



## Stratford in Bloom - Growing Together



As we move into Spring and Summer you'll soon see our hanging baskets and planters appearing around the town once again, bringing colour to the streets and helping attract important pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

This year we're also sowing wildflowers on one of the town's islands, which we hope will create a beautiful natural display through the summer months.

Stratford in Bloom is very much a community effort and we're always happy to welcome new volunteers to our friendly committee. If you'd like to get involved, we would love to hear from you.

We're also exploring the idea of a WhatsApp group where local people can share environmental ideas, gardening tips and ways to help our local surroundings.

Finally, if you would like to sponsor one of the town's hanging baskets, commemorative plaques are available. If you're interested in volunteering, joining the WhatsApp group, or sponsoring a basket, please contact us via our website or message us on Facebook.

Thank you for supporting Stratford in Bloom and helping keep our town colourful and welcoming.

*Cohl Warren-Howles - Chair of Stratford in Bloom*

Facebook - [Stratford-upon-Avon in Bloom](#) [www.stratfordinbloom.org.uk](http://www.stratfordinbloom.org.uk)



## Spring Spectacle

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Springtime brings so many jobs in the garden; it can be hard to find time to observe and enjoy all the wonderful changes. If you can find a few moments to sit back and take it all in, here are a few things to look out for which may help you plan ahead:

- On any sunny, still day (even if it's still a quite chilly) there should be a buzz of bees and other insects - check out which flowers they prefer. Be aware of the 'June gap', a slight lull in flowers as the spring flowers finish and summer blooms have yet to get going. Plants such as foxgloves, comfrey and borage can help plug this gap.

- While enjoying spring bulbs, watch out for any bare patches and make a note of where they are – by the time you come to plant more bulbs, it may be surprisingly hard to remember where the spaces were.
- If any herbaceous perennials are looking a bit lack-lustre, make a note of these too. Clump-forming plants including hardy geraniums and rudbeckias can be revived (and multiplied) by lifting and dividing them in the autumn.

*Judith Conroy - Research Fellow, Coventry University*

## Schools and Nurseries Challenge 2026

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Each year we organise a challenge to our local primary schools and nurseries. This is to provide an area in the school grounds and make it environmentally friendly. We ask them to plant fruit, vegetables and plants to support and attract insects, birds and wildlife. We want them to grow from seed, propagate and grow plants, preferably not purchasing them. We would like pupils to present them in an imaginative way using all sorts of containers and features that they have upcycled.

We look forward to seeing a range of exciting and interesting ways.

Each school will receive a packet of wild flower seeds to use.

We will be reviewing the gardens in July.

Happy planting !!

*Sue England - Stratford in Bloom Secretary*



## FOSS - Friends of Stratford Station update April 2026

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If you walk along the Station walk from Brunell Road to the station concourse you will see much work has been done clearing the unruly bank. Stratford District Council cleared the scrub, Forest of Hearts planted the hedge and Warwickshire County Council will soon be planting trees along this walk.

Orbit has mended the damaged planters opposite the station and FOSS has topped up all the planters on the platforms and around the station ready for planting. It is so rewarding to see everyone coming together to look after this important area and make it a good place to be for residents and visitors.

FOSS volunteers have completed the first Spring planting with hardy plants, such as low growing Michaelmas Daisies, scabious and a selection of summer flowering bulbs. Second planting will

happen at the beginning of May with the blowsier annuals for colour. The historic cascade planter is now ready for its traditional geraniums to give that focus of summer colour.

We are a bit worried that this will be another very hot dry summer when watering becomes a real task for the willing volunteers.

*Councillor Jenny Fradgley - Stratford in Bloom Vice Chair*

## Mulch ado about nothing

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Gardening magazines and television programmes talk a lot about mulching, but it's often something we intended to do and didn't quite get around to. Applying a layer of mulch material will bring a range of benefits including:

- Weed seedlings are suppressed and unable to emerge.
- Soil moisture cannot evaporate, so less watering is required in a hot summer.

There are many different materials you can use for mulching. Stones and slate might achieve a certain look, but can make it difficult to work the soil without clearing them away again. If you go for compost, leaf-mould or other 'organic matter' (materials that will rot down), there are extra perks:

- As the mulch breaks down, it will be incorporated into the soil by worms and other organisms, improving the soil structure and capacity to both drain and retain moisture
- The nutrients within an organic mulch will be released slowly into the soil, feeding the plants at the time of year they need it most.

If you have your own compost heap, this is great and saves having to buy something in (although it might be a bit too rich for mulching around very young or delicate plants). An even better option is leaf-mould – leaves from deciduous trees that have started to rot – a thick layer of this can be added without the risk of over-feeding and it looks great. If you haven't tried mulching before, the most important thing is to have a go and keep in mind what you're trying to achieve.

*Judith Conroy - Research Fellow, Coventry University*



## Why use a Peat Free Growing Medium

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Over the last few years there has been a growing pressure that businesses and the public move away from the use of peat-based composts and move to peat free growing mediums. As this demand has grown, specialist manufacturers, and suppliers have come forward with improved peat free growing mediums that can now compete with the traditional peat-based compost.

Having recognised the need that we should all help the environment, Plantscape and Stratford in Bloom have been using more sustainable Peat free compost for over 3 years and still provide our characteristic fantastic floral displays. .

Plantscape was the one of the UK's First major supplier of public floral displays to adopt the use of a 100% Peat Free growing medium.

Here are some of the points that have helped us make our move to supply summer displays using a Peat Free growing medium.

### Why we should NOT be using a Peat based growing medium

- *Peat is a non-renewable resource.*
- *Peatlands are what's known as a carbon sink – they absorb a huge amount of carbon dioxide – a greenhouse gas – from the atmosphere.*
- *Damaging peat bogs results in carbon dioxide being released into the air – an estimated 23 million tonnes of it every year from UK peat lands alone.*
- *Peat bogs are special landscapes – they store carbon, control flooding and create homes for wildlife.*

### Why we should use a Peat Free growing medium

- *Demands to move to Peat Free from Government institutions, Horticultural Organisations, Councils and the Public.*
- *Good for the environment as made from sustainable organic matter.*
- *Improved water retentive properties – with the use of a man-made biodegradable resin foam.*
- *Lower carbon footprint as the planting medium we use is made locally in Leicestershire*
- *Most peat is imported from Ireland, which increase the road freight and the damaging effect on the environment*
- *The Coir used in our growing medium is purchased direct from villagers in India to help local communities.*

**Alan McGregor - Plantscape**

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**Fancy getting involved? We are on the look out for like-minded green fingered people to join us.  
Drop us an email to [sueengland@btconnect.com](mailto:sueengland@btconnect.com)**