

# Volunteer Gardeners

helping

## THE KIRKWOOD SUPPORT LIFE

An update from Volunteer Gardener Linda Roberts

October 2020

### Introduction

Well, what a year it has been! Let us hope all who are reading this are keeping in good health.

The gardens have become even more special over these torrid challenging months and I am sure all of us have enjoyed spending time in our own gardens, caring for and developing them during lockdown. It was lovely to hear that the volunteers were allowed back to the hospice garden. A few volunteers returned in August though we are still missing Elizabeth, George, Kath and Linda (flora Dora), hope we see you soon.

### What has been happening in the gardens?

At first glance, it was wonderful to see how the garden had fared over our absent months. Hydrangea 'Annabel' was in full bloom with her usual blousy stance. Our grasses and perennials although not pruned still stood graciously in their borders. Growth generally around the garden appeared quite vigorous, particularly (as we soon found out) the weeds!



The Cornus Kousa survived though apparently did not flower, its support can be removed now. Hopefully we will all enjoy the flowers and fruits next year. We wondered how the Spanish Daisies (erigeron karvinskianus) would fare, but they did flower until early February when they were cut back hard and are now in full flower – so a definite hit – thank you Sarah Raven! Next year we could have the Dianthus Green tick which Sarah recommends growing as a companion plant with both flowering until Christmas.

In the garden at the moment, there are swathes of Rudbeckias in full flower - the healthiest we have seen them. They thrived principally because they were well watered and mulched, one of the last jobs some of the gardeners did before lockdown. Sue Wood and others continued to water through the summer too.



Sue also planted the vegetable patch with a real mixture of donations and even some tomatoes in the planters. Hopefully next year Chef Matthew will have an abundance of home grown produce with the raised beds fully planted and, with these COVID restrictions behind us, a greenhouse full of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and perhaps other exotica!



## What are we up to?

We all soon got up to speed attacking the weeds and continue to keep doing so. We are working our way around the whole garden, neatening, clearing, splitting, and removing 'past their sell by date' roses and shrubs, making room for new and exciting ones. We are extending borders and developing new ideas for them. These borders and planters must work hard for their places. It is up to us all to make sure we have the 'right plant, right place'!



It's easy to keep the garden as it is, but already as can be seen, just little changes like extending and widening borders enhance their space and keep you wondering about what's next to see!



Our new wild flower area is in the early stages of development having been close mown and scarified ready for seed sowing. I suppose not everyone enjoys long grass but if it develops as we hope, it will be an asset to the garden.

Wild flower areas need careful management requiring lower soil fertility to keep the more vigorous grass in check and allowing wild flowers to develop and thrive. Steph managed to get some yellow rattle and we have some good wild flower mixes to commence the process this autumn. We have developed, and are developing, two areas to promote all sorts of wildlife by using our own old logs and leaves etc.



Our nursery bed has been very much in use supporting plants before they are moved to their new beds and where we have had to very quickly house plants to allow for the activity round the Light up a Life tree! Sadly, we lost all our seedlings of Hellebore, Candelabra Primulas and other perennials whilst we were away. We have very quickly got others on the go so hopefully they will be ready for next year's planting.

The compost area is looking great – it is an ongoing task – hopefully we are ready to house the immense load of leaf fall!

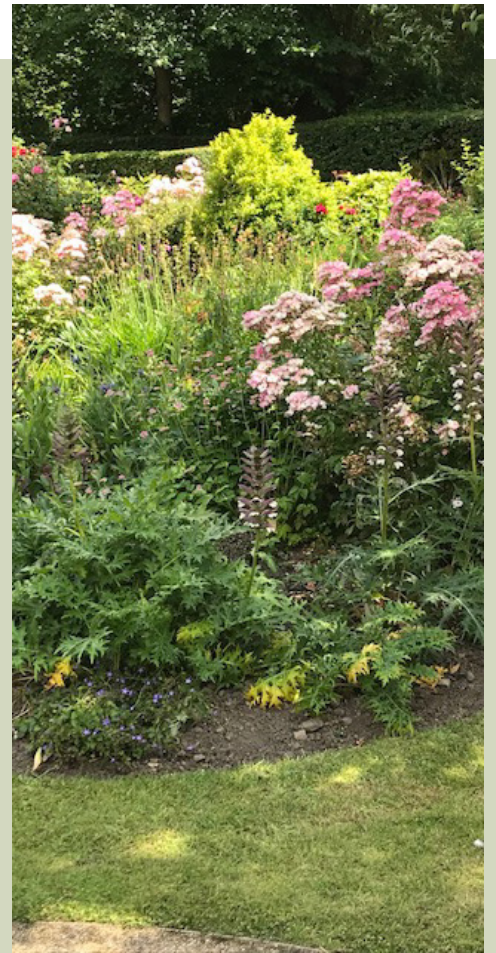
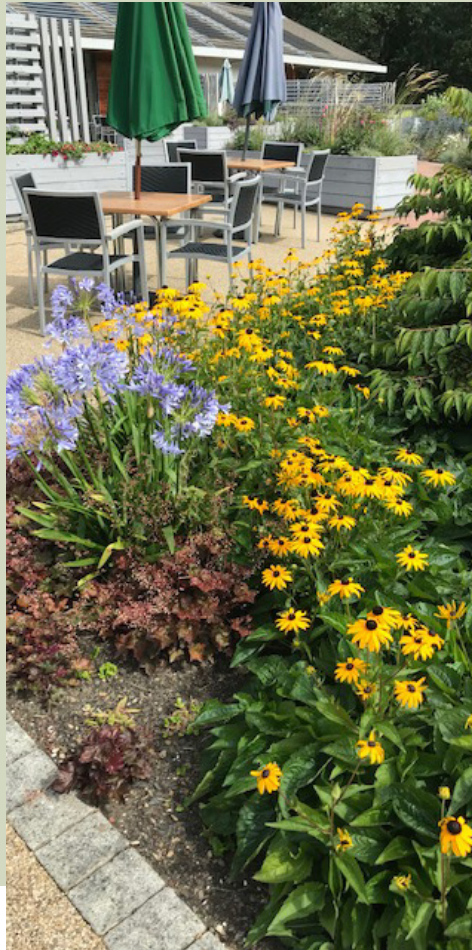
Terry and John have done a fantastic job laying the foundations for our Greenhouse (very kindly and generously donated by the husband of a patient). They have worked hard laying concrete paths and organising areas for paths and potting table area. Truly fantastic!

The Verbena Bonariensis has spread and self seeded here and there and looks delightful. As do the Grasses, Salvias and Geranium Rozeanne. We have such wonderful banks of Sedum (we must remember to Chelsea chop next year so it doesn't flop too much!) and Fuchsias looking fantastic with their vivid red flowers. Amazingly, the plants in the planters survived and look fantastic. They look impressive and for some of the gardeners who were not sure about Grasses I think they will all agree they do create some structure and elegance.

We obviously were not able to plant any annuals and they have been clearly missed, particularly the Cosmos. There are lots of gaps in some of the planters. A priority is to get some colour in the planters for the Autumn and Winter months for the patients to enjoy and hopefully next Spring we will be ahead of the game with more structural Perennial planting as well as some Floriferous annuals for fillers.

There are bird boxes and feeders to be dotted around the patient's area and these are to be fixed and fitted in the coming weeks.





## What are we planning?

Autumn is now officially here with leaves falling in abundance. It is a wonderful season with such spectacular changes of colour and interest amongst the trees and planting. The all important seed heads should be left in situ for the hungry birds to enjoy and to provide interest and drama around the garden.

We have a hugely busy time ahead in the next two months, planting bulbs, dividing and dead heading plants, that all important leaf clearance and of course, planning for the year ahead. We have of course to be garden ready for our grand National Garden Scheme opening (suspended from this year) and of course Yorkshire in Bloom. I have no doubt that we will be ready for both.

It's hard to pinpoint favourite plants and areas around the garden, but I do think our main Herbaceous Perennial border always steals the show. We wonder whether, looking forward and when there is some money in the kitty, we include other Herbaceous borders with swathes of interesting and original planting particularly at the entrance to the main garden leading to the Light up a Life tree. Gardens need change and continual development to keep them looking fresh, interesting and invigorating.

Still, the plan is to create something that is in flower or of interest for the whole of the year. I think we are getting very close but we still have masses and masses to do.

Our Light up a Life border is still to be planted and that has been delayed because of COVID but plans are in place to get this sorted for the annual event in December.

We have some wonderful additions to the garden from Dave (New Zealander) who is bringing a bit of NZ to the hospice garden – I can't wait to see how the Manuka does and how the Bottlebrush fares near the pond. Many thanks Dave.

There is still much work to do around the borders adjoining the compost area since we had to chop down the overgrown trees to let light into the nursery bed. Amazingly, the Lilac and Viburnum Bodnantese survived. We lost a newly planted Skimmia – so we have a big gap to fill there. We also lost a newly planted Laurel and another Viburnum Carlesii. We moved the Oak Leaf Hydrangea from underneath the huge Conifers hopefully to a better site. It certainly seems to be doing better. Dave provided some Cyclamens which have been dotted around that border so in time it should look stunning.

Alan very kindly donated some Oxygenators for the pond after winning The Kirkwood Lottery! Many thanks Alan it was extremely generous. The Pond does need further work with several ideas from Alan about how to improve the overall appearance.

Martin suggested painting the fence, benches and the seat around the Light up a Life tree the same colour as the planters – so when time permits that will be done before the National Garden Scheme/Yorkshire in Bloom events next year.

Hopefully the greenhouse will arrive soon! Steven and Anne had been given £100 as a donation for the garden and that will be paying for the staging if we decide we need it.

We are a mixed bunch of volunteers from all professions all working and contributing in harmony and passion to develop our wonderful garden. Many plants and seedlings come from our own gardens to help fill and develop these ever growing borders! We are very fortunate to have a lovely relationship with the Denby Dale flower club who have supported us with plants and seedlings over the last couple of years and hopefully will continue to do so. Not forgetting Tim Grace and his nursery which keeps us supplied with wonderful plants as and when needed.

It is sometimes said that walking around a garden takes you on a journey, I believe The Kirkwood garden can do that. It is lovely when patients and their families come out into the garden and tell us how it brings so much pleasure and lifts their spirits in what are often difficult and trying times for them. It makes all our efforts worthwhile and we are all the more determined to help make a difference to all those who visit it.

We now have two, maybe three, new volunteers which means we have a healthy volunteer base committed to the development and maintenance of this wonderful healing garden.

Everyone keep well.

Best regards  
Linda

#### What our gardeners want to plant next...

- Orchard
- Dahlias
- Heleniums
- Agastaches
- Monardas
- Asters/Symphotrichum
- Chrysanthemums
- Eupatoriums
- Alliums
- Salvias
- Hydrangeas
- Persicaras
- Nerines
- Bi-ennials
- Grasses

## Volunteer Gardeners' wishlist: