

ROOTS AND SHOOTS FOUNDER LINDA PHILLIPS RECEIVES RHS VICTORIA MEDAL OF HONOUR

Thursday 26 March, 2026

Linda Phillips, one of the foremost pioneers in therapeutic community gardening and the founder and driving force of the award-winning charity Roots and Shoots, was this week presented with the Royal Horticultural Society Victoria Medal of Honour (VMH) at a ceremony in London.

The VMH is the highest distinction in British horticulture, established in 1897 to honour those making outstanding contributions to the field. Limited to only 63 holders at any time -symbolising the 63-year reign of Queen Victoria - it represents a prestigious lifetime achievement award for UK horticulturists.

Linda comes from a family of working gardeners and developed a passion for plants from an early age. In a time where there were very few women working in horticulture, at 18 she became a Royal Parks apprentice at Hampton Court Palace. Many of the gardeners she worked with would today be considered to be neurodiverse or have learning difficulties but in the gardens, they were accepted as individuals and as part of the team, establishing her view of gardens as places for everyone.

She founded Roots and Shoots in 1982 for young people with complex special educational needs and disabilities to learn practical skills for life and work, including horticulture, complemented with a full educational programme. Through hands-on gardening projects students gain a sense of pride, achievement and belonging, while achieving experience and qualifications that are both practical and meaningful.

Roots and Shoots' Walnut Tree Walk site in Kennington began as a dilapidated polluted brownfield site used by the Civil Defence in the Second World War. Despite no plants on the site and few funds, Linda envisioned a beautiful garden for all. Over 44 years under her direction, staff, students and volunteers have transformed the site into a beloved garden and state-of-the-art environmental charity in the heart of the inner city. Many Londoners get their first contact with the natural world and gardening experience at Roots and Shoots. It is a place of hope and joy.

Linda explains, *"I'm incredibly honoured to receive the Victoria Medal of Honour in recognition of my work in community and therapeutic gardening and its vital importance for transforming people's lives. Roots and Shoots reaches people from every background and gives them a new perspective on the world. It has been the joy of my life to share my love of the natural world with so many."*

At Roots and Shoots, RBG Kew alumna Linda took her experience as a gardener and applied it to teaching - propagating people in the way she propagated plants. She found that if you provide people with kindness and patience, while discovering and encouraging their conditions to thrive, they flourish and grow. Through her dedication, horticultural skill and remarkable ability to see beauty in everything and potential in everyone, Linda has cultivated a glorious space that nurtures people, the environment and the local community.

Roots and Shoots is a UNESCO award winning organisation. At its heart are beautiful gardens, including the half-acre Wild Garden, tended to encourage wildlife, which provides a vital green lung amidst the urban landscape and a safe learning place.

Linda's extraordinary horticultural talent has been recognised, including by two Chelsea Gold Medals and a Silver Gilt Medal (in collaboration with Pennard Plants). She is an RHS Associate of Honour and was awarded the MBE in 2012 "for services to young people".

Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, London SE11 6DN. Tel 0207 587 1131

rootsandshoots.org.uk

ends

For further information and photographs contact Rosie Danford-Phillips on 020 7587 1131

rosie@rootsandshoots.org.uk

Media:



Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits ::
Education & Human Resources ::
Environment & Nature :: Home & Garden ::

Related Keywords:

RootsandShoots :: RHS ::
Victoria Medal Of Honour :: Linda Phillips :: Gardening ::
Therapeutic Gardening :: Awards :: Horticulture :: Charity :: SEN ::

Scan Me:



Company Contact:

—

Roots and Shoots

T. 07961181982

E. lindsay@lindsayswan.co.uk

W. <https://rootsandshoots.org.uk>

[View Online](#)

Additional Assets:

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:

<https://www.rootsandshoots.pressat.co.uk>