

VOLUNTEER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER



THE
KIRKWOOD
SUPPORT
LIFE.



Garden update from Volunteer Gardener Linda Roberts

Sept 2022

We've just heard some great news that our lovely, dedicated team of gardeners have been nominated **'volunteers of the month'** – Thank you to everyone on behalf of all the gardening team

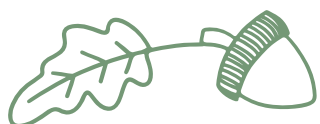
A Summer of heat-waves

Thankfully we have managed to keep our garden looking good during the recent exceptional heat wave. It was so so hot! We carried on regardless nurturing and loving our garden and trying to keep cool whilst doing it! We were all mindful of saving water only using hose pipes where necessary; in the patients' planters, new plants and annuals and of course the kitchen garden. We restricted the use of hose pipes way before the ban was announced.

We watered with watering cans and mulched newly planted plants to retain as much moisture as possible. We have had very few casualties all things considered.

Hanging baskets were taken down and put in the shade during the worst of the heat wave, and have so far survived. Next year the whole hanging basket situation needs a re-think. Maybe planting succulents? We have had a lot of trouble watering the hanging baskets as they are so labour intensive. Non the less we have to make the most use of our rainfall. We have suggested installing water-butts within the garden but question whether this would be allowed around, given the previous concerns about stagnant water, and are currently awaiting a response. This would surely ease the water bill as well as saving our water.

Although we have been aware of the extremes in climate we have for some time now



prepared for this by planting drought-tolerant plants throughout the garden, especially in our newest borders.

This recent bout of extremely hot weather has made us and everyone more aware of how devastating it can be. A big cause of concern on many counts. No rain, no flowers! In a heat wave, flowers die early which leads to no seeds. Leaves fall early – no autumn. Nothing for pollinators. No food for birds. Simply catastrophic for our ecosystems.

It should make us all think... Moving forward, we have to manage our planting and our gardens better, such as using tougher plants cultivating pockets of shelter thus creating micro-climates within the borders.

A brief garden update

Despite all that the weather has thrown at us the Kirkwood garden continues to thrive, bursting at the seams with colour and form, it is truly joyous.

We are embracing what the growing season has provided. Our Perennials and Herbaceous beds are floriferous including our many home-grown annuals; our Orchard is providing fruit, including our very first plums and damsons! Maybe we will have our very own Kirkwood jams soon.

Our Kitchen Garden has been superb – red cabbage, broccoli, onions, tomatoes, peppers, courgettes, and cucumbers. Still to come is the sweetcorn, more kale, leeks and sprouts. Sadly somehow the cabbage white butterflies have managed to get through the protective netting and are enjoying munching through the fruits of our labour also!

How lovely to have had the rain return recently and what a refreshing difference it has made, boosting the gardens where everything looks uplifted and inspirational. It can now breathe and develop.

Despite all the doom and gloom we're still making the news, fearing what is yet to come, but our gardens keep us sane offering an endless distraction, and how lovely it is to have somewhere where we can escape and forget what is going on in the world.



Summer Events

We had our judging from the **RHS** judges from the **Yorkshire in Bloom** team. What a wonderful experience being able to show off our wonderful space to two people who had never seen the garden before. It was clear to see they liked what they saw. We have yet to hear the news but fingers are crossed for some high scores and interesting feedback.

Shortly afterwards we opened the garden a second time for the **NGS** charity. It was an overwhelming success and whilst it was not as well attended as last year we still made a healthy profit and we were able to show off our garden, plant stalls, bbq, and home baking skills to visitors. With our garden developing year on year it would be interesting to hold open days for each season of the year.

As usual, we had a Visitors' Book on display for visitors to make comments, sadly there were not too many entrants, but one stands out from **Deborah Johnson...**

“There is so much love in this garden, there are lots of peaceful areas for contemplation. A wonderful space.”

(She told us it brought happy tears to her eyes she was truly blown away by our lovely garden)

With the success of our plant stall at the NGS, we now have our very own **“Kirkwood Gardeners' Plant Stall” at the main entrance to the Kirkwood**. In time we will be able to offer “a little bit of The Kirkwood” to take home and plant. We will propagate the plants that stand out in the garden so visitors can replicate some of the planting ideas in their own gardens. As well as that there are times when we have too many of one particular plant and rather than throwing them away these can be sold. Plants are donated to our shops and to the gardeners individually as well as the donations we get from local supermarkets. All would earn a little to contribute to The Kirkwood.



We would like to take pause here and take this opportunity to thank our wonderful supporters!

Thank you to **Bolster Moor Farm Shop** and **H Copley Family Butchers** for generously providing meats for our BBQ.

Thank you to **Head Chef, James at The Venue at Barkisland** for making scones and donating the butter, cream and jam.

Thank you to **Mr and Mrs Yarrow** for their wonderful donation of cuttings and divisions of plants.

Thank you to **Susan Proctor** for her donation of Hostas. Susan is the holder of the national collection of Hostas in this area. If you are looking to buy she will have something to appeal to whatever your tastes. Based in Clayton West give her a call and pop in. You will not be disappointed. Most of the Hostas in the Kirkwood garden come from her collection as well as from Tim Grace.

Thank you to **Tim Grace** for donating many annual plants in time for our Yorkshire in Bloom judging and for a new hosepipe at the entrance. Supplying many seedlings for the vegetable patch and Grow Bags for the Tomatoes.

Special Thanks to Bob!

We'd like to extend a special thank you to the wonderfully kind **Bob and his family**. An In-Patient at The Kirkwood Dalton site, Bob very sadly passed away recently and even though he was so poorly his thoughts were about helping us in some way around the garden with Bob donating some wonderful watering cans, hose pipe connections, trowels and forks, helping us to maintain the beautiful serenity of the Gardens for all to enjoy.

We will never forget his kindness.



Hello Autumn!

It is now time to give thought to Autumn Bulb planting – a lovely season. We have many bulbs in the garden, to ensure continuity there is always a need to plant a few more each year to maintain impact and to have that something special to see each season of the year. Perhaps introducing ones we have never had before, perhaps adding to our small collection of species Tulips. There are some exciting ones to collect for example Tulips Sprengeri, which is highly sought after amongst keen gardeners. Would be wonderful to have them naturalising in our garden. Planting many more here and there and making new drifts in the lawn to add another dimension to different areas of the garden.

The new planting in the summer herbaceous sweep is in full flower at the moment looking truly magnificent. We are receiving many comments about what the flowers are etc. Visitors asking for cuttings or seeds which is lovely to hear. The soft mauves, pinks, blues and purples hold the planting together hopefully the succession planting will add to our something of interest 365 days of the year!

We have had plans for a cutting garden for a long time but choosing a spot is difficult because of the abundance of trees and the resulting shade, a no-no for flowers. There is such a spot adjoining the compost bays which we have used as an overspill bed where cuttings and divided plants have been stored. Since our absence during covid resulted in losing all the seedlings of hellebores, primulas, and, violas, it never really worked. Some larger plants there have been dug up and sold at the NGS event; there are a few remaining which we hope to sell at our plant stall.

This area is good ground, it has been worked and composted for some time. Hopefully with the ok to remove several trees this would be a good area for both a cutting garden and a bed to nurture cuttings and divisions. The volunteer florists for the Kirkwood struggle from time to time to provide good flowers for arranging in patients' areas and for reception areas. With the addition of a cutting garden, they can select good flowers and greenery from around the garden to show off their talented flower arranging skills.



The wild flower lawn has in some ways been too successful. Alas, much of this 'success' is down to the prolific growth of the grasses, a common problem in wild flower meadows. Despite the planting and seed sowing of yellow rattle which has its own defensive mechanism for suppressing grass growth, the grass has continued to grow!

Wild flower areas need time for the flower seeds to germinate and grow sufficiently for them to outgrow the grasses. Our wild flower lawn will be cut back to the ground in late September/early October, scarified and further wild flower seeds and plugs added which hopefully will be prominent next year.

This year for the first time we tried our hand at '**Chelsea chopping**'. We worked on Sedum, Echinops and Eryngium. Wow. What a success. It did work, twofold really, it slowed down the growth so they did not become top heavy too early in the season and it delayed flowering. They are in full flower now and providing much nectar for the pollinators. They then dry with interesting seed heads which have good stature through the winter. We will be doing a lot more next year.

We have heavily pruned the overgrown rhododendrons in the far shrub border. Very much a trial, most of these shrubs have been in the garden since it was first created and have lost their shape and have become leggy with too few flowers. Will be interesting to see how they fare. This has created some gaps in the garden. There are shrubs we can move to fill the gaps but it is allowing us to create yet more interest in this area of the garden.

Our roses have increased in the garden this summer, mainly through donations and cuttings. In time they will bring much colour, scent and interest to the summer beds. Quite interestingly **Tim Grace** gave a tutorial on budding roses using 6 buds from our roses onto a rootstock of climbing roses to make new plants. Quite technical and difficult to the on-looker but Tim, an old hand, hopefully, has produced six magnificent future climbing roses for the garden.



They are in the overspill bed and need particular management to make sure they survive. It will be most interesting to see the results. Not sure any of the gardeners will be doing it regularly though!

As well as roses increasing in the garden, we are trying to increase our dahlia displays. In former years there were many and a lovely vivid yellow Dahlia was created for the Hospice. This has disappeared and we are trying to find out who propagated it; hopefully, we will have it back in the garden in memory of Jack a former gardener who passed away this year. We have planted several in the garden this year and they are looking wonderful. A variety called 'Bishop's children' has been grown from seed; these are all planted in the patients' planters, we are hoping these will form tubers so we can maintain and keep them there.

We have begun to paint some of the old wooden furniture around the garden and also the seat around the Light up a Life tree, a huge improvement already. Painting the pond surrounds will be the most challenging – that is the next job on the agenda!

As always thanks for reading and Happy gardening!

