Notting Hill East, 2026 Garden Competition

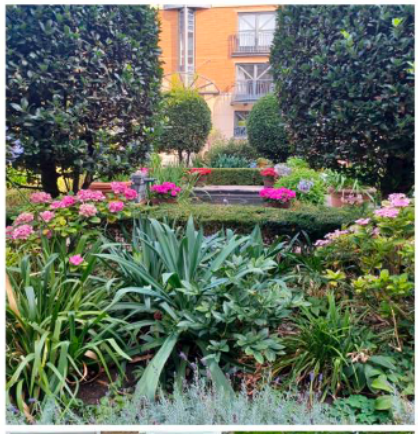
As I listen to Gardeners' Question Time, I begin to muse 'A bench, a tree, a jug of wine and thee'. This may not be an exact verse from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, but it runs something like that. What a true pleasure it is to sit in the shade in your own garden in Notting Hill, Westbourne Park or Bayswater, for who knows exactly where we are, and enjoy the flowers, listen to bird song and observe the world go by.

Front gardens really have become another useful room where one can sit and read or enjoy a coffee or a drink with family and friends. There is always a chance to exchange a few words with neighbours and passersby. In many of our buildings, you can even celebrate life with food and drink from the luxury of your own balcony. How lucky we are to live in this most charming corner of London where we don't have to fight the winds and gales that challenge gardeners over so much of this Sceptred Isle.

It has become an annual pleasure for Brenda and me to stroll around our streets, smell the roses and delight in the pleasure of the variety of front gardens that adorn our area, making it such a special place.





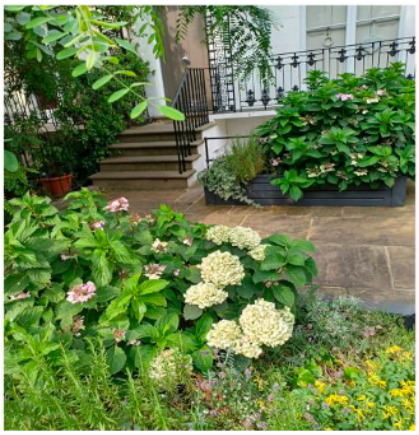
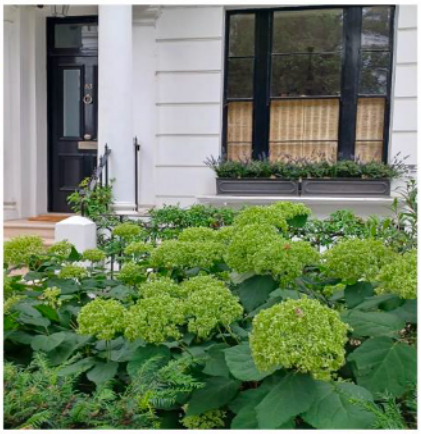


The day before the inevitable hosepipe ban, we wandered around chatting with neighbours, thinking about the garden competition and wondering whether gardening could be a more cooperative endeavour. Perhaps a competition is the wrong way to celebrate our lovely gardens and gardeners. We both remembered with pleasure and a smile how urban gorilla gardening had in the past taken over barren plots and turned them into lovely spaces. It is also recorded in the annuls of the area how a visiting vicar remarked to an old gentleman in Northumberland Place that the elderly gentleman and God had done a wonderful job with his front garden. The old man told the vicar that he should have seen the wilderness when he first came to the house and God was doing it on his own.

Gardens do not happen without effort, and we salute everyone who tills the soil, plants and waters the tubs and looks after window boxes. We hope future generations will be happy that our area now has our own special plan that will preserve our private and public green and garden spaces. It is a real win-win.

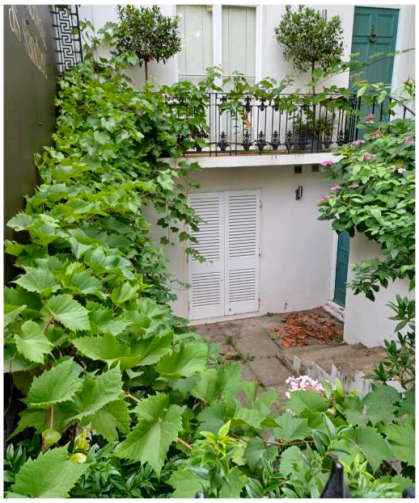
We wondered if we might encourage cooperative gardening. Might neighbours create a plant and seed swapping day to spread the pleasure of urban gardening more widely? Or could residents with herbs growing in abundance in their front garden encourage neighbours to snip a few in return for what they have in theirs? Rosemary and thyme exchanged for mint and sage perhaps. The hot weather no doubt hastened grape and olive ripening. I wonder how soon it will be before neighbours join each other in the grape harvest in Northumberland Place and the olive pressing in Sutherland.

Our hard surfaces and surrounding buildings together with hotter days seem to indicate we now have a climate becoming closer to that of the Mediterranean. Thus, Mediterranean plants are everywhere. Yet we were also delighted to find marvellous displays of stunning hydrangeas, despite or perhaps because of the weather.

As usual we must stress that we wandered around on one pleasant July morning and that our results are our judgement made on that morning. We have tried to be fair and at least we both agreed on what we thought were the best.

We found the Cock and Bottle the best dressed pub but mourned the loss of the tree that used to stand outside. At the far end of St Stephen's Gardens, we were delighted to meet Philomena, the charming secretary of the British Legion Club celebrating its 125th birthday, decked out in red, white and blue. Go and enjoy a drink on the outside terrace. You will be delighted at the range of draught drinks and the very sweet prices.





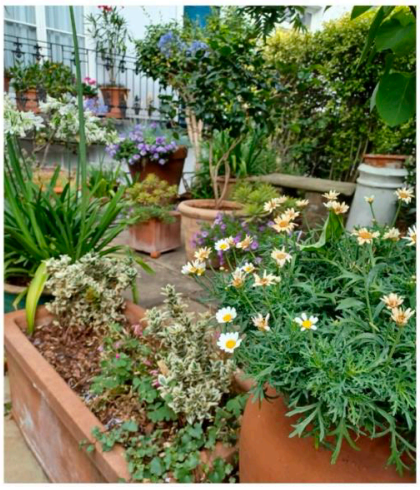


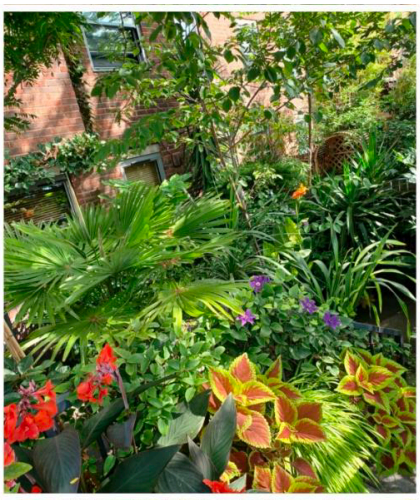



As to the competition, as we always say, our decision reflects our view on one particular day last summer. On other days, others might have won as there are many worthy gardens and window boxes everywhere.

We looked at two categories: Full planted gardens and a collection of planted pots or window boxes.

We both agreed that the garden at number 46 Northumberland Place was a clear winner this year. This garden won this competition several times over the last twenty years. Now again in the same family, it is an absolute triumph. It is always full of lovely flowers and interesting planting. A total delight and only equalled by a stunning garden at number 13 Weatherbury, 90 Talbot Road, that has won two times over the past few years.





As for the pots and window box category, no collection came near the amazing arrangement at No 42 Sutherland Place. Here the lovely grouping of containers and their plantings harmonised gracefully with their stucco backdrop.





Congratulations to all the winners. We look forward to the prizes being presented at our forthcoming party in the suitably greened Cock and Bottle.

Finally, we have thoroughly enjoyed looking at your gardens the last few years but feel it is time to pass on the baton. It would be great if this year's winners judge the competition next year.

So, from Brenda and me - good gardening!

Richard Perkins and Brenda Morrison

24-07-2026 RTP