

Friends of Valley Gardens

June 2021

No 27

Working Parties

Dates for Working Parties

Sunday 13th June 10am

Thursday 24th June 7pm

Sunday 4th July

Thursday 22nd July

Meet under the bridge

On the 16th of May, 10 members prepared and sowed an area for wild flowers, weeded the shrub border and put in Osteospermum, Lavender, London Pride and Penstemon plants, tidied borders near the Art Gallery, weeded the paths near Woodend and litter picked.

I noticed that the wildflower seed has germinated and the plants we put in are growing well. I now put in plants that are not in flower at the time of planting, they are less likely to catch the attention of thieves. The beautiful saxifrage that the council put into various borders all disappeared one Saturday night.

Someone also attempted to pinch the bird feeders but my anti theft chains held and they had to make do with the coconut shell.

On the 27th May 7 members tackled the long border below the old school.

At the next work party we will finish weeding the long border and put some plants into the spaces created by removing the weeds. A couple of shrub borders need a tidy up and of course there is litter to remove. Please bring a good pair of gloves and wear a decent strong pair of shoes.



Other Dates for your Diary

June 27th Great Get Together in the Crescent

June 30th – Brownie Meeting in the Park

***From the top –
Tim prepares the wildflower area
Bluebells and Wild Garlic
Blossom on the trees below Woodend***

**Great Get Together
Sunday June 27th
Crescent Gardens**

We attended this event the last time it was held two years ago. This year we will again be publicising the work we do in the gardens, but in addition we will have some activities for children (and adults) to do. Sue and Debbie will be supervising pebble painting and have already done a lot of the preparation needed to do the activity.

We will also offer children the chance to sow Nasturtium seeds. They are the ideal plant to sow this late in the season as they germinate quickly, will flower by September and continue flowering until the frosts and the leaves and flowers are edible.



Wild areas in the park

Last year the Parks Department left a number of areas of Valley Gardens uncut until the autumn and put in signs saying – ‘Excuse the weeds, we’re feeding the bees’

Some cynical local residents have suggested it was simply a way to save money on maintenance, but if it does lead to a greater variety of wild flowers then everyone wins – the council, the people who use the park and of course bees and other wildlife. Is it working?

I think perhaps it is. Cow parsley is certainly dominating the area, but I also spotted buttercups, wood avens, welsh poppy, lady’s smock, speedwell, forget -me- knot, red campion, herb Robert and knapweed. Ox-eye daisies, vetches and clover are absent, but we could perhaps introduce these through plug plants in the autumn.



Photographs – from the top

**Coffee break
Debbie’s Pebble paintings
Cow Parsley**



Sheila Vickers

We are very sorry to announce the death of one of our members. Sheila was a stalwart of the Weaponness Valley Community Group since it started six years ago, but often found the time to join the Friends at our work parties on a Sunday Morning. Both groups will miss her energy and no-nonsense approach to projects and her ability to carve a way through bureaucracy and red tape.



Charity Event

Saturday August 14th

We have booked a table at a charity event to be held in Westborough on August 14th. We obviously need something to sell from the table. It is not a good time of year for plants although I should have some in flower and available to sell. We would also like to sell books so please don't throw any out. We can arrange to have them collected or you can drop them off at 23 Valley Road.



Cow Parsley

The drifts of cow parsley in the park certainly look spectacular. It apparently prefers shaded areas but seems perfectly happy in any conditions. It is an umbellifer, with a flower head made up of many small flowers.

It is an early source of nectar for insects and is the food plant of the common flat body, a rather unremarkable brown moth.

The leaves are edible, but I wouldn't advise trying to eat them as there are a lot of very similar looking poisonous umbellifers including Hemlock. One of its other names is Mother Die. Parents would warn children that if they ate cow parsley their mother would die, presumably to stop them eating anything that looked similar. Other names include Queen Anne's lace, fairy lace and hedge parsley.

It has apparently always been used as a mosquito repellent.

Photographs from the top

***Sheila chats to Chris
There's always paperwork to do!
Cow Parsley Avenue***