

Flower and Produce Show

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Arundel Flower and Produce Show

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO FUNDRAISE?

We knew that our town used to have a large community flower and produce show, but that it had stopped running several years ago. As keen gardeners ourselves, and members of Local Agenda 21, we decided to reinstate the show, to encourage people to start growing more of their own produce, as well as hosting a fun, community day out.



WHAT DID YOU CHOOSE TO DO AND WHY?

We decided that as well as fundraising at the show itself, we should hold an additional event to make sure we covered all costs and could safeguard its future. This is now an annual "seed swap", where we encourage local gardeners to swap plants and seeds with each other for free, at an event where we sell refreshments, charge a small entry fee and hold a raffle etc. We also sought sponsorship for various parts of the show.

WHAT WAS INVOLVED AND DID YOU GET MUCH HELP FROM THE ORGANISATION/PEOPLE YOU WERE SUPPORTING?

We approached organisations in the town that we thought might support the show, such as our Local Agenda 21 group, the Allotment society, the Gardens society and the Flower club. We were lucky that all of these groups were keen to get involved, and were also able to provide us with contacts who remembered the original show and how it was run.

We decided to keep the scale of our event relatively small (in the past, it had been a huge, weekend-long event) but to try and bring back some important aspects of the original.

Agenda 21 agreed to provide seed funding for the event. Other groups and individuals couldn't offer money, but offered to do things like sponsor a trophy or provide a judge for a category of produce.

Our luckiest "break" was that the local Football Club offered to allow us to hold the event there for free, which solved two problems - finding a venue and finding the cost of a venue - at once. Without their help, it would have been much more difficult to get together.

HOW MANY PEOPLE ON YOUR VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING TEAM AND HOW DID YOU GET YOUR TEAM TOGETHER?

We got our team together by approaching local groups who we thought would be interested (see above.) We have seven members on our committee, plus other helpers who help out on the day (eg on the door, with refreshments, or as judges.)

We have found that using contacts and approaching friends of friends is invaluable, and that you don't always need to ask everyone to join your committee. Most people are more than happy to help on an "ad hoc" basis, rather than attend lots of meetings that aren't really relevant to what they've offered to help with.

We're lucky in that each member of the team has a different skill - one is good on the computer at making the entry forms and brochures, for example, and one is very good at dealing with the local schools. This makes dividing jobs up relatively easy!

WHAT WAS IT LIKE PLANNING FOR IT?

Because we had decided to start off small, it was not too difficult. The most crucial thing that we did was to visit a similar show in a nearby town and watch carefully how it was done! We asked the organisers of that show for a lot of advice, which was all helpful.

Then we divided everything that needed to be done into manageable tasks and distributed them amongst members of the committee who would feel the most confident at tackling each one.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE, INCLUDING EVERYONE'S TIME?

We have one meeting a month (for about an hour) in the three or four months leading up to the event, then we all go off and do our various tasks independently (making forms and programmes, distributing them, publicity, spreading the word, organising volunteers for the day, co-ordinating with the

venue, booking judges, seeking sponsors for trophies, sorting out refreshments etc.) These range from a couple of hours to a couple of days each, depending on the job.

Then there's the event itself, including setting up and taking down, which takes most of a day.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE ASKING FOR DONATIONS, ANY TOP TIPS?

We decided to keep things like the entry fees for the show and admission on the day really low (20p/50p) to encourage people to take part, so that wasn't difficult to ask for!

When it comes to asking for sponsorship, the best advice is probably to start by using any contacts you already have.

Also, think hard about what you're prepared to offer in return for sponsorship, and make sure what your sponsors are getting from you is appropriate to the amount of sponsorship they've provided. You might be prepared to give them a thanks in the programme, for example, but not have a huge banner over the door saying "show sponsored by..."

Think carefully about what you want, but also what you're prepared to do in return for it. On the other hand, if you've agreed to do something in return for sponsorship, make sure you do it!

Don't undervalue the small things like tombola, raffle and refreshments to your fundraising total - they can each bring in a surprising amount of money!

If you're offered a venue free of charge, make sure you say thank you properly, stick to any curfew times that are agreed and (of course) leave it clean and tidy!

WHAT WAS YOUR TARGET?

We didn't have a financial one - just to make the show happen and to make it sustainable for future years.

HOW MUCH DID YOU RAISE?

It has now become an annual event, so we're reaching our target.

WOULD YOU DO IT AGAIN?

We already have, and its return has been very well received. This year we had more involvement from the local schools, and two new sponsors, so it's all very positive. However, we're very conscious that we don't want to expand too much or too quickly - it's fun and manageable just the way it is!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WANTING TO DO THE SAME THING?

- Seek advice from somebody who has done something similar in the past.
- Keep it manageable - set a scope for your event and don't be tempted to overstretch yourself.
- Make sure everybody has a specific role and knows what it is - communicate with your group and volunteers.
- Use contacts - everybody's contacts!
- Don't forget to thank everybody who has helped - they won't help again if you don't.