



Opening your garden with Open Gardens Canberra



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Welcome

Thank you again for opening your garden under the banner of Open Gardens Canberra.

This Guide is intended to answer most of the questions you are likely to have about Open Gardens Canberra and about opening your garden. The Guide sets out:

- what you need to do to prepare for your open days
- what Open Gardens Canberra will do for your open days.

If you have any other questions, please contact your Garden Selector. S/he will be your initial point of contact with Open Gardens Canberra. Once the program for each season is settled, a member of the OGC Committee will be your Garden Coordinator and will coordinate all activities leading up to the open garden.

We want you to feel relaxed about your garden opening. You and your garden will be a source of inspiration, motivation and learning for hundreds of visitors. Your role on your open days is simply to chat with visitors about your garden. Looking at your garden and talking with you are the two most important things garden visitors want.

What you need to do to prepare for your open days

The Garden Opening Checklist at the end sets out a timetable of the main actions you will need to do in the lead-up to your garden opening. Here we provide more information about those actions.

Preparing your garden

You know your garden better than anyone else. When you commit to opening your garden under our banner, we expect you will want to present your garden at its absolute best. This doesn't mean your garden has to be totally perfect with not a leaf out of place!

You may need to postpone or bring forward some of your usual garden maintenance, for example, to avoid a just-heavily-pruned look. However, garden visitors are also garden lovers. They will understand if your bulbs have finished and the tops are messy, or if you have left the pods on some ornamental peas because you want to collect the seed.

Preparing your Garden Notes

Your visitors really value garden notes. They add human interest to the garden and they help answer a lot of basic questions visitors will have.

Garden Notes should be no more than one double-sided A4 page. A template for the notes is available from the [Opening your garden](#) page on the website. You might consider having some laminated copies at the entrance table, to be used and returned, as well as paper copies that your visitors can take away. Using clear plastic sleeves on some notes can also encourage their return (and may be handy on rainy days).

We will put your Garden Notes on our website if we receive them in time (see Checklist for timetable). Many visitors now read the notes online.

Use your notes to tell the story of your garden:

Describe your garden — where is it, how big is it, what type of garden is it?
What makes it special to you?

Think about what sets your garden apart and how it differs from others in the street or region. Why should visitors come and see it?

What have been the biggest challenges in creating your garden? Think about what you have learned the hard way. Have drought, floods or pests been an issue? Have you struggled with soil conditions or something else?

What is your favourite part of the garden? Is it a particular plant or something that you have had success with, or that took a lot of work to achieve? Why do you like this aspect?

Why have you decided to open it to the public? Why is gardening important to you? Who or what has had a major influence on your own gardening style?
What do you hope visitors will take away?

Labelling plants of interest

Many garden visitors will want to identify some of the plants in your garden. To save you answering the same questions repeatedly, you could consider labelling plants of special interest, preferably with both their botanic and common names. Alternatively, you might like to have a board or a box with labels from your plants, or even a plant list. A plant labelling system is available if you wish to use it.

Garden fees and charities

Open Gardens Canberra uses membership fees to support the work of the organisation and its aims. Open Gardens Canberra shares day entrance fees with the garden owner 50/50 plus \$1 for every attending member (current, renewing and new). Open Gardens Canberra process this payment within 7 working days of the Treasurer receiving the “Payment details for open garden owners” form.

You may decide to use your garden opening to raise funds for a charity of your choice. If you decide to support a charity, you need to discuss with them as soon as possible what assistance they will provide, for example:

- help with off-street parking
- arrange and run ancillary activities such as morning tea or a plant stall
- arrange other entertainment
- help with publicity through their own usual avenues.

The sooner you do this, the better: you and they will have a clear idea of who is doing what, and you can use any ancillary activities to help attract visitors to your garden.

If you decide to offer your visitors the chance to make donations direct to the charity you have chosen, you are responsible for all signs, collection bins, banking of donations and so on relating to donations to the charity. Open Gardens Canberra will provide one lockable box which can be used for charity donations.

Ancillary activities (Please see also later section on COVID)

Visitors enjoy other activities associated with open days and many garden owners have raffles, produce stalls, live music or displays of local artists' work. You may decide that opening your garden is quite enough to manage, so please don't feel

pressured to undertake more activities. If you do decide to offer any ancillary attractions, remember that visitors are above all coming to enjoy your garden, so it's important that any ancillary activities don't detract from its beauty.

You may decide to run some other activity yourself, to have your charity arrange it or to invite another organisation or business to arrange it.

Plant stalls

Visitors will often want to buy plants they have seen growing in your garden. Plant stalls need to be of a high standard with well-grown and clearly labelled plants.

Teas and lunches

We encourage you to ensure that appropriate food handling certification has been obtained by anyone providing catering at your garden opening.

Wine sales: please note that a licence may be necessary if you are planning on serving or selling wine or any other alcohol at your garden opening. Many wineries have their own 'portable' licence which allows them to sell wine at events, and you will need to check.

Two tips for teas and lunches:

- put tables and chairs under trees or umbrellas if the weather is warm and
- put up a menu board so visitors can easily see what is on offer.

Finance

You are responsible for all monies associated with ancillary activities and how the proceeds of these activities are dispersed.

Notifying your immediate neighbours

Please let your neighbours know well in advance of your opening days:

- if your street has limited parking, let your neighbours know that visitors have been asked to park in nearby streets to avoid congestion, so they can see you are being courteous.
- tell them that you and your volunteers will park some distance from your property and leave the closest parking spaces for your garden visitors.
- suggest to them that it would be helpful if they could garage their vehicles for as much of the weekend as possible.

Publicising your garden locally

Open Gardens Canberra will do most of the publicity for your open days and you can help with many of these actions. For example, you can:

- forward our newsletters on to your own email contacts
- be available for an interview and photograph with print media, two to three weeks before your open days
- be available for radio interviews on the Saturday morning of your first open day
- if you are a fan of social media, create a more personal view of your garden on our Facebook page or on Twitter, with links to our website. For example, post some fun photos of you in your garden with your prized plants.

Practicalities

Access

Some of your visitors will be elderly or have limited mobility. They will be grateful if you would allow them to drive close to the garden entrance to either park or to drop off and pick up passengers. Perhaps you could mark off a "Reserved - Drop or pick up" area with orange hat signs.

Toilets

We suggest you prepare a sheet for your Entrance Table providing information about availability of toilets, particularly in country areas:

- if a toilet is available on your property, give directions so that visitors can find it
- if no toilet is available on your property, give directions to the nearest public toilet. You may need to provide the address of the public toilet and a map.

For security reasons, we do not recommend indoor toilets be made available. In an emergency, arrange for one of your volunteers to accompany the person to and from a toilet inside the house. Don't leave them alone as that would compromise the security of your home.

Please note that Open Gardens Canberra does not generally reimburse the hire costs of portable toilets.

Visitors' Book

A Visitors' Book is a memento of your garden opening. Open Gardens Canberra does not provide Visitors' Books, but we are happy to direct visitors to your book if you have one. To make sure as many visitors as possible see the Visitors' Book, we suggest you direct visitors to take a particular route around your garden, so they are most likely to end up where the Visitors' Book is placed. In our experience, almost every garden visitor asks which is the best route to take so most visitors will probably just take the suggested route.

If possible, put the Visitors' Book on small table with a chair nearby to encourage visitors to write in it.

Your Garden Selector will discuss with you the best route for garden visitors to take and your Entrance Table volunteer can direct visitors to take that route.

What Open Gardens Canberra will do

In summary, Open Gardens Canberra will:

- do most of the publicity for your garden opening
- provide all the signs you will need
- provide two Open Gardens Canberra volunteers for your Entrance Table each day (separate morning and afternoon shifts)
- provide an entrance table, chairs and shelter if required
- collect, secure and bank all entry and membership fees
- provide Public Liability and Personal Accident insurance cover (including volunteers and visitors) for your garden on your designated open days.

Publicity for your garden opening

Our email newsletters

Open Gardens Canberra will publicise your garden opening in our email newsletters to members and others on our email lists. We encourage you to forward these newsletters on to your own email contacts.

Email and hard-copy newsletters produced by other organisations

Open Gardens Canberra has good relationships with other organisations that will publicise your garden opening in email or hard-copy newsletters to their own members.

Print media

Open Gardens Canberra will arrange publicity for your garden opening through City News, the Canberra Times, the Chronicle and other appropriate print media. At least one of these is likely to contact you for an interview and photograph, two to three weeks before your open days.

If your garden is in a country area that has its own newspaper or local magazine, please give your Garden Selector their contact details so that we can arrange to publicise your garden there, too.

Many gardening and lifestyle magazines publish opening details of a selection of gardens and occasionally run feature articles. These are organised up to six months in advance. Whenever possible, Open Gardens Canberra will send details of garden openings to these publications.

Local radio

Open Gardens Canberra will arrange publicity for your garden through ABC Radio Canberra (666), 2CC and 2XX. We encourage you to be available for interview, especially for the Saturday morning gardening programs.

Website

Your garden open day will appear on our website www.opengardenscanberra.org.au. Garden visitors love to see photos on our website so your Garden Selector will ask you for suitable photos of your garden, or s/he will take photos herself. The photos need to show the garden at the time it will be open.

We will also publicise your garden on other appropriate event websites.

Social Media - Facebook and Twitter

We will promote your open day on our Facebook page.

We encourage you to create a more personal view of your garden on this page — post some fun photos of you in your garden with your prized plants, for example.

If you are familiar with Twitter or any other social media, post some photos of you in your garden there, too. Include links to our website in your postings.

Tourist Offices

Open Gardens Canberra will provide local government tourism websites and the Tourist Office in Northbourne Avenue with details of all our garden openings.

Road signs

You will be supplied with several large double sided signs with arrows pointing either left or right. They should be prominently displayed at major intersections and roads leading to your garden. Signs can be set up any time in the week before the garden is opened, and should be set up before 9am on your first opening day.

Before your opening, drive around your neighbourhood to determine the best locations for the signs. Your visitors may come from any direction.

If you need additional large signs, please contact your Garden Coordinator well before your open days.

Take down the signs as carefully as possible at the end of your garden open days so we can re-use them for other gardens.

A banner will also be provided for placing at the entrance to the garden.

Volunteers and the Entrance table

We will provide two Open Gardens Canberra volunteers for your open days who will:

- collect entry fees
- take applications for membership, and
- give general support.

Volunteers staff the entrance table for a morning or afternoon shift.

At the first open gardens of the Spring season, Open Gardens Canberra may provide up to three volunteers to make sure that garden entry runs smoothly. If you have any questions, please approach the volunteer who is managing the garden entry process.

For your information:

- the entry fee to visit just one garden is \$10 per person. There are no pensioner, senior, family or group discounts.
- visitors may choose to join Open Gardens Canberra for an annual fee of \$25 and then they have free entry to all our open gardens.
- children under 18 accompanied by an adult enter free.

Insurance and incidents

Open Gardens Canberra has arranged \$20m Public and Products Liability insurance and Personal Accident insurance for you and your volunteers for your garden on the days it is open under the Open Gardens Canberra banner.

Our public liability cover is only in place on your scheduled open days. For your own peace of mind, you should check with your own House Insurance provider whether they provide any coverage for a garden opening.

Personal Accident Cover for Voluntary Workers covers all unpaid helpers, including any you invite to run a stall for a charity. The liability cover indemnifies the garden owner against claims in the event of an accident.

Our liability policy does not automatically extend to all the activities you might arrange such as activities associated with farm or domestic vehicles, animals (pony rides etc), jumping castles, model train rides or power tools. If you are contemplating any activity of this nature, or if you need any further information on our insurance cover, please contact your Garden Selector or Coordinator.

If you are using neighbouring properties for visitors' parking, please inform your Garden Selector or Coordinator. We will need to inform our insurers of the address of the property and the names of the owners. If access to your garden is through land not owned by you, we will also need details of the owners of the land so we can inform our insurers.

For insurance reasons, you may only use the Open Gardens Canberra logo at your garden opening.

Minimising Risks

Before your opening, you need to ensure that any potentially dangerous areas of the garden are roped off and that all garden tools and equipment are safely stored.

If you have ponds or other exposed water, put up warning signs. Take precautions to make your home secure. Close windows and blinds. Lock doors and give keys only to a small number of trusted family and assistants.

Consider having a few basic medical items available, such as band aids. Don't dispense pills and potions.

Ensure that you and your helpers have easy access to phones so you can call emergency services promptly, should the need arise.

Managing any incident

On your open days, if you become aware of any incident - however minor - that may give rise to a claim, whether any claim has been made against you or not, please let the entrance table volunteers know, and they will record the name and address of the people involved and notify your Garden Coordinator immediately. Do not admit liability or offer to make any payments.

COVID

As always, we are taking safety at our events seriously. You can find our [COVIDsafe plan here](#). Ancillary activities may or may not be possible depending on the government guidelines in place at the time of opening. As the situation evolves, so will our approach. Your garden selector or co-ordinator will keep in touch with you and inform you of any changes to the information in this guide.

Garden opening checklist

4-6 weeks before your Opening
Complete and send your garden notes.
If you are involving a charity, confirm the assistance they will be providing.
Your Garden Coordinator will contact you and answer any questions you have about opening your garden
Notify your immediate neighbours of your opening days.
2 weeks before your Opening
Prune hedges and other plants if you want to avoid that “just clipped” look.
Identify the best locations for your road signs.
3 days- 1 week before your Opening
Your Garden Coordinator will be in contact to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirm whether a table, chairs and shade are available or are required• Confirm what signs are required and whether you can erect them• Make arrangements for the delivery of items before the opening Local media may also contact you
Mow and water lawns for the last time.
Print Garden Notes
1 day before your Opening
Your Garden Coordinator will drop the following off at the time previously agreed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entrance table, chairs, shade (if needed)• Signage• Publicity material• Volunteers’ kit• Finance kit• Membership kit
Sweep the paths and ensure all equipment and tools are put away.
The BIG days
Greet the volunteers and help set up the Entrance Table.
Be prepared for your radio interview, if one has been arranged
At the end of the first day, securely store the first day’s takings
At the end of the second day, return the takings, signs etc to the Garden Coordinator or other OGC committee member
1 week after the opening
Return the “Payment details for open garden owners” form to the Treasurer.

