

Sanctuary  
Supported  
Living

retirement  
communities

technology  
enabled living

Take part in our **Gardening Competition**



March – July 2024



ready steady  
**grow**



Resident  
Information



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# Introduction

## Welcome to Ready Steady Grow 2024

We appreciate the feedback we received last year and have made some changes to this year's competition based on your suggestions.

This year, we've introduced two brand new and exciting themes:

Keep calm, love plants and

Best fruit and veg patch

We've also added an additional category for the **Tallest Sunflower**

As always, there are some fantastic prizes up for grabs!

The competition is open to all residents of our supported living and retirement communities services. Whether you have access to a communal garden, an allotment, a courtyard, a balcony – or even a window sill! - we look forward to seeing your gardening skills in action.

Remember, each participant is allowed only **one entry**. You can submit your entries anytime from the launch date until **15 July 2024**, giving you ample time to plan and plant.

Getting started is easy – simply read through this guide, start planning your garden, and don't hesitate to ask our staff for support and advice as you go.

Happy gardening!

## How to use this pack

This pack provides all the information you need to participate, including timelines, how to enter, judging criteria, and what our all-important prizes are.

There will be reference to useful documents that can help you plan your entry. Please ask a member of staff to provide you with these resources.

## Competition categories

This year, there are two main themes:

Keep calm, love plants and

## Best fruit and veg patch

You can also enter an additional category for the **Tallest Sunflower**

Details on how the competition will be judged are provided in the **Judging** section.

# 1 Keep calm, love plants

How you choose to beautify your garden is entirely up to you. Here are some ideas:

Transform your garden using recyclable products. For example, use toilet paper rolls for growing plants, wellies for planting flowers, or pallets for displaying plants or making tables. This is a great way to create beautiful spaces and keep junk out of landfill.

Grow your garden or window pots and boxes to capture all the beauty of nature. Create nesting for birds or plant colourful flowers to attract bees and butterflies. Making your outdoor space attractive to wildlife can be very therapeutic and doesn't require a lot of work.







Here are some flowers that are not only beautiful but also easy to grow and maintain:

## Nigella (Love-in-a-mist)

Simply scatter seeds across a patch of soil. Nigella is tougher than it looks and will happily self-seed for the following year.

**LOVES** Full sun and watering in dry conditions.

**TOP TIP** Sow two or three times between Spring and Summer to maximise the amount of flowers you get.

## Marigolds

The seeds grow fast so you will quickly see their colourful flowers. Tall varieties for the border, smaller ones for beds and pots.

**LOVES** Sunny, fertile and well-drained soil.

**TOP TIP** Sow marigolds among tomato plants to repel blackfly and greenfly.

## Sweet Peas

Pretty and fragrant. Easy to handle.

**LOVES** Sunny, fertile and well-drained soil.

**TOP TIP** Mice love sweet pea seeds and young shoots. Cover with a mini propagator or cut off plastic bottle.

## Californian Poppy

The seeds grow fast so you will quickly see their colourful flowers. Tall varieties for the border, smaller ones for beds and pots.

**LOVES** Full sun and well-drained soil.

**TOP TIP** Super hardy, this plant is also ideal for rock gardens.



## 2 Best fruit and veg patch

You can have a fruit and veg patch even in a courtyard if you have one. Fill it with large terracotta pits and grow herbs, figs, chillis, blueberries, tomatoes, cucumbers and courgettes. If you have space, why not buy a couple of raised beds.

### Questions and Answers

#### How do I lay out my vegetable patch?

- Consider staggering plants by planting in triangles so you can fit more plants in each bed.
- Avoid planting too close together.

#### What fruit takes the shortest time to grow?

- Strawberries
- Blackberries
- Raspberries

#### What is the most difficult vegetable to grow?

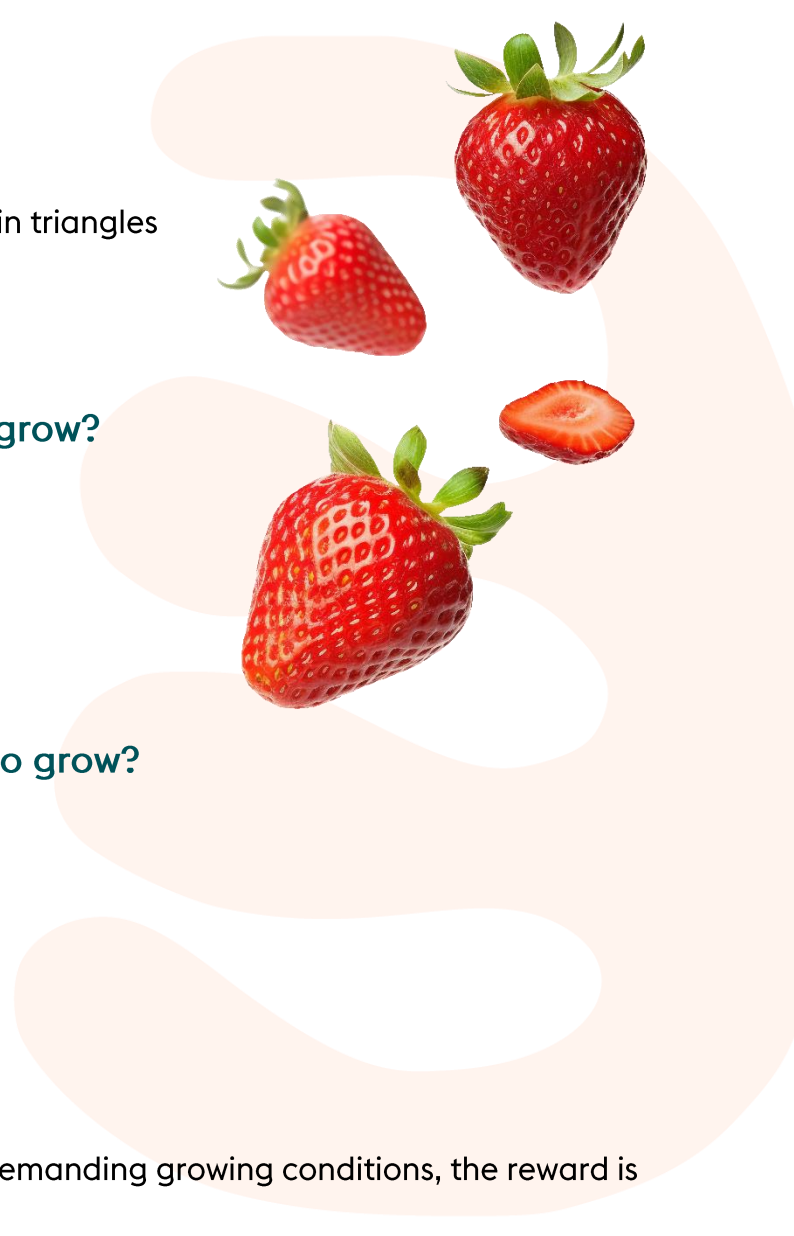
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Melons
- Head lettuce

Whilst these vegetables are known for their demanding growing conditions, the reward is entirely worth the work!

#### When should I start my vegetable patch?

- The optimal time to sow vegetable seeds is during Spring, Summer and Autumn directly into prepared beds. This is known as direct sowing.

#### Tips for planning a low-cost vegetable patch



- Manure can often be obtained for free from farms or stables. Just be mindful of herbicidal residue.
- Trees and shrubs with long straight stems, like Hazel, can be repurposed into plant supports at no cost.
- Encourage hoverflies and other beneficial insects to your garden for natural pest control.

For more tips on planning a low-cost vegetable garden, we recommend exploring YouTube. There are numerous videos available that provide practical advice and step-by-step guides to help you create a beautiful and productive garden on a budget.

## 3 Tallest Sunflower

This year we have added a new category **Tallest Sunflower**. You can enter this category in addition to either of these themes:

**Keep calm, love plants**  
**Best fruit and veg patch**

### Growing the tallest Sunflower

Sunflowers have long taproots that grow quickly and can become stunted if confined. Therefore, it's essential to sow seeds directly into the garden rather than starting from a pot.

### How to increase the size of my Sunflower

- Deep, regular watering, particularly in the morning.
- Apply a liquid fertiliser every two to three weeks to boost their height.

### Which Sunflower seeds grow the tallest?

- The Russian Sunflower variety, which can reach heights of up to 15 feet, is the tallest and is easy to grow from seed.



- Sow them singly under glass into multipurpose compost from March-April and outdoors from April-June once all risk of frost has passed. Flowers will appear between July and September.
- Don't forget to support the stems for even taller flowers!

### How long does it take a Sunflower to reach maximum height?

- A Sunflower grows rapidly in the first 50 days then the growth rate slows until the Sunflower reaches its maximum height of approximately eight feet tall.

### What is the best location for planting Sunflowers?

- Choose a full sun location with 6-8 hours of sunlight per day, ideally in a location protected from wind.
- Provide fertile, well-drained soil amended with good compost.

As Sunflowers have large taproots, they can grow deep in the soil.





## Important dates

### Monday 4 March 2024

Competition opens – send us an email confirming you are taking part to [speakup@sanctuary.co.uk](mailto:speakup@sanctuary.co.uk)

### Monday 15 July 2024

Deadline to submit final photos and entries for the competition.

### Monday 12 August 2024 – Monday 19 August 2024

Online public vote is open.

### Monday 2 September 2024

Winners announced via email to managers and scheme mailboxes, and on our website.

## Prizes

We've added extra prizes for this year's competition based on your feedback! Every participant will receive a certificate of recognition. In addition, all winners will be awarded a trophy and a gift card. Here are the details:

### 1 Keep calm, love plants

#### First Place

“Best garden and flowers”

**£200 gift card**

#### Runner Up

“Highly commended garden”

**£100 gift card**

#### Spot Prize

Chosen by members of our Resident Advisory Panel and Resident Scrutiny Panel.

**£30 gift card**



## 2 Best fruit and veg patch

### First Place

“Best fruit and veg patch”

**£200 gift card**

### Runner Up

“Highly commended fruit and veg patch”

**£100 gift card**

### Spot Prize

Chosen by members of our Resident Advisory Panel and Resident Scrutiny Panel.

**£30 gift card**



## 3 Tallest Sunflower

Winner will receive a **£50 gift voucher**.

All winners will be asked to have a photo with their trophy, certificate and voucher that will be published on the website.

### Gift cards

Winners will receive a B&Q gift card, which can be used at any B&Q store nationwide. It's the perfect prize for garden enthusiasts!



## How will my entry be judged?

Your garden will be judged by public vote between **Monday 12 and Monday 19 of August 2024**.

**Important Note:** Showcasing the transformation of your garden is crucial. Voters will be keen to see how your garden has improved. Therefore, make sure to capture some 'before and after' photos. These can be sent to [speakup@sanctuary.co.uk](mailto:speakup@sanctuary.co.uk).

## 1 Keep calm, love plants

The judging for this category will be based on the overall positioning of displays and designs, as well as how colourful and vibrant your garden looks. Proper positioning of your plants will contribute to a successful garden.

Consider factors like colour, impact, composition, and plant health. Think about whether the plants you've chosen can coexist and thrive together.

The transformation from the 'before' to 'after' photos will significantly impact judging. The size of your garden doesn't matter; what counts is how you've developed it and the effort you've put in to showcase your transformed garden.

## 2 Best fruit and veg patch

The primary factor in judging will be the quality of your produce. We'll consider all factors that influence quality including maturity, freshness, as well as resilience to disease, insect damage, and blemishes.

Remember, it's not about the size of your space. If you've managed to grow a variety of ripe, ready-to-eat fruits and vegetables, and can show the transformation with 'before' and 'after' photos, you stand a good chance of doing well in the competition.

In addition to the main themes, we have an extra category this year: **the Tallest Sunflower**. Remember, you can enter this category along with one of the main themes.

## 3 Tallest Sunflower

The winner of this category will be determined based on the height of your Sunflower. You'll need to measure your Sunflower and provide a photo showing the measurement. This will allow us to verify the height of your Sunflower.

**Measurements are taken from the bottom of the plant (at ground level) to the base of the Sunflower head or green bud using a tape measure.**

The tallest sunflower ever recorded was 30 feet, and needed some rather elaborate scaffolding to keep it stable.





# How do I register to take part and submit my entry?

You can register your entry any time from when the competition launches on **4 March 2024** up until **15 July 2024**.

Just send an email to [speakup@sanctuary.co.uk](mailto:speakup@sanctuary.co.uk) with your name, where you live, and your interest in participating in this year's competition. If your service is entering as a whole, please indicate this in your email.

We accept one entry per service or individual entries if you're entering on your own.

Once we've received your email, we'll confirm your registration and guide you through the next steps.

Remember to take 'before', 'during', and 'after' photos of your garden so we can appreciate its transformation. If you'd like to share pictures of yourself in your garden or with a planter you're particularly proud of, please email these along with a completed photography consent form (available from staff or the Ready Steady Grow web pages).

**The deadline to submit your photos is Monday 15 July 2024.**

**If you need support with your entry, please speak to a member of staff who can help you or submit your entry on your behalf.**

You can view entries and vote for your favourite on the Ready Steady Grow pages of our websites from **Monday 12 - Monday 19 August 2024**.

**\*You are not allowed to vote for your own entry\*.**



# Taking photos

It's important that any photos you take are clear, sharp, and high-quality, so that they provide good evidence of what you've done. We can accept photos from staff or residents. If you don't have your own camera or smartphone to take photos with, speak to a member of staff who can take photos for you.

We would also like to celebrate your gardening activities on our social media pages as well as our website.

If you or your friends, family or members of staff are in the photos, the photos must be accompanied by a completed consent form. Without this form, we will not be able to accept the photos. Make sure you write down the names (first and last) of people in the photos and send a brief description of what is happening to [SSL.Marketing@sanctuary.co.uk](mailto:SSL.Marketing@sanctuary.co.uk).

## Tips for taking great photographs

### Resolution

For clear, crisp images, set your camera to the highest possible setting. Aim for photos around 3MB in size. If the file size ends in KB, it's likely too small for high-quality images.



### Lighting

Avoid taking photos with the main light source (such as windows, the sun, or lights) behind the subject. This can result in dark, underexposed images.

### Focus

Make sure your subject is in focus. If your digital camera has an LCD screen, use it to check the focus. On most smartphones, you can control the focus by tapping the part of the image you want to be in focus on the screen before pressing the shutter button.

### Composition

Make sure the main feature of the photo is clearly visible and that any points of interest are included in the frame. This helps to ensure your photos are relevant to what

you're doing. Take multiple photos from different angles, both vertical and horizontal, to give yourself plenty of options to choose from.

## Getting started

Now that you're familiar with how the competition works, it's time to start planning. We understand that maintaining a beautiful garden can be costly, which is why this competition doesn't award extra points for extravagance.

Starting can often be the most challenging part, especially if you lack equipment, seeds, or soil. However, there are ways to find inspiration and options for cost support.

Check out the [Inspiration, tips and DIY projects](#) section for practical advice.

If you're interested in participating but are concerned about the costs, don't hesitate to speak to a staff member. It's likely that others at your service are in the same situation. Staff may be able to apply for funding, negotiate discounts, or acquire gardening tools and equipment for communal use.

We've compiled some ideas in the [Funding Your Project](#) section to help you manage costs.

As you plan your entry, remember to consider what might appeal to voters. Every detail could make a difference!

**Remember to think about what might get you votes when planning your entry.**



## Funding your project

Organisations often have funds to support local community projects, such as your gardening project. They can assist by providing or donating soil, plants, and gardening tools, or even items that would otherwise go to waste.

Before going ahead, consider what materials you need and estimate the cost of your project (use the **Growing Planner** to help you). Speak to other residents or staff members to find out who else is participating. Group applications or requests for donations or funding are often more effective, and staff can help organise these.

## Local funding

If your needs **are likely to cost less than £200**, consider approaching local stores such as Wickes, B&Q, Argos, Homebase, local garden centres, nurseries, and supermarkets like Tesco, Co-op, Sainsbury's, Morrison's, Asda, Aldi, and Lidl.

## Donations and expertise

**Local environmental 'Friends and Residents' groups or allotments** might potentially donate equipment, soil, or seeds. Consider asking if they'd be interested in providing expertise and advice to help you with your garden transformation.

## Client Engagement Funding

Sanctuary's Client Engagement Funding **offers grants of up to £500** for projects that support skill development for a group of residents, such as horticultural skills for growing vegetables. Applications must be made by a member of staff and demonstrate some measure of match funding and an element of working with the wider community. For more information, speak to a staff member or email: [speakup@sanctuary.co.uk](mailto:speakup@sanctuary.co.uk).

## National initiatives

Some companies run national funding initiatives. These are most suitable if there are lots of residents participating and you apply for funding as a whole service. Check eligibility as applications often need to come from registered charities or community groups and speak to a member of staff so they can help you to organise an application.

## Applying for donations or funding

Ideally, funding applications should come from residents – it's your project after all! – but don't be shy to ask for support. A coordinated effort with other residents and staff can increase your chances of success.

Don't be disheartened if you don't hear back immediately, and always check your eligibility before applying. Good luck!



# Inspiration, tips and DIY projects

## Finding inspiration

- Use free apps like Instagram and Pinterest for ideas or follow professional gardeners.
- Repurpose old gardening magazines into collages for visual inspiration.
- Draw inspiration from your surroundings on a walk.
- Consult gardening experts in your network for advice.
- Watch gardening videos or TV programmes like Garden Rescue, Love Your Garden, and Gardener's World.

## Essential gardening tips

**While gardening is therapeutic, knowing where to start can be daunting. But it doesn't have to be!**

**Below are ten simple gardening tips to get you started.**

- 1.** Start with the right tools i.e secateurs, shears, pruning saw, trowel, hand fork and garden hoe for weeding. Plus, you'll need a pair of gardening gloves to protect your hands!
- 2.** Plan your garden for effective use of space, colour, and structure.
- 3.** Prepare the soil with weeding and fertiliser before planting.
- 4.** Regularly feed and water plants, focusing on the roots rather than the leaves.
- 5.** Start small when creating a new veg patch, covering unused areas to prevent weed growth.
- 6.** Monitor pest populations like slugs and snails and act if they become an infestation.
- 7.** Consider installing nest boxes if you lack suitable trees or hedges for birds to nest.
- 8.** Avoid planting in pure compost due to water retention and stability issues. Instead, mix a couple of inches of compost with your topsoil.



9. Avoid over-watering, remove dead flowers, use quality soil, and remember that different plants require different levels of light.
10. If you have open space, consider creating a quiet spot to reflect on your achievements.

Don't forget to enjoy your garden and take time to sit back and enjoy what you have achieved.

## DIY pallet planter

Save money and give an old pallet a new lease of life with this clever recycling idea to make a vertical pallet planter.

**You will need:** an old pallet, landscape fabric, staple gun

### Step 1 Prepare your pallet

Smooth the slats of the pallet with sandpaper and decide which side will be the top. Cover the bottom, back, and sides with landscape fabric, pulling it taut before securing it with a staple gun. Leave the front and top open.

### Step 2 Planting

Place the pallet face up. Slide 12 plants into the top opening to secure the compost. Pour a bag of compost onto the pallet, pushing it between the slats. Repeat this process with a second bag. Once the pallet is full, begin planting from the top to the bottom.

### Step 3 Watering and feeding

Leave the pallet flat on the ground for a couple of weeks, watering it regularly. This allows the roots to establish and secure all the plants in place. Feed and care for the plants according to their specific instructions.

**Ideal for tumbling tomatoes, strawberries, and herbs.**



## Sow herb seeds



Grow your own herbs from seed for a continuous supply of aromatic leaves. Herbs are simple to grow and require minimal space. You can grow them in various containers such as a trough, patio containers, or even an old bucket with drainage holes. While some herbs can be sown directly outside where you want them to grow others should be started off indoors. Harden off indoor-sown seedlings by gradually acclimatising them to outdoor life over 10-14 days.

Basil	Chives	Coriander
Sow little and often indoors, two seeds per cell and thin to the strongest	Sow indoors or outside, keeping soil or compost evenly moist.	Sow indoors. Hates root disturbance so sow in a pot that you can put outside.
<b>Great with:</b> Italian style food	<b>Great with:</b> Potato salad	<b>Great with:</b> Curry

Parsley	Marjoran & Oregano	Dill
Seed is notoriously slow to germinate. Sow indoors for warmth.	Sow indoors with warmth in pots or trays.	Sow indoors from early April or outside in May.
<b>Great with:</b> Greek style food	<b>Great with:</b> Italian style food	<b>Great with:</b> Seafoods and salads

## Make your own compost

Compost is vital for all gardens. It enriches your soil and helps your plants to grow and thrive. Making your own compost is cost-effective and reduces waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill.

**You will need:** a bin, suitable waste

### Step 1: Prepare your bin

Make sure your bin is large enough. If it's too small, you won't be able to add enough materials, which can unbalance the mix, especially when adding waste that slows down the composting process, such as grass clippings.

### Step 2: Put the right stuff in

Any organic material will do. Good things to compost include vegetable and fruit waste, teabags, and grass cuttings. If your mix looks wet and slimy, add cut-up paper, egg cartons, and toilet roll tubes to absorb excess moisture and thicken the heap. Try layering by alternating between a layer of soft and moist material. Avoid using meat or dairy products as these will attract unwanted pests and smells. Regularly turn the compost heap and water if required!

### Step 3: Get the best out of your compost

When your compost is ready, you'll have a dark brown, soil-like layer with a spongy texture at the bottom of your bin. Spreading the finished compost onto your flowerbeds improves the quality of the soil by helping it retain moisture and preventing weed growth. It also reduces the need for chemical fertilisers and pesticides!

### Top tips

- Keep a pail in the kitchen for collecting compostable waste – when it's full, just add it to the heap.
- Use two compost bins rather than only filling and collecting compost from one – as one bin is composting away, add fresh material to the other.

## Create your own unusual containers

It's time to think creatively and repurpose waterproof household items that might otherwise be discarded. We've provided a couple of examples for you to try out:





## Old wellies transformation

Transform your old wellies into plant containers in six easy steps:

1. Clean the wellies with soapy water and dry with a cloth or old towel.
2. Remove any insoles and make a few little holes in the bottom for water drainage
3. Put a few pebbles at the bottom of the wellies to aid water drainage.
4. Fill your wellies with compost from the toe to a few inches from the top
5. Plant seeds by pressing them lightly into the soil and top up with more compost
6. Give them a good water and place in sunlight (check seed packet for specific directions)



## Bicycle Tyre

1. Clean the tyre thoroughly.
2. Use an exterior-grade primer to seal the tyre and help your paint stick. After that, acrylic art paints are the best option, as they will stick to the rubber surface more effectively.

Perennials or small shrubs are best suited for a tyre planter.

3. Position your tyre planter. If your tyre will be laid flat on the ground, fill it as you would a regular plant pot. Perennials or small shrubs are ideally suited for a tyre planter.
4. Distribute your potting soil evenly throughout the bottom half of the tyre planter (the side with the drainage holes).

## FAQs

### Which part of the garden is best for my plants?

Check plant tags or consult garden centre staff to determine sun requirements. Place plants where they're visible for easy maintenance.

### When should I dig the soil?

Dig soil when it's moist enough to form a loose ball but dry enough to crumble. This helps roots grow easily.

### How often should I water my plants?

Depends how often it rains. Water slowly at the root, ideally early morning or evening to minimise evaporation.

### Do I have enough space?

Avoid overbuying plants. Small spaces can still attract wildlife and grow vegetables and herbs. Check plant labels for space requirements.

### How do I prevent weeds?

Hand-weed your garden to protect flowers. Dig out weeds by their roots and wear gardening gloves for protection.

### What is compost?

Compost is recycled organic material, which you can buy from a store or make yourself from grass trimmings, leaves, and fruit and vegetable peel. Making your own compost not only provides a rich source of nutrients for your plants, but also helps reduce garden and kitchen waste.



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Good Luck!

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