

VOLUNTEER GARDENERS' NEWSLETTER

Winter 2022-23



THE
KIRKWOOD
SUPPORT
LIFE.



Welcome to the Gardeners' Winter Newsletter

By Head Volunteer Gardener Linda Roberts

Happy New Year, and welcome to our winter newsletter. Originally planned for publish over Christmas, having started early, I am now only completing this, as I was quite poorly throughout December, but now we are officially in week 3 of 52, it feels like a good time to reflect on the gardening year that has just passed, which seems to have come abruptly to an end, leaving us wondering how we managed to cram in everything we did during 2022. Yet there is still so much that awaits us when we return in a month or so.

We've see so much beauty in the garden throughout the seasons particularly in early and everlasting Autumn, We were brushing up horse chestnut leaves early in September and only completed brushing up all the leaves well into December, such was the Autumn this year.

Now winter has arrived bringing with it dark mornings and colder starts. Not an easy season for some, but it is a season to be embraced and appreciated as we look forward to what lies ahead of us. We are so lucky to have our seasons – just imagine hot sunshine and nothing else how boring would our gardens be if we had continuous hot sunshine and nothing else all year round. This magnificent winter season gifts us glorious blue skies with crisp cold air on winter days with wonderful silhouettes

of bare branches simply highlighting the horizon, with the low lighting from the winter sun, throwing shadows on our borders, they look just as interesting as if it were amass of flowers. Just as we finished in the garden the most horrendous icy cold weather arrived, and on a recent visit to feed the birds we noticed the Salvias had been decimated by this cold snap. we will not know until spring if the Salvias can be saved or have been lost completely. Despite all this, winter is an important time in the garden. There is so much going on within the soil that benefits all that live and dwell within it. It is always interesting to see how 'Mother Nature' surprises us and yet somehow always seems to restore the balance! Hopefully, the heavy frosts killed off the bad pests and diseases, helping break down the organic matter in the soil making it more fertile for the growing season ahead. I suppose we should view it as beneficial rather than unpleasant.

We hope everyone had a lovely Christmas and enjoyed seeing their families and friends, making the most of this special time, particularly after the last couple of years. Sadly, our world continues to be surrounded the by doom and gloom on the news channels, with the rising cost of living and energy prices, food shortages and many other worries. We remain optimistic that 2023 brings peace and harmony all around.

As we mention in all our 'Round Robins', our gardens bring us so much peace and harmony that for those moments we are immersed in them, and all the unrest going on in the world and any other troubles around us disappear. It is so true – we all need to keep gardening, and if we can't then just simply take the time to walk around others gardens and absorb the beauty and atmosphere.



The Kirkwood Garden in review for 2022

What a year we have had in the garden, we encountered droughts, floods, violent winds, and storms but our borders coped and looked stunning throughout the year.

Now the winter season is truly upon us, with our plants continuing to delight right to the bitter end. At this time of the year, the garden is put to bed, normally everything is chopped down and ready in preparation for spring.

Current thoughts are we leave it all as it is, which is quite untidy to some, but it gives insects places to hide and forage throughout winter. Always a difficult decision as our gardening team is divided, with some of us

being ultra tidy and others ultra-relaxed; so we meet halfway and do a bit of both, that way there is always something for the insects. (It is amazing how many insects you will find if you shake a seed head into an envelope - there is always a cluster of the tiniest insects mixed in with very tiny seeds)

Once again, The Kirkwood achieved double Gold from Yorkshire in Bloom last year, a truly great achievement for the gardening team, and we are all up for the challenge again this year. With many improvements in the planning before the event later this summer. So much so, one wonders if there is enough time!

Coming up this year in The Kirkwood Gardens

The fundraising team are managing the gardening opening for early July 2023, with more details to follow later this year.

The pond needs some major work this year, so plans are currently being drawn, it will be the top priority project when we return to the gardens. The pond area suffered the worst through the 2022 drought. The pump is not working properly, and the electricity supply needs urgent repair. (Facilities are on with this)

We were very lucky to be gifted a tree from the Queens Platinum Jubilee, 'Tree of Trees' project. The multi stemmed Alder planted by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, sitting in pride of place adjacent to the pond area. The new area created for the tree offers more planting opportunities available for enhancement. It has been a very busy few weeks prepping the garden for our annual break over January and February. We were, fortunately, able to achieve most of our to-do list, which included creating a huge leaf mould area at the top end of the front garden to house the multitude of leaf fall we get each year. We will soon be the very proud owners of the best leaf mould in Kirklees, for the first time, The Kirkwoods collection of pre-loved Christmas Trees will be dropped off in this area ready to be chipped, and the chippings to be moved to our Terrace of Compost Bays in the main garden area.

You may have noticed that all the very dark brown seating in the garden has all had a lick of paint, enhancing the attractiveness of the garden hugely.

A multitude of bulbs have been planted to extend the flowering season around the garden, and some of these bulbs were planted in the cutting garden too. We have arranged for a local flower grower/farmer to come along and give us some help and advice with our newly formed cutting garden, and we look forward to that happening soon. Hopefully, for the forthcoming seasons, The Kirkwood florists may cut the offerings from here to make arrangements for the patients, and perhaps some of The Kirkwood team may like to cut the odd stem for their desks too. We have seeds on the go in preparation for the first annuals, and we will see how they perform.

There are plans to continue to provide the head chef Matthew and his team with produce from our vegetable garden, enhancing the meals served from the kitchen. We were delighted to be able to supply Matthew and the team with some impressive cabbages and purple-sprouting broccoli, along with masses of tomatoes and courgettes, French beans and some beetroot too. We left a supply of lettuce hopefully growing in the greenhouse to top up the salads over the coming weeks, and we have plans for an area closer to the kitchen to be terraced so Matthew and the team can walk from the kitchen door to collect salad and vegetables quickly and with ease.

Our plant table seems to be doing quite well and there has been a steady turnover during these past few months. We are hopeful we can keep that going a little over the winter months too.



What is in flower this winter?

Well, there is the winter flowering honeysuckle, hugely scented. We were lucky that even in the frosts, we were able to spot a common carder bee during a brief moment of sunshine. The winter flowering mahonia has been a mass of yellow scented flowers since November and still is exuberant in her offerings.



There has been a mass of buff tailed bumble bees here too. The Christmas flowering box 'sarcocca' – a truly magnificent scent. This will still be in flower when we return to the garden in February and after flowering, we will remember to cut back. The Hellebores are emerging, as are many bulbs, the grape hyacinths, species tulips, snowdrops, not forgetting the heathers (apparently coming back into fashion). Having flowers bloom throughout the year is fantastic for providing nectar and pollen for our bees and insects and now we have planted diversely, we have created seasonal areas to extend the interest. Yet, there is so much more that we need to do.



Our Kirkwood Wish List grows more and more each year as one learns more about our wonderful flora and fauna.

Hopefully, we will have the skill of Arborists to come along and assist us with our diseased and possibly dangerous trees over towards the rear of the garden in the forthcoming early season before the birds begin to nest. We are still awaiting confirmation on this.

New equipment is needed to help make our garden more environmentally friendly and to improve diversity – these include a heavy-duty shredder and a garden vacuum/blower for the leaves. These would be hugely valuable assets to the garden.

All that remains is to wish you all a healthy, peaceful, happy year ahead and happy gardening too. Take care - Linda.