces can bring. So we are absolutely delighted to support this amazing event & all the effort & hard work by everyone involved to make this happen. It is a wonderful event inspiring pride in local areas and creating connection within the local community & Amber Paving is thrilled to be involved."

Dunstable in Bloom headline sponsor for 2025 **Deakin-White**



Dunstable Running Club – Enjoying the new pergola and
a run through Priory Gardens on a spring evening

Dunstable in Bloom – Blooming Together on Life's Journey