

Friends of Valley Gardens

June 2022

No 36

Work Parties

Sunday 12th June

(Change of date – see below)

Sunday 26th June

Meet under the bridge at 10am.

In May six volunteers litter picked, removed yet more wild garlic from the shade border, planted foxgloves and cut back penstemons, cotoneaster and buddleia in the shrub bed near the Crescent. Thanks to Steve Allen for providing the foxgloves

Our next work party was scheduled for this Sunday (5th) but we forgot that it is Jubilee weekend and many of our members will be involved in Jubilee events, including Felicity and I. We have therefore decided to move our work party to the following Sunday (12th) which I believe, for a change, isn't a bank holiday.

We need to continue clearing the shade border and complete the tidying up of the shrub borders.



Matthew

Since the formation of the Friends in 2019 we have worked closely with the Parks Department and particularly with Matthew Jordan who was in charge of the gardening teams that worked in Valley Gardens.

He always made time to listen to our ideas, did his best to implement the more sensible ones and dealt patiently and efficiently with any problems we identified in the park.

It was therefore a bit of shock when he told us he was leaving to set up his own gardening business – MJ Garden Care. He will certainly be missed but we wish him all the best for his new endeavour and if you would like to make use of his services he can be contacted on matthewsj80@hotmail.co.uk.

We look forward to working closely with Helen Percival who will be our point of contact within the Parks Department. One of Matthew's last projects in the Valley was the refurbishment of the Fountain. As you can see from the photograph it is no longer a smelly waterlogged litter bin.

Photographs from the top
Clearing wild garlic
Foxgloves in the shade border
The newly refurbished fountain



Armed Forces Day

If you get the chance on Armed Forces Day (25th June), check out our stall on the grassed area near the Vernon Road Roundabout. We'll be talking to people about the park and giving out fliers and questionnaires to anyone that is interested.

The Gardens in June

There is always something new to see in the park. For instance just through the Strawberry Arch is a patch of Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum Multiflorum*) a native perennial related to Lily of the Valley. It grows really well in deep shade and will grow up to a metre in height.

Columbine (*Aquilegia Vulgaris*) is also a native plant and the parent of the Granny Bonnets that have been a staple of cottage gardens for centuries. Columbine plants have begun to appear in the park but are probably garden escapees that have begun to revert.

London Pride (*saxifrage x urbium*) is not native but has been grown as a garden plant since the 17th century. On the bank next to a footpath near Londesborough Lodge there is a large area of naturalised London Pride. The plant has some wonderful alternative names including St Patrick's Cabbage, Prattling Parnell and Look Up and Kiss Me. It was one of the first plants to colonise London bomb sites in the Second World War and came to symbolise the resilience of London and ordinary Londoners.

Noel Coward wrote a very popular song called London Pride. One verse and the chorus is reproduced below

***There's a little city flower,
Ever spring unveiling,
Growing in the crevices,
By some London railing.
Though it has a Latin name
In town and countryside,
We in England call it
London Pride.***

***London Pride has been handed down to us,
London Pride is a flower that's free.
London Pride means our own dear town to us,
And our pride it forever will be.***

Last year we sowed wild flower seeds on the embankment near the grotto. It produced a marvellous display of yellow, white and blue annuals throughout the summer. This year it is completely different. The campion has taken over. The area is still very colourful but is now a sea of red and white. We did sow more annuals seeds in the spring but I suspect the very dry weather in April has delayed their germination

***Photographs from the top
Solomon's Seal
Blossom in early May
Naturalised London Pride***