

Alton In Bloom «

High Society



How high will your sunflower grow? Alton in Bloom is well and truly in flower and you still have time to rise to the occasion in your own garden.

The deadline for entering Alton Town Council's tallest sunflower competition is August 31st. If, by that time, you've grown a whopper, the event's judges will visit you by appointment to photograph and measure your blooms.

"We've been so busy rushing to make the town look wonderful for our entry into this year's regional 'South East In Bloom' competition," says Martin Whapshott, groundsman at Jubilee Playing Fields.

The town has Martin and his colleagues to thank for the plethora of flowering hanging baskets garlanding Alton's lampposts and businesses. This year's Alton In Bloom theme is a patriotic red, white and blue colour scheme, which has resulted in the jolly displays all around the town.

Martin's children, Eva and Corbin, have clearly inherited his green fingers – they were crowned winners of last

year's tallest sunflower competition, which is organised by Alton Horticultural Society, growing a sunflower that measured an impressive 11ft 6 inches.

"The children love to get involved in growing," says Martin, "and that competitive element makes it much more fun!

"They were measuring their sunflower every day throughout August, getting more excited.

"As for secret sunflower-growing tips, well I can't give all our secrets away, because we do want to win this year! But, watering well every morning and choosing a sheltered, sunny spot is always the best starting point for growing a whopper."

● To enter the tallest sunflower competition, call Emily-Jane Messenger at Alton Town Council on **01420 83986**, email events@alton.gov.uk or complete an entry from available from the Town Hall in Alton's Market Square.

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