

## **Boats in Bloom Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why are you launching a Boats in Bloom?**

Right across our canal network we see people on boats and beside our towpaths growing and caring for plants, flowers, vegetables and green spaces. They put in the hard work but we get to enjoy their efforts. The awards are our way of saying 'thank you' for their contribution to making the waterways look lovely for everyone.

### **Who will receive a Boat in Bloom certificate?**

Staff and volunteers will be out and about giving certificates right across the Canal & river Trust network. They'll be giving certificates to boats and people gardening alongside the canals and rivers. Anyone might receive a Boat in Bloom certificate, they are not being judged against anyone else, but being recognized and thanked for their individual green-fingered contribution to making our waterways attractive for all.

### **Are there any criteria for deciding who will receive a certificate?**

We're providing some simple criteria (see below) that our staff and volunteers giving out certificates to help them, but in short we're encouraging them to give certificates to everyone whose gardening efforts (big or small) are making a positive contribution to our waterways.

### **Will you be recognizing those who make an extra special effort?**

Yes, we will be giving out a number of special awards these are listed on our Boats in Bloom webpage. If you think you or someone else should be considered for a special award you can make a nomination on our website (to make a nomination you will need to provide a photo, boat index number or for land based nominations an address).

### **Who will decide who receives the special awards?**

A group of volunteer judges will help shortlist finalists for the special awards from the nominations we receive. The public (including boaters of course) will be invited to vote to choose the final winners of the special awards.

### **What if someone thinks they have been missed or overlooked for a certificate or a special award?**

There are a lot of boats and towpaths to cover, so we might inadvertently miss someone, but if they think they have been missed and think they deserve a certificate then they can call our customer service number and we'll try and get someone to visit. If they would like to be considered for a special award then they are welcome to nominate themselves.

## **Frequently asked questions for volunteers**

### **How do I sign up to help give out the certificates?**

Please [complete this short registration form online](#) or call our customer service team on 0303 040 4040 and we'll be in touch.

**What would you like the volunteers to do?**

We would like you to walk a section of towpath and look for boats and towpath businesses and gardens that you think are making a positive contribution to the appearance of the waterway. If you see any that are doing this, please give them a certificate.

**When should I give out the certificates?**

The certificates will be given out between 1 May and 30 June. You can do your volunteering and present certificates at a time that is convenient to you (in sociable daylight hours!). Because boats move around and you might see different boats at different times, you could visit the section you're covering a few times. If you are already volunteering somewhere (for example as a lock keeper or a welcome station volunteer) it may be possible to find time to give out certificates alongside your other volunteer task.

**Can I give out certificates anywhere I want to?**

Yes, but we will try to avoid too many people doing the same areas and nobody doing other areas so when you sign up to help we'll ask you which areas you'd like to cover and agree that with you before you start. We have a lot of towpaths (and boats!) so there is plenty to choose from. We hope to get a good spread of volunteers all over the network.

**Is there a limit to the number of certificates that I can give out?**

No, we would like to give out certificates to everyone who is making a contribution to brightening up our towpaths, it's our way of saying thank you.

**Should I do it on my own or with someone else?**

You can do it on your own, but it's also nice to do it with someone else so that you can have a chat while you're giving out certificates.

**What if someone doesn't want to receive a certificate?**

That's fine, if someone tells you that they don't want a certificate please respect their decision and don't give or leave a certificate for them.

**Where do I get hold of the Boat in Bloom certificates?**

Once you have registered as a Boats in Bloom volunteer we will send you a pack containing Boats in Bloom certificates and criteria to help you decide who to give them to.

**Am I only giving out certificates to boats?**

No, you can give out certificates to businesses, private gardens and community spaces that are making a positive contribution – but they must be beside/adjoining the waterway and be visible to the public from the towpath to be eligible for a certificate.

**Is there any guidance on who I should give certificates to?**

Yes, we have some simple criteria to help you consider who to give certificates to. Remember, you're not judging one against another for the certificates – rather what effort they have made individually. Someone might only have one pot, but if it looks

nice and is making a positive contribution then they should get a certificate just as much as someone whose boat is overflowing with plants.

#### General principles for giving out certificates

- To receive a certificate, the boat or garden must be visible to the public from the towpath.
- Please reward all efforts, no matter how big or small. If they are making a positive contribution to the waterway then they are eligible for an certificate.

#### Some things to consider when you give out certificates

- Does the planting on the boat/garden make a positive impact on the waterways?
- Has the gardener made good use of their different circumstances?
- Is there a 'wow factor' – would passers be likely to pause and admire the planting?
- Does the boat/garden exhibit a good use of colour, plant texture and shape?
- Is there variety and good design, perhaps with a sensitive use of non-plant material?
- Is this boat/garden likely to be attractive to wildlife, e.g. appropriate plants with flowers, fruit or berries for feeding birds and insects?

If you can answer yes to one or more of these questions, then they probably deserve to be given a certificate.

#### **What if I see something extra special?**

If you see something that makes you think 'wow' then why not nominate them for one of the following 'special awards';

##### Boats in Bloom – special awards

- Most flower filled boat
  - Most edible growing boat
  - Most imaginative use of space
- (Special prizes may be awarded to other non-boat floating structure)

##### Towpaths in Bloom – special awards

- Best towpath garden or open space (private or public)
- Best towpath business in bloom (pub/cafe/other business)
- Best wildlife friendly towpath gardening initiative

#### **How do I present the certificate if there is no one around to receive it?**

If possible please deliver the certificate in person, but if that's not possible you'll find in your pack along with the certificates some envelopes, waterproof bags (in case it's raining) and cable ties. If it is safe to do so you can use these to attach a certificate to the boat, please do not step onto the boat to attach an certificate and try and put it somewhere it will be seen (for example near the tiller). If there is a letter box you can deliver the certificate this way.

**What if I need more certificates or have spares that I want to return?**

Please [contact our customer service team](#) to request additional certificate or you can return any spare certificates to Boats in Bloom, Canal & River Trust, The Dock Office, Commercial Road, Gloucester, GL1 2EB.

**Do I also need to nominate for the ‘special prizes’ awards?**

You don’t need to, but if you see something that makes you go ‘wow’ and you think they should be nominated for a special award, then you are very welcome to make a nomination through the online nomination form on the boats in bloom web page (please note you will need to include digital photos to make a nomination).

**Is it ok to take photos?**

Yes, provided that you are taking photos from the towpath and do not step onto a boat or private property you can take photos. If a someone says they would prefer not to have photographs taken of their display, please respect their request.

**Should I record the volunteer hours that I spend giving out certificates?**

If you already carry out another volunteer role for the Trust then please record any hours you spend volunteering giving out certificates incorporated with you other volunteer hours (there is no need to record them separately. If you only volunteering is by giving out certificates, when you have finished giving them out please email [boatsinbloom@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:boatsinbloom@canalrivertrust.org.uk) saying roughly how long you have spent volunteering so we can record these volunteer hours.

**Can I claim expenses for my volunteer time giving out certificates?**

We’re keen to encourage exiting Trust volunteers to help give out certificates alongside their existing role. If you already volunteer and claim expenses, you can only claim once for your main volunteer role but not for helping give out certificates.