



April 20 2005

## **BBC TV's MONTY DON TO JUDGE BLIND GARDENERS OF THE YEAR COMPETITION**

### **RNIB AND THRIVE INVITE PEOPLE IN WALES TO ENTER**

This week sees the launch of a new competition to find the UK's blind or partially sighted gardeners of the year. BBC TV's Monty Don will be one of a panel of judges. The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) and Thrive are running the competition

The competition is open to blind and partially sighted people of all ages, experience and skills from across the UK. You don't have to be an expert gardener to enter. Three categories will be judged - People with less than 2 years experience - People with more than two years experience – Younger People up to 18.

Monty Don, the celebrated gardener and lead presenter of BBC TV's *Gardeners' World* and one of Thrive's greatest supporters is delighted to join the judging panel for Blind Gardeners of the Year 2005. Monty says: "I fully support the excellent work that Thrive is doing in encouraging blind and partially sighted people to garden".

Lucy Morrell of Thrive, who is co-ordinating this new competition, says, "The award recognises the enthusiasm, achievement and skills of gardeners, young and old. The competition is open to anyone who is blind or partially sighted and loves to garden, whether they maintain a wonderful window box, beautiful borders or an abundant allotment."

Prizes include Hall's Glasshouses delivered and erected on a level site, a cold frame and stand, raised-bed kit and compost tidy tray from Suttons, £50 Suttons Seeds vouchers, cash from St Dunstan's and sets of Peta Easi-Grip hand tools. The first 1,000 entrants will receive a starter pack containing a Suttons Seeds catalogue with a £5 voucher, a pack of taped seeds, and a sample edition of *Come Gardening*, Thrive's unique quarterly magazine for gardeners who have sight problems.

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## **2/ BBC TV'S MONTY DON JUDGES BLIND GARDENERS...**

Eleanor Ellison from RNIB says: "We know that many blind and partially sighted people just love to garden. Time and again we have seen that re-learning gardening skills following sight loss has given people the confidence to carry on with other aspects of daily living. RNIB is delighted to be working closely with Thrive and we look forward to the competition which will celebrate people's achievements"

Along with Monty Don the other Judges are; Lesley-Anne Alexander, Chief Executive of RNIB, Andrew Colquhoun, Director General of the Royal Horticultural Society, Vincent Robins, blind gardening expert, St Dunstaner and Vice Chair of The Advisory Committee of Blind Gardeners, and Bill Simpson, Chair of Thrive's Board of Trustees

**-ENDS -**

**For more press information and regional spokespeople contact Bill Alker or Paul McDonald at the RNIB Press Office 020 7391 2223 [bill.alker@rnib.org.uk](mailto:bill.alker@rnib.org.uk) Out of hours telephone 07968 482 812.**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

#### **1. How to enter: Entries are invited in three categories:**

- 'New to Gardening' – with less than 2 years' gardening experience
- 'Old Hand' – with more than 2 years' gardening experience
- 'Young Gardener' –18 years of age and under (in this category we will also accept group entries)

**For further details and an entry form please contact Lucy Morrell (Thrive, The Geoffrey Udall Centre, Beech Hill, Reading, RG7 2AT, call 0118 988 5688 or email [info@thrive.org.uk](mailto:info@thrive.org.uk)). Completed entries must be received by 15 August 2005 and the winners will be announced in October 2005.**

**2. Prizes:** Thrive and RNIB are grateful for the generous support of the following organisations: Suttons Seeds, Peta Tools (UK), Hall's Garden Products and St. Dunstans. Blind ex-Service men and women from the charity St. Dunstan's, many of who are keen gardeners, will create handcrafted trophies for the winners.

**3. Thrive** is the national charity whose aim is to enable positive change in the lives of disabled and disadvantaged people through the use of gardening and horticulture.

**RNIB** campaigns to change society's attitudes, actions and assumptions so that people with sight problems can enjoy the same rights, freedoms and responsibilities as fully sighted people.

**The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)** is Britain's gardening charity dedicated to advancing horticulture and promoting good gardening. RHS work includes providing expert advice and information, training the next generation of gardeners, helping school children learn about plants, and conducting research into plants, pests and environmental issues affecting gardeners.

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**4. Getting on with Gardening.** Blind Gardener of the Year is part of the Getting on with Gardening Project, a partnership between Thrive and RNIB, with support from the Big Lottery Fund, to develop a national service to blind gardeners. Getting on with Gardening provides: roadshows, residential courses, a national blind gardeners club supported by the *Come Gardening* magazine, and a pilot Garden Guide scheme in Rotherham.