GREEN ON WIGHT
Horticultural & Environmental Professionals

NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2025

Happy Christmas to you all and I hope you are all keeping well. As it's been a while since our last meeting I thought it might be useful to send a newsletter around to keep you up to date with some recent news and to take some time to reflect on what we have achieved as a group since Green On Wight was formed.

Next Meeting

We had intended to hold another meeting this autumn but various events meant this became impossible. We are planning to have our next meeting on Monday 9th February between 10am and 1pm at the IW College. Please ear mark the date and look out for the invitation after Christmas.

GROW Branding

You'll notice the Green On Wight banner and strapline at the top of this page. Thanks must go to Craig Ratcliff and Simon Attfield of Attfield Design who came up with the name and branding for our group. The font and background colour of this newsletter is also part of our branding strategy. And if you attended the Wolverton Manor Garden Fair in August you will have seen the GROW stand kitted out with Green On Wight banners, feather flags and even badges to give

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BIG IDEAS FOR SMALL BRANDS

away. We also have a dedicated Green On Wight email address greenonwight@outlook.com and we are on WhatsApp.

Social Media Presence

Craig has been busy once again and set up Green On Wight pages on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. If you visit any of these social media sites, please 'like, comment and share' and interact with these pages.

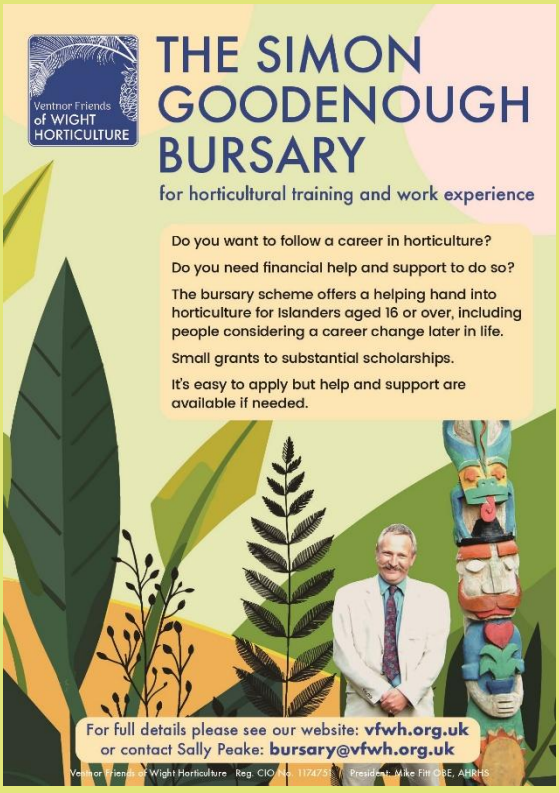
F: https://www.facebook.com/GreenOnWight

I: www.instagram.com/green.on.wight

L: www.linkedin.com/company/green-on-wight

The first recipient of a Simon Goodenough Bursary award

Shoshana Hill pictured with Val Pitts



The Trustees of Ventnor Friends of Wight Horticulture are delighted to announce that Island resident Shoshana Hill is the first recipient of a Bursary award that will allow her to pursue her dream of a new career in horticulture.

Shoshana told us that her love for gardening started as a child when she spent lots of time in her garden and outdoors, but, living in the centre of Manchester, she did not see gardening opportunities there and qualified as a dog groomer, a job she undertook for a few years. A move to the 'Garden Isle' with her family made her re-evaluate and she is now determined to pursue her love for horticulture as her career.

We were struck by the thoughtfulness of her approach and her long-term plan and are pleased that we can support her on the first step of the way to a new career,

which is to follow the online course for The RHS Level 2 Certificate in the Principles of Plant Growth and Development provided by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Shoshana is backing this up by getting her hands dirty through work experience at CAR Gardens and by volunteering at Osborne and VBG.

Information about the Ventnor Friends of Wight Horticulture and the Simon Goodenough Bursary can be found here Please encourage anyone you know who might benefit from one of our awards to apply or email me if you would like a poster or some of our leaflets to display.

Val Pitts
December 2025

South and South East in Bloom Successes

The results for South and South East in Bloom (S&SEiB) came out in late October and awards were won by several gardens and organisations across the island, many of which are managed/maintained by members of GROW. There are more award winners on the island than you might think so please see the list of winners under each category below (apologies if I have missed anyone out) but well done to all our S&SEiB winners.

Parish	
Bembridge Parish Council	Silver
Heritage Park/Garden	
Faringford Estate, Freshwater	Gold
Osborne, East Cowes	Gold
Small Park	
Bembridge Parish Council – War Memorial Gardens, Bembridge	Silver Gilt
Cascades, Ventnor	Silver Gilt
Park	
Ventnor Park	Gold
Walled Garden	
Faringford Estate, Freshwater	Gold
Osborne Walled Garden, East Cowes	Gold
Business Landscape	
Bembridge Coast Hotel, Bembridge	Gold

Norton Grange Coastal Village, Yarmouth	Gold
Celebration Stations (Stations in Bloom)	
Shanklin Station	Silver
Lake Train Station	Gold
It's Your Neighbourhood	
Shanklin Green Towns – Shanklin Library	Improving
Shanklin Green Towns – Shanklin War Memorial	Advancing
Shanklin Green Towns – Shanklin Station	Thriving
Play Lane Millenium Green Trust, Ryde	Outstanding
National Certificate of Distinction	
Play Lane Millenium Green Trust, Ryde	
RHS Community Awards	
Community Engagement Award	
Play Lane Millenium Green Trust, Ryde	Silver Gilt
Health and Welbeing Award	
Norton Grange Coastal Village, Yarmouth	Silver Gilt & Category Winner
Hotels & Guesthouses	
Bembridge Coast Hotel	Gold & Category Winner
Wildflowers and Weeds	
Bembridge Coast Hotel	Gold & Category Winner

IW College Horticulture News Autumn 2025

Catrina Richardson has supplied the following 3 stories where members of GROW have helped provide additional training opportunities to college horticulture students some of which have resulted in horticultural improvements in our community.

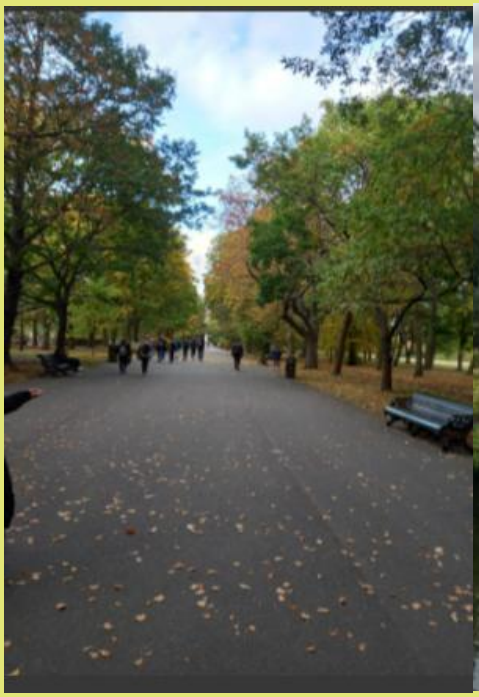
The Horticulture students were fortunate to be invited to this year's Discovery Day at London Zoo in October.

The Discovery Day brings together trainees, apprentices and students in Horticulture from across the UK. It offers the opportunity to find out about the wider industry, hear from industry experts and network with a range of professionals.

We heard from guest speakers, including Avenade on the use of AI in Horticulture which captured the students' imaginations and Sven Seiffert, Curator of Plants ZSL on Zoo Horticulture.

The students participated in break out sessions to offer their thoughts on the future of Horticulture and the challenges and opportunities for the next generation of Horticulturalists.

The afternoon was spent on a range of tours. Groups visited habitats in the Zoo and heard from staff about the challenges around creating and maintaining these for the benefit of the diverse species of animals.



We saw their experimental work on sea grass, and related this back to the seagrass restoration project on the Island. We also went out into the wider Regent's Park including seeing the new development of the Queen Elizabeth Garden which is not yet open to the general public.

Thanks to Mike Fitt and all at the Royal Parks Guild for accommodating us!

Main sponsors: THE ROYAL PARKS GUILD · THE ROYAL PARKS · ZSL Zoological Society of London

Supported by : Green Flag Award · CWGC · National Trust · the tree council · Chartered Institute of Horticulture · Rochfords · THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF GARDENERS · Parks for London · POLLINATING LONDON TOGETHER · RHS · Kew

For further information please contact Mike Fitt at Chair@royalparksguild.org.uk

Other off site days have included Nunwell House for Tree Planting and East Cowes Community Orchard for Winter Fruit Tree Pruning.

Bembridge Coast Hotel – Garden Design Competition – Realised Project

This autumn, student Madeleine Dew, who won the garden design competition sponsored by Bembridge Coast Hotel last academic year, returned with this year's class to realise her design.

Before…

During…

And after…

Thanks to Andy Bennett, the Head Gardener, and all at Bembridge Coast for this great opportunity to see a project through- we look forward to seeing it grow on in 2026.

Horticulture St. James' Square Project

Update…

Last academic year we worked on a project to improve the beds in St James' Square Newport.

This autumn the students paid a return visit to carry out seasonal maintenance, weeding, cutting back and preparing the beds for winter. It's great practice for them to work in a bust area and engage with the general public.

GROW Timeline

As this is the first newsletter we have produced I thought it might be useful to document the development of GROW and what we have been up to since we formed. So in chronological order.

February 2024 – Craig Ratcliff (C.A.R. Gardens), Mike Fitt OBE (Royal Parks Guld) and Toby Beasley (English Heritage, Osborne House) decide to form a professional's group to help with networking and the promotion of the green industry on the island.

April 2024 – GROW first meeting at Osborne House where 14 members got together. Discussions focussed on training, raising the profile of horticulture on the island, the purpose of this group and potentially undertaking projects. GROW have tried to meet three times per year at a variety of venues around the island.

June 2024 – GROW's second meeting at C.A.R. Gardens where a paper on the islands horticultural education provision was circulated by Catrina Richardson and Rob Mew highlighting barriers/issues to young people on the island and how the college and island horticultural industry needs support and positive promotion. The name of our group was also discussed.

October 2024 – students, trainees and apprentices from the island travelled to London to participate in the Royal Parks Guild Apprentice Discovery Day at the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, learning about the breadth of the horticultural industry. (The 2025 Discovery Day has been covered by Catrina Richardson above).

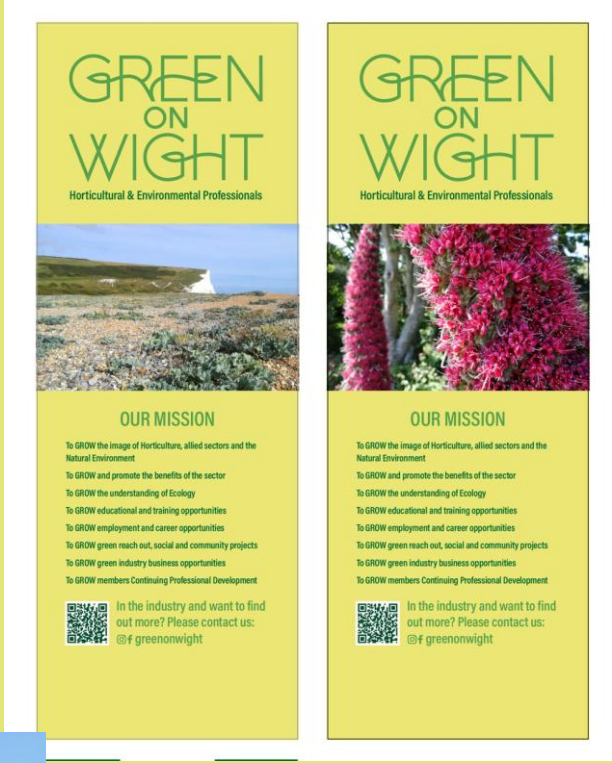
October 2024 – GROW's third meeting at the IW College where members had the chance to see the college horticultural facilities and helped the IW College horticultural department validate the horticulture course curriculum. The group discussed promoting GROW at a local show and we held a workshop to discuss the groups terms and conditions.

March 2025 – GROW members help promote the green industry at the IW College Careers Fair.

March 2025 – GROW members help to redesign and replant the flower beds in St James' Square, Newport. With help from IW and Newport Parish Councils, C.A.R. Gardens, Catrina Richardson and her students from the IW College horticulture class and the local community (see Catrina's update above)

April 2025 – Andrew Bennet, head gardener at the Bembridge Coast Hotel offered the IW College horticultural students the chance to design and replant an area of the hotel's garden (again more details in Catrina's update above).

April 2025 – Our 4th meeting where the name Green On Wight was first aired with a strapline of Horticultural and Environmental Professionals. Val Pitts gave an update on Ventnor Frields of Wight Horticulture, establishing the charity as separate from Ventnor Botanic Garden and we heard from Ian Boyd about the newly adopted Local Nature Recovery Strategy, only the 4th published in the UK at the time. Craig Ratcliff also confirmed he had booked a stand at the Wolverton Garden Show.



June 2025 – Our 5th meeting at Chillerton Village Hall/green. Among the updates in this meeting we also had the chance to discuss community gardening and had a look at the green spaces maintained by Deb Goodenough and the residents of Chillerton.

August 2025 – GROW is formally launched to the wider public at the Wolverton Manor Garden Fair. The stand aimed to show the breadth of horticulture and the projects our members are involved in around the island thanks to the support of GROW members, Vernon Square Conservation Society and Ventnor Friends of Wight Horticulture for helping to man the stand and thanks to Mermaid Gin for sponsoring the stand.

November 2025 – GROW helps facilitate a teacher training day at Osborne House to promote the use of the garden/estate by school children and highlight the breadth of horticulture and its potential as a career. 23 teachers from a range of IW schools attended and heard about practical activities they could use on school visits. Plus the Worshipful Company of Gardeners provided an insight into the careers older students might consider in horticulture.

There are many other ideas and projects that have been completed, or are in the pipeline, but those listed above are perhaps the some of the highlights that GROW, and its members have achieved over the past two years.

Upcoming Events/Projects

Careers Fairs – GROW has been invited to the IW College Careers Fair on the 4th March, and the Lift Ryde Career Fair on the 25th February. If you are keen to talk to students about a career in horticulture, and able to help at either career fairs, please get in touch.

The Duck Roundabout, Ryde – The CAR Gardens team will be starting the design for the Duck Roundabout from January 26th and welcomes any ideas for inclusion in the concept. This is part of CAR Gardens 'Project Giving Back Some' initiative and the design work will be done for free. The surveys for the roundabout have been kindly done for free for this GROW project by Brian and John Quirk: GQG Surveys, Measured Land & Building Surveys, CAD Drafting Service.

And of course, don't forget our Next Meeting – Monday 9th February

Finally – Happy Christmas!

From Mike, Craig and Toby. We hope you manage to have a great Christmas and a successful 2026.