

# Friends of Valley Gardens

May 2021

No 26



***From the top –  
Forsythia and Mahonia by the urn bed  
Looking towards the urn bed from the Woodend path  
Pruning the hydrangeas***

## ***Working Parties***

In the first working party of the year we managed to erect the new bird table and take down some of the hogweed that is threatening to overwhelm sections of the gardens. Snow prevented the second session from taking place but last Sunday ten members managed to tidy up the shrub borders and Woodend Tower border, sweep paths, plant shrubs in the bank below Woodend, prune Hydrangeas, tidy and plant up the mini rockery near the urn bed and plant out cowslips.

### ***Dates for Working Parties***

***Sunday May 16<sup>th</sup> 10am***

***Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May 7pm***

***Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 10am***

***Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June 7pm***

***Meet under the bridge***

It is important that members let me know if they are going to be present at the first of these sessions so I can organise tasks in different parts of the park and ensure that we don't break the rule of six. It is best to contact me on the friends e-mail

[friendsofthevalleygardens@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthevalleygardens@gmail.com)

However the rules should change for the later working parties and although we will still have to sanitise equipment before use and observe social distancing, group size shouldn't be quite such an issue.

Please bring a good pair of gloves and wear a decent strong pair of shoes.

## ***Brownie Meeting***

The cowslips that the Brownies put in the bank near Londesborough Lodge are in full flower and have obviously seeded themselves around.

The Brownies will be joining us again on **Wednesday June 30<sup>th</sup>** to do some more litter picking and planting.

## ***Further News***

The park continues to look very attractive. It really does look at its best in spring. As the daffodils fade, the bluebells and wild garlic are beginning to put on a show. The Forsythia and Mahonia have been magnificent and the blossom trees – wild cherry and crab apples are just coming into flower.

It is nice to see the waterfall running, but diverting the beck through the pond has shown up some cracks in the dam wall. They are attempting to provide a temporary fix with a layer of clay against the side of the pond.

Two signposts have appeared in the park, one by the bridge over Vernon Road and one by the Crescent entrance. At the time of writing there are no finger boards on them yet.



## ***Sweet Violet***

If you look carefully at the grassed area near the bird table you will see a mass of sweet violets. They might be small but they're very pretty when there are a lot of them.

They are of course the birth flower for February, hence their appearance in many Valentine verses. The one below is a traditional nursery rhyme dating from at least the 1780's

The rose is red, the violet's blue,  
The [honey](#)'s sweet, and so are you.  
Thou are my love and I am thine;  
I drew thee to my Valentine:  
The [lot](#) was cast and then I drew,  
And [Fortune](#) said it shou'd be you.

Violets are a good source of nectar for early insects but they are not always violet, they can be white or lilac. The flowers are edible and that might be the reason they are not as common as they used to be. They have been used in herbal medicine to treat headaches, depression and insomnia.



***Photographs – from the top***

***The Waterfall  
Sweet Violets  
Litter Pickers at work***

## ***The New Bird Feeder***

In the first work session we erected the new bird feeder on the grassed area near Londesborough Lodge. The design is based on one I found on the RSPB website and certainly seems to be attracting a range of birds already. We have seen blue tits, long tailed tits, coal tits, robins and chaffinches on the feeders and goldfinches and dunnocks in the bushes nearby.

The drainpipe screwed to the wooden support is a squirrel baffle, they apparently can't climb the smooth plastic surface. The feeders themselves are also meant to be squirrel proof.

Thank you to Martin Dove for taking the photographs of birds on the feeders.

In other news, has anyone else noticed the reduced number of ducks on the pond. I presume the absence of female ducks has encouraged the males to explore other ponds and lakes.

A number of our members have spotted a large goldfish in the pond. It could possibly be a survivor of the pair we had in the pond last year. If it is, it has done well to stay alive.



### ***Photographs from the top***

***The new bird feeder***

***Coal Tit***

***Blue Tit***