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Gardener honour

REYDON: Top award for 'celebrity' horticulturist

By Ben Woods

A SUFFOLK gardener who helped propagate flowers for celebrities has been commended for his services to horticulture.

Jim Blythe, from Reydon near Southwold, will receive the Associate of Honour from the Royal Horticulture Society (RHS) after spending years working behind the scenes at the Chelsea Flower Show and the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

The 74-year-old is known for marketing specially-bred flowers for TV and sports personalities, including the Countdown Carol – a white and peppermint green fuchsia for Carol Vorderman.

Mr Blythe is one of 15 horticulturists who will be presented with a prestigious award at this year's Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, between July 3 and 8.

He said: "It gives me a great sense of pride and that is what I was aiming for – to be proud of what I have done.

"I have always got on with people. When I was selling flowers, I would always say that if you get on with the people first then they are more likely to want to buy something.

"I have learnt all I know via my wife.



FLOWER EXPERT: Jim Blythe is to be presented with a top award from the Royal Horticulture Society

Photo: NICK BUTCHER

I hope everything I have done for the RHS I have done successfully, but my wife and the people who I have worked with deserve much of the credit."

Mr Blythe's first contact with the world of plants came in 1965 when he and his wife June, now 77, took over her parents' nursery.

They spent 40 years at the business

in Hawkwell, Southend, where they created 400 varieties of fuchsias and began to exhibit flowers.

Mr Blythe joined the RHS committee to sit on panels for flower shows at Westminster, Chelsea and Hampton Court Palace.