

Friends of Valley Gardens

August 2022 No 38

Work Parties

Sunday August 21st.

Sunday September 11th

Sunday October 2nd

Meet under the bridge at 10am.

We just had the one work party this month, the second one, scheduled for last Sunday, had to be cancelled as it was pouring with rain. We certainly needed the rain but it was a bit annoying it had to fall when we had a work session planned.

In the session early in July we got the long border below the school tidied up.

In the next session we will try and get the borders near Woodend tidied up and some plants put into the shade border.

The session in October will be part of the Great Big Green Week and we will be planting bulbs around the park.



Forthcoming Events

News now of a couple of events taking place in or around the gardens.

Wind in the Willows

Wind in the Willows is being performed in the gardens over bank holiday weekend in August.

There are three performances on each of the days – Saturday 27th, Sunday 28th and Monday 29th. Each performance last about an hour and a half and is a promenade performance, meaning that different scenes take place in different parts of the park. A chair will be useful. Further information and tickets available by visiting - [The Wind in the Willows at Woodend Gardens event tickets from TicketSource.](#)

Fossil Festival

The Fossil festival is taking place from 16th September to the 18th September, and again volunteers are being sought to help staff the event. Details are on the attached document with the newsletter e-mail.

Photographs from the top

**A well earned rest from clearing the long border
The seat has reappeared near the vase bed**

Other News

A seat has been placed back near the vase bed, not in its original position, but probably a better place. It is more visible from Valley Road and less likely to be vandalised. Our plans for other seating in the park are progressing slowly but we have been promised that the grotto seat is part of this Autumn's scheduled work. Also included in this work should be the installing of bird boxes and bat boxes and the replacement of the missing railings on the bridge.



How Do We Want The Park to Develop?

A couple of weeks ago one of the gardeners strimmed the sloped area behind the vase bed, but in doing so took down some small shrubs, the foxgloves before they had time to seed and numerous other patches of wild flowers. The area is now undeniably neater but completely sterile. If you compare it with the slope above the scalloped wall just a few yards away you will see that area looks very untidy. It is covered in thistles, feverfew and ragwort, all of which provide valuable nectar for insects, a food source for moths and butterflies and in the case of the thistles, provide seed for various birds, particularly Goldfinches.

The question is, what are visitors to the park likely to prefer?

Do they want it tidy, but barren or untidy but wildlife friendly. I think there is a growing acceptance that parks cannot be kept pristine and areas managed for wildlife are a good thing. The important word there is managed. If you just leave an area to revert it won't necessarily produce the results you want.

This can be seen in the areas of the park that were left uncut two years ago with signs saying that it was for the benefit of wildlife. The problem is that if you want it to remain as a grassed area full of native flowers you have got to manage it and that means cutting it back in the autumn every year. Failure to maintain this regime means that it reverts to scrub with brambles, sycamore and hawthorn dominating. You can see that happening already in the area next to the Abbey Flats.

We had a very productive meeting with Chris and Steve of the Parks Department and have come up with a plan that we hope will create a balance between keeping areas of the park neat and tidy where they are very visible to visitors, but allowing other areas to be managed for the benefit of wildlife.

Comments would be welcome.

View of the Bridge – 1870's?

The photograph to the left shows part of the park from an unusual angle. It must have been taken before the houses of Grosvenor Road were built, which means sometime before the mid 1880's. The toll booth can be seen at the far end of the bridge and the houses of the Crescent are on the right.

***Photographs – from the top
Tidy and sterile or
Untidy and wildlife friendly?
The bridge and park 1870's***