



From Wendy Dare, Blockley, Moreton in Marsh, Glos GL56 9HU

England is not just a garden full of stately views!!

It is actually full of some of the most beautiful and innovative gardens in the world. Our plant breeders introduce new species to us, our designers bring new styles to gardens big and small our garden owners lavish considerable expense on their gardens and open them both for the enjoyment of sharing their beauty but also to defray some of the costs. We do lead the world in gardening expertise but VisitBritain does very, very little about it. BTTF in past years has featured all sorts of attractions but seldom GARDENS!" WHY?

Our kingdom's history can be read in its gardens. From earliest recorded perhaps by Gerard in the Middle Ages to the present day.

As a garden owner I have at least 25% of my visitors from overseas. They have come specifically to visit our gardens; they come in large organised groups from Belgium and the Netherlands, from Italy and Australia, and in small groups from Japan and the USA. I have even had a visitor from E.Timor. The groups are organised by, of course, the usual specialist travel agencies, but gardening and lifestyle magazines organise them too. British gardens are a draw.

Our problem is that this wonderful, uniquely British resource is all but ignored by VisitBritain. Think of how many more visitors would come to our shores if it was made just a little easier for them to source the gardens and access them.

On the whole, the larger more famous gardens apart, our gardens are underfunded. It costs a great deal to publise our gardens ourselves. Sending leaflets to British tour offices is prohibitive for most of us.

Gardens are...green, sustainable and cost the communities they are in nothing. They are often in the country and their addition to the rural economy is most welcome. They bring the extra \$/£ etc which spreads to the local hotels and restaurants. If the visitors are from the EU, they will more than likely buy plants so helping our very excellent nurseries. They tick all the boxes.

So why are they not recognised as such by our main tourism body. I throw a challenge to our new Chairman, Christopher Rodrigues, to major on British gardens for 2009.