



Open your garden for charity – some ideas to bear in mind

Here we share some hints and tips for those who might be thinking about opening their garden for us (or any other charity).

- Don't just open on a single day - it's too much of a gamble on the weather, not just on that day, but in the months leading up to it. Go for two days separated by at least a week. Doesn't have to be a weekend, mid-week openings have less competition. Ideally open 1300-1700.
- If your garden is small, get together with other local small gardens and open as a group. Small gardens are very popular because visitors think 'I could have a garden like that'. The smaller the garden, the bigger the challenge: there is nowhere to hide mistakes!
- Offer tea and coffee if possible - it can double your takings. Get friends to bake and help.
- If you have a plant stall, plan a season in advance - fill the stall with the plants which will be looking good in your garden when you open.
- Don't be afraid to charge a reasonable amount for entry - a good single garden should charge at least £3; a handful of small gardens or a single big garden at least £5.
- Private 'by invitation' evening openings are very profitable. Price tickets as 'donation' to MMF of £10+ to include a glass of wine - donation allows Gift Aid to be claimed by MMF. Further wine by donation. Get friends to provide nibbles. Sell 'art' at the opening, with a 20% royalty to MMF.
- Get the local press to feature the garden; email all your friends; tell the local horticultural society; put it on The List.
- Opening your garden is fun - only nice people visit gardens (and I've been opening since 1995).

Thanks to Frank Kirwan for these. His garden, Humble Dean, opens for the Mamie Martin Fund each year and it being featured on the BBC's Beechgrove Garden helped attendance quite a bit!