



Last year, hard working and green-fingered Bath residents planted some real colour for Bath in Bloom, so much so that the city won gold in the Britain in Bloom competition and was crowned overall winner in the South West last year. This year, the national competition kicks off in Bath, with floral preparations already taking over the city PICTURES: DAVID HARGRAVE

Bath getting ready to Bloom again for judges

After winning the inaugural competition 55 years ago, Bath will once again show its colours as the city prepares to host the start to this year's Britain in Bloom competition.

In 2018, the city won gold in the national competition, under the entry from the Bath Business Improvement District, while the local committee was announced the overall winner in the South West category.

For this year, on July 17, Britain in Bloom kicks off in the Roman city, by the banks of the river Avon, starting at the Western Riverside regeneration project where judges from the South West Champion of Champions panel will start their tour.

The project, developed by Crest Nicholson, includes new housing with wide green community spaces, with landscaping to include modern art and sculptures, wild flowers, living walls and other striking innovative planting schemes.

Before the national event, however, comes Bath in Bloom, the city-wide competition from July 6 to 14.

Last year's growing has only inspired this year's entrants again as colour takes over the city centre and outlying villages.

Margaret Grant is one keen participant, living at the of Sheppards Gardens retirement centre in Weston, which enters Bath in Bloom every year. She told *Bath Magazine*: "The gardeners come in once a fortnight to cut the grass and do any pruning and so on, but we do everything else."

"Lots of the residents have a little bit that they look after and it definitely keeps you fit – especially doing all the watering this summer."

Once again, all residents, businesses, schools, institutions and groups within the boundary of Bath and North-East Somerset can enter.

For the majority of categories, the keen-eyed judges are on the lookout

for a variety of specifications, including impact, variety and the use of a range of plants, colour combinations, originality and design and condition, care and sustainability.

But immediately after Bath in Bloom, Britain in Bloom begins as the city's top planters are judged.

The city boasts a fair record, having won 13 times and have been finalists 17 times, also taking the South West in Bloom title an amazing 23 times.

If Bath in Bloom are successful in this year's South West competition, they will be nominated to progress to the national championship.

Barry Cruse MBE, the Bath in Bloom committee's honorary President, said: "It's an exciting year. This year we're in the South West in Bloom category, after winning gold for the last two years."

"We only have a three and a half hour tour, but it's a real struggle finding things to leave out. We have so



much new stuff to show the judges. I'm really looking forward to it."

Along the route, the Millennium Green on Lansdown has been developed and maintained by volunteers. Close by at St Stephens Church, also on Lansdown, there is a large wildlife garden where various community and educational events for children are held.

Nearer to the centre is St Andrews Junior School, where there are some young vegetable growers excited to meet the judges and show off their produce.

A 3D bedding feature has been planted at Parade Gardens as well, to celebrate 20 years of the Forever Friends Appeal.

The display is in partnership with the Royal United Hospital Bath, and the Bath and North East Somerset parks department.

There has also been volunteer planting in Bath's Botanical Gardens,

as well as two new beds planted in Manvers Street.

The beds were designed and planted by a small group of volunteers with donations by the Bath BID company, the Bath in Bloom committee and the new Indigo Hotel.

The Ranger team, organised by the Bath BID organisation, have been helping residents in the community. While typically they help with clearing up of anti-social mess and light maintenance, the team have been in demand to help get the city ready for July.

The Bath BID committee first began working with Bath in Bloom three years ago, at a time when low funding saw the city struggle to find its colour.

Since then, however, the competition has grown, as Stephen Brook, from the Bath in Bloom committee, said: "This year we are aiming for the same again. Should we do well we are hoping that we will be invited to com-



pete in the national UK finals next year.

"In planning the route we have looked at various areas of Bath in detail and we were very impressed with what has gone on and the landscaping at the Crest Nicholson Regeneration development at Bath Riverside.

"We want to begin the judging tour at Bath Riverside to give the judges a wonderful start with a real 'wow' factor."

Marcus Evans, sales and marketing director at Bath Riverside, added: "We were absolutely thrilled to be approached by Bath in Bloom to begin the judging tour at Bath Riverside.

"As developers, we have always been conscious of the need to support and improve the local environments by creating green spaces that support biodiversity and provide inviting spaces for local residents to enjoy. This is a real feather in the cap for all our work here.

"Since we started work on the site, Bath Riverside has installed around 135 square metres of external living wall over the principal buildings creating visual interest as well as increasing biodiversity and attracting pollinators.

"More than 5,000 plants were used, as well as the addition of insect and bird boxes.

Bath will not be the only location in the South West competing in this year's event, however. Yeovil and Curry Rivel in Somerset, Kingsbridge in Devon, and Newquay and St Just in Cornwall have all been named as 2019 national finalists.

Last year, Cornwall's Truro was crowned the overall national winners for their exotic, drought-tolerant plants and solar-powered rainwater harvesting system, impressing the judges with more than 1,000 hanging baskets and floral features, and a community orchard.

Public urged to watch for robber

Avon and Somerset Police are appealing for help to trace wanted man Danny O'Driscoll.

The 29-year-old is wanted in connection with an armed robbery in Dorset.

The robbery took place in February at a Bournemouth bookmaker's shop, and the following day he was part of a house burglary in Poole.

O'Driscoll is described as a white man, 5ft 7ins tall of medium build. He may have shaved his head and although normally clean shaven sometimes grows beard stubble.

He may be in the south or central areas of Bristol or possibly Chipping Sodbury. Call 999 immediately if you see him, quoting 5219048951.

Man found dead at Prussia Cove

A man has died after being pulled in from the sea by a lifeguard near Penzance, Cornwall.

The man was spotted at Prussia Cove at 12.50 pm. He was brought in to Praa Sands and treated by ambulance crews, but was sadly pronounced dead at the scene.

His death is not being treated as suspicious, and police efforts to locate his next of kin continue.

Poole to Majorca

Poole Town FC midfielder Marvin Brooks has made the peculiar transfer from Southern League football to ITV's Love Island.

The 29-year-old will miss pre-season training to look for love at the Majorca resort, where a £50,000 prize awaits the programme's winner.

Poole manager Tommy Killick said: "I have had to deal with a few different scenarios in terms of players going away and missing things, but this is a new one."

Top for students

Falmouth has been named as having the highest percentage of properties available to students.

A new online tool, created by www.thomas-sanderson.com, found that a staggering 77 per cent of all properties in the Cornish town were for students to rent, beating fellow uni spot Leeds.

Gloucester and Exeter had some of the lowest available, at 14 and 16 per cent respectively.

No nuts on FlyBe

Exeter-based airline Flybe has announced that it will no longer carry peanuts or nut-based products on board its own-operated flights.

The aim is to "improve the passenger experience for severe allergy sufferers".