

Friends of Valley Gardens

September 2021 No 30

Working Parties

Dates for Working Parties

Sunday 19th Sept

Sunday October 3rd

Sunday October 24th

Meet under the bridge at 10am

The work party scheduled for August 8th had to be cancelled as the weather was awful, but on Saturday 28th August eight of us managed to get the big rockery tidied up and did some work on the area near the urn bed, putting in some plants (cranesbill, cowslips and ornamental strawberry), weeding the small rockery and weeding parts of the slope. We also cleared many bags of litter. We welcomed Lucas, by some distance the youngest member of the group who came along and worked very hard during the morning. Our next work party is on Sunday September 19th to coincide with the Great Big Green Week. This is a national initiative where organisations are asked to do something towards improving the environment during the week of September 18th to the 26th. We hope to collect litter, weed the shrub borders near the Crescent, and put in bulbs and perennials.



Around the Gardens

The wildflower area gets more colourful by the week. This has been a very successful experiment and I will be asking Matthew if he could rotovate a slightly larger area next year. At the beginning of the month a spell of very wet and windy weather brought down a tree near the three circular beds and caused a massive branch to break from a tree by the top path below the old school. Thankfully no-one was hurt, but it took three days to clear the debris. The walls below the Art Gallery have been cleared of ivy and shrubs so that builders can prepare estimates for the proposed repairs

***Photographs from the top –
Planting Cowslips
Penstemons and Hydrangeas in the shrub border
The fallen branch***

News

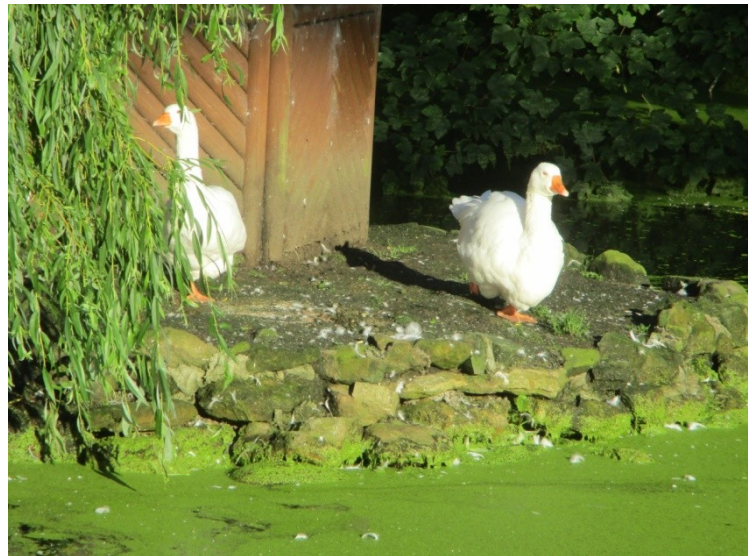
Thank you to everyone that helped at the Cavaliers Charity Fair a couple of weeks ago. We set up a display board with some information about the park and work that we do, although we had to reduce its size as it kept toppling over in the wind. We also had a table selling jigsaws, plants and books and made £120 towards funds. A lovely photograph of Jane, Angela and Debbie appeared in the local press.

The council have replaced the litter bins on Valley Road with new ones that hold a big green bin. I presume they are easier to empty.

Fossil Festival

We need to know by the end of the week if anyone else would like to help at the Fossil Festival that is being held on the 11th and 12th September. Sessions run from 9am to 1pm or 12noon until 4pm on each day. Volunteers will be based outside the Rotunda to chat to visitors, tell them a little bit about what's going on, and direct them around the site. Other volunteers will be needed to assist in collecting information on where visitors have come from, how many people are in their group, and what aspects of the Festival they have particularly enjoyed.

Let us know if you would like to be involved and which day/session you would like to do.



Ragwort

There has been a lot of ragwort flowering in the park this year, especially on the bank above the pond. Ragwort is a controversial plant. On the one hand it is extremely poisonous and of particular danger to livestock who can suffer liver damage and death from eating the plant. It is the only plant to have its own act of parliament (Ragwort Control Act 2003). On the other hand it is a native biennial that is an important food source for many invertebrates. Over 200 species have been recorded visiting the plant for nectar and others, despite its toxicity, feed on the leaves. The brightly coloured caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth feed on the leaves and absorb the poison, becoming poisonous to predators themselves. Should it be removed? Not necessarily. The law recognises its value to wildlife and recommends controlling the plant only if it is growing within 100m of fields used for grazing animals or growing fodder.

Photographs – from the top

*The Charity Fair stall
The geese on the island
Cinnabar moth and caterpillar*