

FGS MEMBERSHIP GUIDE

# Members Handbook 2013/14



FLORA  
GARDEN  
SOCIETY





For more information about the terms and conditions of your annual membership, exclusive advantages and offers, or if you have any questions, contact us at [help@fgs.com](mailto:help@fgs.com) or visit [www.floragardensociety.com](http://www.floragardensociety.com).



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Top: The Society has access to many Stately Homes and Gardens.

Middle: There really is something for everyone to enjoy in the garden!

Bottom: We can help you to make the most of your garden and show you how to enjoy the fruits of your labors.



# Welcome to the Flora Garden Society

Welcome to the Members Handbook, we hope it provides you with all the information you need to get

the most out of your membership. Your valued support makes it possible for us to work closer towards achieving our mission of supporting and promoting the beauty of plants and gardening around the world. Every year our membership grows, and more and more people are opening their gardens for everyone to enjoy!

***“It is our goal to bring a greater awareness of the beauty of plants and gardens to societies across the globe and grant access to every individual to experience and learn the art of gardening”***

## ABOUT US

We are the Flora Gardening Society (FGS) with 58 country and regional offices world wide, with our headquarters in sunny San Luis Obispo, CA. We are the fastest growing horticultural organization and are unique in the fact that we cover the widest geographical area, offering all of our members the exclusive opportunity to visit gardens which are all very different and provide a wide range of experiences. We currently have over 35,000 members and are growing every day. More and more of our members are volunteering to open their garden gates to allow access to other members to share in the beauty of their gardens.

## ANNUAL MEMBER CONVENTION

Every year we host a Members Convention which takes place in different cities each year; previous locations include Barcelona, London, Sydney, San Francisco & Bangkok. At the convention we update members with a series of interesting presentations which include the latest developments in horticulture. It also provides the opportunity to network and swap ideas with other members. In advance of each convention you will be sent a VIP invitation together with an overview of topics to be covered.

We look forward to seeing you at a garden soon, and hope it brings you as much pleasure as it does us.

***P. Blackmore***

Patricia Blackmore, Director FGS







Above: One of the decorative water features in the majestic Versailles Garden in France.

## Something for Everyone!

Our gardens have been all designed to inspire and educate gardeners by demonstrating a wide range of gardening techniques, new and unusual plants and creative but practical design ideas. Throughout the whole year, whatever the weather, there is always something new and interesting to see in our wide range of gardens... we truly can offer something for everyone.

As we are in the privileged position of having access to gardens across the globe, provides us with a unique opportunity to share a huge variety of different gardens to our members. You will be able to see for yourselves how different climates and cultures affect the styles and types of plants that we have available through all four seasons.

### MEDITERRANEAN GARDENS

The style of the gardens in the Mediterranean are becoming more and more popular; not only with gardeners looking for some unusual ideas for their own gardens but also because they often offer a sense of peace and tranquillity amongst species that cannot survive in other parts of the world.

The designs of Mediterranean gardens often depend on the local micro-climate and are therefore usually filled with an abundance of exotic species in the coastal areas, with the more sober Renaissance gardens and formal patios inland. Shade is often provided by the huge palms and Italian Cypress plants whilst lavender and rosemary provide the fragrance... also look out for some pretty amazing cacti!

### TRADITIONAL ENGLISH COTTAGE GARDENS

The quintessential English cottage garden conquers up images of tumbling of plants filling every available space and climbers running up walls and fences. It is a garden full of color and life... every single one is different and every single one reflects the location, the space and the personalities of the gardeners.

The cottage garden, complete with roses round the door, is often perceived as the English national style... with plants such as rambling roses, hollyhocks and *Alchemilla mollis* tightly packed into the borders. There is often no such thing as a formal planting scheme with colors mixing and clashing, resulting in some amazing displays.

### ALPINE GARDENS

Alpine gardens provide a habitat for precious mountain flowers which can often be very rare and unusual. They can actually produce some of the most stunning flowers imaginable due to the fact that in the cold climate they can struggle to pollinate in the usual way so they produce large & very bright flowers to help the insects can find them. Also in their natural habitat alpine plants develop dwarf habits so that they can survive the natural conditions.

Edelweiss and Blue Thistle are the most common forms of species found in alpine gardens but also look out for the Alpine Toadflax Rock Plant (Lion's Mouth) and sometimes it can be possible to find more than twenty different colors or species on very small patch of Alpine Meadow... spectacular!



Above: There are many different varieties of fragrant roses that can be typically found in traditional English gardens.

Right: Many of our public members also hold "Garden Open Days". Why not take the opportunity to discover the many styles of gardens that people design?







Left: Crathes Castle in Scotland boasts a fine example of a traditional garden that you would expect from such a magnificent castle.

#### FORMAL GARDENS

Some of our large flagship gardens boast the most amazing examples of formal garden design with their arrangements of terraces and lawns spaciouly laid-out with ornate designs of clipped hedges, topiary & formal flower beds mixed with statues and water features combining to make these gardens an absolute joy to explore.

#### KITCHEN GARDENS

It's not at all surprising that kitchen gardens are now starting to feature strongly in many of our gardens as it is claimed that the number of people growing their own food is rising year on year. Although often not the most prettiest of gardens, it is certainly one of the most useful. Our gardens will provide inspiration for growing many different types of fruit, vegetables and herbs.

#### GLASSHOUSE GARDENS

Some of our large, flagship gardens are able to provide you with the true glasshouse experience, and they really are worth a visit. Glasshouses are able to create a variety of controlled environments including desert, rain-forest and tropical conditions, supporting a huge range of tender plant varieties including some rare, vulnerable and endangered species. The typical type of plants you could expect to see inside a glasshouse include, huge tropical palms, banana and pineapple plants, giant water lilies, orchids and cacti. The glass houses themselves can be very impressive and a work of art in their own right.

#### WILDLIFE GARDENS

Watching wildlife in the gardens can be such a treat and some of our gardens have dedicated nature reserve areas specifically designed for attracting wildlife. These nature reserves provide haven to many animals such as birds, butterflies, frogs, bats and hedgehogs by offering them food and shelter. An added bonus is the wild flowers that grow in these types of conditions such as poppies, daisies and buttercups which can provide a stunning display of color.





Top: Trees that provided welcome shade during the summer months come into their own when they turn their rich autumnal colors.

Middle: Spring-time trees in full blossom paints such a pretty picture, but it's not around for long!

Bottom: Winter at Castle Wuerzburg, World Heritage Site.

## Beautiful Gardens, Whatever the Weather!

It is often assumed that the best time to visit a garden is during the spring and summer months when gardens are full of bright colors and interesting scents. However, many cities have unique climates that have distinct seasons where certain plants can flourish in the off seasons; so in actual fact it is really interesting to visit our gardens at any time of the year.

### SPRING

When you visit a garden during the spring months you are uplifted with a feeling of hope and anticipation following the long winter months. The first few small flowers to appear offer us the promise of the warmer days and show the first signs of nature's most busy season. The shrubs all start to bloom, and plants like Forsythia's are at their best with new flowers arriving every day. The vibrant displays of spring bulbs are always an impressive sight with the bright yellow daffodils, beautiful tulips and crocuses making a fantastic display in many of our gardens.

### SUMMER

The summer months offer us an abundance of flowers and foliage which provides all our gardeners the opportunity to develop some amazing displays of color, shape and texture. This is the season where some of the more tropical plants come into their own as hardy palms, tree ferns and bamboos take on the form of living sculptures. The oversized foliage of hardy banana plants and cannas form a beautiful backdrop to some of the most dramatic flowers such as dazzling dahlia, glowing red-hot poker and vibrant hibiscus. While tender specimens such as jasmine, lilies and citrus fruits provide us with intoxicating perfumes.

### AUTUMN

The autumn sun provides a warm light which enhances the beauty of gold, brown and orange – the true colors of autumn. The garden offers a greater variety in terms of shapes and textures. Ornamental grasses are at their most beautiful at this time of the year and set against the richness of the last flowering plants such as asters, sedums and kniphofias can provide dramatic borders. Autumn is also the time when deciduous plants prepare to drop their leaves and many are transformed from green mounds into a blaze of glory in red, orange and gold.

### WINTER

Many people think of winter as a dead time in the garden but it is still a fascinating time to visit and appreciate the garden's subtle beauties as interesting stems are revealed and the evergreen foliage becomes even more impressive. Plants like Cornus alba are shown at their best during this time of year as the green leaves are gone and the beautiful red stems are revealed. Tree bark can be striking all year round but it is only in winter when deciduous trees have dropped their leaves can you appreciate the true beauty of bark, which is not only lovely to look at but interesting to touch. Frost can also bring a new glamour and sense of magic to any garden.

Our gardens are open all year round and we also encourage our members to hold open days for their gardens at different times of the year in order to provide a different experience each time you visit.





# Gardening for the future

With the increasing changes in our climate, combined with the fact that we have ever decreasing resources it's not surprising that more and more people want, and need, to be doing their bit to minimize their effects on the environment. We are doing our bit to educate and support our members about the various ways to maintain beautiful gardens whilst being ecologically aware.

Ecologically aware gardening is understanding that even the smallest action can have the biggest impact both to the local wildlife and the global community, and it certainly doesn't have to cost you the earth or take up more of your precious time. Ecological gardening is about working with what you already have and making the most of your gardens unique features... growing plants which are naturally happy to live in the conditions that your garden provides for them.

It also means not using anything that you don't really need, including artificial chemicals and ensuring that reuse and recycle wherever possible. By composting our garden and food waste not only do we provide valuable food for the garden but we also can reduce the amount of rubbish we send to landfill. Also don't use tap water in the garden, start collecting rainwater instead, it's pure, natural, doesn't waste valuable resources and it's free!

Year on year, many of us spend a small fortune on bedding plants which just get thrown away at the end of year; think about raising your own from seeds or cuttings. Also consider if you are able to recreate the same dramatic affects by planting hardy perennials.

Essentially becoming an ecologically aware gardener requires you to be more in tune with your garden and it's environment and work with what nature has already provided... try it, you might be amazed and delighted with the results.

## ACTION POINTS FOR RECYCLING:

- **Avoid creating waste**, by reducing the amount you throw away
- **Repair items** instead of buying new ones
- **Reduce landfill**, don't throw away anything in general rubbish that could be recycled
- **Reuse any items** that might have served their original purpose
- **Compost waste materials** instead of throwing them away
- **Buy wisely**, always look to purchase products which utilize recycled materials



Above: Visit your local farm shops or garden nurseries to buy produce or plants as an alternative to the larger stores.

Middle: Consider planting new trees to replace any old ones that get removed.

Bottom: Growing fruit and vegetables in your garden along side plants and flowers, can be very rewarding.







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