

VOLUNTEER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER

THE
KIRKWOOD
SUPPORT
LIFE.

An update from Volunteer Gardener Linda Roberts

June 2021

Introduction

Well, we have been back at the garden for just over a month now and gosh how much has been achieved already! Since we have been back there has been much in flower and quite a few pictures have been taken that are included in this newsletter.

In late April, all the spring flowers have bloomed. Snowdrops, Fritillaries, Crocus and Iris. With Peonies, Alliums, Rhodenendrons, Euphorbias and Wood Campion (regarded as some as a weed, but it looks fantastic) flowering in May. Our three Viburnum Plicatum Maressi look stunning and the Cercis Siliquastrum has just started opening its flowers. Unusually these flower straight onto the bark, which I didn't know until recently, but it is a member of the Pea family! It is a native of the East Mediterranean but has been in the UK since the sixteenth century and it is doing particularly well alongside the pond.



What has been happening in the gardens?

At first glance on arriving back at the garden it was, perhaps surprisingly, in good order. It was only at close inspection we realised how infested the borders had become with weeds though inevitably there were casualties and plants have been lost. There will have to be some juggling around in the borders to split and replenish where necessary with this work now well underway.

Upon the return to the garden, it was found the patient planters area was infested with Vine Weevil (pesky little horrors). Despite the use of liquid killer, they remained active. Our only other option being to treat with nematodes, which has been completed recently so fingers crossed this will finally see them off and hopefully the planters will return to their previous floriferous splendour! Because of the weevil we have lost a lot of plants and there are currently many empty planters so we do need to be looking at what we have in the garden that can be divided and added, hopefully when the weevils have gone.

We completed the Light up a Life tree border before the last lockdown and I think the general consensus is that it looks really good. The Tulips that we thought had been removed flowered again and looked lovely and have added an extra dimension to the border. The Alliums, amidst the *Stipa Tenuissima* (pony tail grass), look stunning which just confirms that it needs to be copied at the other end of the border for it to 'follow-through'. Whilst previous years have seen Geraniums and Tulips planted, which looked great, this area will now have a different feel and hopefully reflect the different seasons. Plus, in the long run better for diversity at no extra cost with these plants spreading - the Alliums will self-seed giving more plants for free.

The three Labyrinth borders are now all quite mature and form the main structure of the original garden. However, these areas have taken the most losses. Other than replacing lost and failing plants some re-structure is needed in all these beds and perhaps new planting ideas should be formulated. But that's another project for another time!



The Wildflower Lawn is beginning to take shape and with the border it perhaps needs more definition. The Tree Shrub border behind has become something of an eye-sore, overrun with weeds and bluebells. They all need to come out of what is a very stony and difficult heavy clay soil. This border contains some wonderful Photinias, Cornus, Pittosporum and Magnolias. Some serious muscle is needed here but when it's finished it will greatly enhance the whole area. Our compost area has missed us too. Massive efforts are needed here to turn and aerate to get it back to providing the garden with much needed compost.

The Pond is coming to life and looking good alive with tadpoles, froglets, newts and various pond life. There are some large rockery stones, that were kindly donated, that are still to be strategically placed about the pond edges. The lilies are starting to make a show with the Zantedeschias already in bloom to be closely followed by the various Iris. Around the pond the Herbaceous plants are just peeping through too.

What are we up to?

The long-walled border has now been fully dug over and mulched, and at last our long-awaited Hellebores have been planted. The idea principally for spring in this border is to display Hellebores, Primulas, Snowdrops and Cyclamens and for follow-on, planting Hydrangeas, Ferns, Hostas, Peonies and maybe some Roses.

Volunteers Terry and John have almost completed the erection of the generously donated greenhouse. An amazing feat considering the instructions were all in German! Thank you so much to the friends and family of Mr Ian Johnson, who funded the cost of the greenhouse.



Our new vegetable area is almost complete. We have onions, potatoes, runner beans, French beans, sprout, chives, rhubarb and salad to come. We've also had a wonderful donation of tomato plants too! We have a Chef's area which has been tidied up and new herbs planted in. Matthew has requested more rosemary, parsley, thyme and tarragon. A new bed just outside the kitchen is also being prepared and when it is finished there will be a small run of strawberries and shade tolerant Caucasian spinach. We'll have a wooden trough, also kindly donated, which we'll plant with rocket and more spinach. All this right on our Chef's doorstep! The Orchard area at the top of the front lawn is complete comprising pear, apple, damson, plum and two gooseberry bushes. There are some blueberries still to be planted.

The Gravel Garden is ready for gravel and to be planted. This is another new and hopefully interesting area - now just awaiting plants. Given our green credentials and bearing in mind our future weather and global warming, this area will be planted with drought tolerant plants. Ideas around Beth Chatto theories come into play here – following her doctrine that once planted and watered thereafter would never need supplementary watering assuming right plant right place is adhered to. The benefits of having a dry garden, which are important, is lower maintenance aside from a good spring weed and maybe a midsummer tidy up. This style lends itself to the current aesthetics trend of intermingling of plants - this a really interesting concept.

What are we planning?

We can expect exciting times ahead for us all with preparations for Yorkshire in Bloom and the National Garden Scheme happening on the same day. In the coming weeks priority must be given to the preparation for these two events. The main areas to concentrate on are the front gardens and main entrance area and all the borders in the main garden area. By the time we complete the immediate tasks in the garden the vegetable area will be wholly completed as will the compost area.

I am sure with continued teamwork and huge effort we will get there, and The Kirkwood Garden will look fantastic for the patients and their families, for our teams, volunteers and visitors. It will be a surprise if we do not get ‘double gold’ again for the Yorkshire in Bloom and with the garden fully ready and prepared it should impress our visitors and judges for the grand NGS opening.



Our ranks of volunteers recently swelled taking our number to 24 members. I'd perhaps like to make a special mention for Ian our youngest volunteer (also a student) for working most mornings furiously painting all the patient planters. Ian, who has never painted or gardened, is keen to learn new skills and he is taking everything in his stride and doing a super job.

To finish with a quote from Gertrude Jekyll – a thought to share with you...

“What is one to say about JUNE – the time of perfect young summer; the fulfilment of the promise of earlier months and with as yet no sign to remind one that it's fresh young beauty will ever fade.”

In the meantime, enjoy your own gardens this June as well as The Kirkwood Gardens.

Linda

