



## Spring Newsletter - April 2021

Brighton and Hove Green Spaces Forum (BHGSF) is a volunteer organisation providing an independent voice and communication hub for volunteer groups working with Brighton & Hove's parks and open spaces.

### GREEN SPACES VOLUNTEERING RE-STARTS – AGAIN..

Outdoor volunteering is back 😊  
Please see message below from CityParks which advises that group volunteering, with caveats, can re-commence. Groups working on CityParks sites need to follow the process described. Groups working on other sites should check with their appropriate authority.



*From the 29<sup>th</sup> March, outdoor gatherings of up to six people will be permitted. CityParks will once again be gradually resuming volunteering activities in Parks and Open Spaces. Again we will be limiting the group size to six (that's five volunteers and one 'task leader') and maintaining social distance. If you are an accredited volunteer leader and wish your group to resume volunteering, please contact CityParks at [cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk) to agree your plans and to obtain their written permission. Please do this even if you were given the go ahead at the end of last year.*

### MAKING CONTACT WITH CITYPARKS



A number of green space volunteer groups working on Brighton & Hove CityParks managed sites have highlighted difficulties in making contact with appropriate CityParks officers.

Volunteer groups working on CityParks sites that want help or advice from an appropriate CityParks officer should email their request to [cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk). This is the CityParks first point of contact for enquiries, which will then be forwarded on to the appropriate person or team. CityParks commit to responding to all enquiries into this address within 10 working days. If groups know the name and email address of the specific officer they want to contact, then the message should be sent to that officer and cc'd to [cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:cityparks@brighton-hove.gov.uk)



## City Nature Challenge 2021

Brighton & Hove is one of the 400 cities around the world taking part in the '2021 City Nature Challenge'. This year the challenge takes place between 30th April and 3rd May and aims to involve as many people as possible in photographing and identifying plants, animals, insects, fungi, shells etc. This all to create a worldwide record of urban biodiversity.

Taking part is free, all you need is a smartphone with a camera. Participants download a free app called 'iNaturalist' which helps identify and upload all those things you've photographed. Great fun for young and old alike!

For full details please visit the Brighton & Eastern Downs City Nature Challenge site at <https://sway.office.com/HidCPpZwqG0EWnF6?ref=Link>

## TWO VOLUNTEER TOOLS FROM THE NATIONAL FEDERATION

The Brighton & Hove Green Spaces Forum is a member of the National Federation of Parks & Green Spaces (NFPGS). Across the UK the Federation represents over 7000 green spaces volunteer groups.

Over the last year the Federation has helped develop a new Parks Community website at <https://parkscommunity.org.uk/> which includes two very useful resources.

Firstly the 'Better Friends Strength Checker' – which is a self-assessment tool that helps green space groups reflect and strengthen.

Secondly the site includes a number of case studies and 'How to' guides which are a great resource for volunteer groups at all stages of their development.



## WILD ABOUT GARDENS

RHS 'Wild About Gardens' is back for 2021 and this year we're wild about... **beetles!**



Working in partnership with The Wildlife Trusts, Wild About Gardens aims to get the nation gardening for wildlife and this year we're asking you to help **Bring Back Beetles**.

There are over 4,000 species of beetle in the UK alone! Beetles are a vital part of any wildlife garden. They will munch on garden insects like aphids and snails, whilst acting as food for our larger garden visitors such as hedgehogs and birds, but sadly they are under threat. Visit the Wild About Gardens website at <https://www.wildaboutgardens.org.uk/> to learn more about our brilliant beetles, and take a pledge to support them in your green space.

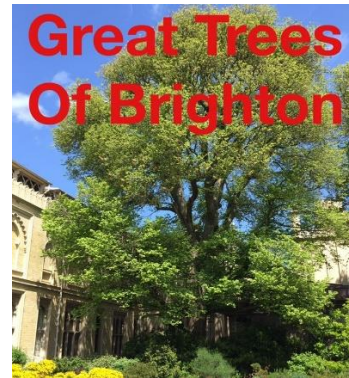
## BRIGHTON & HOVE'S SPECIAL TREES

Brighton & Hove are well known for many things but not for their trees. Now local residents can access some of the city's best trees at <https://tici.me/Brighton/headlines/13814/view>. Sixty of the City's most interesting trees have been uploaded onto an app so that they can be more easily located, enjoyed and celebrated.



Forum committee member, Vivienne Barton was inspired to share her love of trees when she saw a copy of the Great Trees of London Map, at a London tree exhibition last March 2020, 'Suddenly I was seized with the desire to try and create a similar map for Brighton', she says. 'With the help of a small group of volunteers, the project took shape during lockdown. We couldn't have done it without support from Brighton's Elm tree expert, Peter Bourne and members of the London Urban Tree festival which runs again this year from 15-20 May – see at <https://urbantreefestival.org/>

Last year the festival featured the first 20 special Brighton trees and this year it will feature a further 40 plus a webinar with Vivienne, Peter and others talking about how they went about finding the trees. 'We want to go on adding to the app. There are lots more special trees we just didn't get round to identifying,' says Vivienne. 'Some of them are unique to Brighton, in other words they don't exist anywhere else in the world! That's extraordinary and worth celebrating. we're hoping to create a map as well, if we can find a small sum of money to get it printed'.



If you would like to get involved with the Special Trees initiative, please contact Vivienne at [larkfieldway@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:larkfieldway@hotmail.co.uk)

## CARDEN HILL TREE PLANTING

During February and March 2021, City Parks Rangers and newly appointed Tree Planting Officers planted and staked over 2,000 native tree and shrub whips on Carden Hill. Covid-19 restrictions meant we were sadly unable to involve local volunteers at that time.

We are beginning to plan for Phase 2 which we hope, Covid-19 restrictions allowing, will be able to take place this coming winter. We will be looking to establish a local volunteer group over the summer months to help us achieve this goal – anyone interested in joining should Email [cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/libraries-leisure-and-arts/carden-hill-woodland-planting>

Nick Lane  
CityParks Ranger

## CARBON NEUTRAL COMMONWEALTH TREES!



Thousands of acres of forest will be created in and around Birmingham under plans to make the 2022 [Commonwealth Games](#) in the city carbon neutral.

In an announcement to mark 500 days to the start of the Games, organisers pledged carbon-offsetting initiatives including the creation of 2,022 acres of forest and 72 mini-forests, each the size of a tennis court, to be created in urban areas across the West Midlands.

Each mini-forest will be linked to one of the nations and territories competing at the Games, to be held between 28 July and 8 August next year. It will be the first time the games are set to be carbon neutral.



## **REWILDING OUR SEABED**

Damaging trawl fishing has been banned in more than 100 square miles of seabed off Sussex to help once vast kelp forests recover.

A new bylaw has been approved which will prohibit trawling year round over large areas along the Sussex coast to help underwater seaweed forests regenerate.

It follows a campaign to protect kelp, supported by Sir David Attenborough who described the approval of the new bylaw as a “landmark decision” for the management of UK coastal waters. Attenborough said: “Sussex’s remarkable kelp forests will now have a chance to regenerate and provide a home for hundreds of species, creating an oasis of life off the coast, enhancing fisheries, and sequestering carbon in our fight against climate change.”

For more information visit <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/22/trawl-fishing-ban-off-sussex-coast-aims-to-restore-seaweed-forests>

## **BRIGHTON ROADSIDE VERGES PARTNERSHIP**

Over 97% of Britain's ancient flower rich meadows have been lost since the 1930s. But nationwide, there are around 200,000 hectares of road verges. So this can give the councils and highway authorities who manage these a chance to redress the balance.

Highway verges currently support over 700 species of wild flowers nationally, including 87 threatened with extinction. They can act as wildlife corridors, linking other areas of habitat, as well as providing a haven for pollinators and other species, and for people, a daily contact with nature.

Legally, the only reason for councils to mow verges is to allow access and visibility on the public highway. Furthermore, there is a legal duty for local authorities to have regard for biodiversity in everything they do.

The Brighton Roadside Verges Partnership is a developing group looking at how we can bring more biodiversity to our roadside verges, aimed at bringing together people already working in areas such as Withdean and Goldstone.

What are your views on cutting verges less? Let the Forum know by Emailing them at [bhgsforum@gmail.com](mailto:bhgsforum@gmail.com) – all your comments will be passed on to the Verges Partnership.

For more information look at Plantlife's road verge campaign at - <https://plantlife.love-wildflowers.org.uk/roadvergecampaign>

And read their Good Verge Guide at <https://www.plantlife.org.uk/uk/our-work/publications/good-verge-guide-different-approach-managing-our-waysides-and-verges>

## MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

Many thanks to the groups that sent in the following updates. Members have fed back that they love to hear what other groups have been up to. To find the contact details for all our member groups, visit <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/friends-of-groups/>

### Racehill Community Orchard

I'd like to let you know about what's been happening on Racehill Community Orchard. Earlier this month, we planted two new memorial fruit trees for two families who had lost loved ones at an early age. Another family adopted an existing tree as a memorial for deceased relatives.

Despite the Covid restrictions and lack of volunteer help, we are on top of all the scrub bashing and the orchard is blooming. There are so many daffodils and the cherry plum blossom is thick. There are carpets of sweet violets – more than I've ever seen before. Over the past 12 months, the orchard has been so well used and enjoyed and discovered by so many new people. It certainly is thriving. We are debating on getting a couple of bee-hives on site too.



Kirsty Sloman  
Racehill Community Orchard  
[contact@brightonpermaculture.org.uk](mailto:contact@brightonpermaculture.org.uk)

## Regency Square Area Society (RSAS) Gardening Group

Our sponsor, the Regency Square Area Society, has devised a four year fund-raising plan for reviving the top garden in Regency Square. The plan is that the volunteer group will replant one border each autumn for four years, starting in autumn 2021.

We've learnt that spring planting is too much of a gamble – an early heat wave and high winds, such as we had in 2020, desiccate anything planted in spring. The plan has been submitted to CityParks for approval. If we get the go ahead, the work in Regency Square this spring and summer will partly be in preparation for the autumn: assessing which plants to retain and drawing up a planting plan.

Even if we don't get the go ahead, we'll continue to weed and tidy in Regency, Russell and Clarence squares. Brambles and pellitory wall plant are pests in all three gardens, but we've also got Japanese knotweed in Russell Square and mass outbreaks of nightshade and mallow in Regency Square.

Weeding feels like a waste of time if all you do is create bare patches for more weeds, but sometimes nature offers you a useful gift: last autumn, yarrow seeded itself in the grass verges in Regency Square. Two of us transplanted some into the borders, where it was so happy it immediately flowered.

And another surprise gift: one of the Regency Square residents has donated 200 litres of surplus manure for the garden borders. Spreading manure will be one of our first jobs as soon as City Parks confirms that our group can reconvene.

Gill Wales

RSAS gardening group

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





## Nurture Through Nature and FareShare Sussex Collaboration

We are very excited to announce that we are collaborating with FareShare Sussex to help deliver our fresh produce to those in food poverty. We are expanding, with a new allotment in our care and planting already started. All the food grown here will be delivered by FareShare's electric cargo bike, meaning this new opportunity will add very little to our carbon footprint.



While clearing the allotment ready to start our FareShare collaboration we happened to find a bath... instead of wasting it we decided to repurpose it as a polytunnel irrigation system! It collects water from the tunnel then waters seedlings via a timer.



<http://nurturethroughnature.org/>

## Stanford & Cleveland Community Garden

The lockdown period demonstrated the great need for green spaces, particularly in urban environments. Our garden was once part of a very wide road which was narrowed for traffic calming and now provides a beautiful green space instead of ugly black tarmac. Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden volunteers continued to tend the garden during the lockdown periods working alone or in twos. We were still able to work as a team sharing tasks and ideas even if this had to be online. We are very pleased to now be able to work in a group of six, following social distancing rules. Working in the garden during the pandemic has really helped to promote our mental and physical wellbeing and given so much joy to our local community.

Recently we were invited to contribute a short written account and digital photographs to an RHS digital archive at the RHS Lindley Library that will document what it was like for our community group to garden during the first national Covid-19 lockdown of 2020. One of our volunteers also participated in a focus group for a research project on growing spaces and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brighton. This was organised by the School of Law, Politics and Sociology at the University of Sussex. The project gathered evidence on how different legal arrangements for governing urban growing space have shaped community experiences and resilience capacities during the COVID-19 pandemic.



We were thrilled to be able to take part in both these projects and glad that value of community gardening is being recognised and being given a much higher profile.

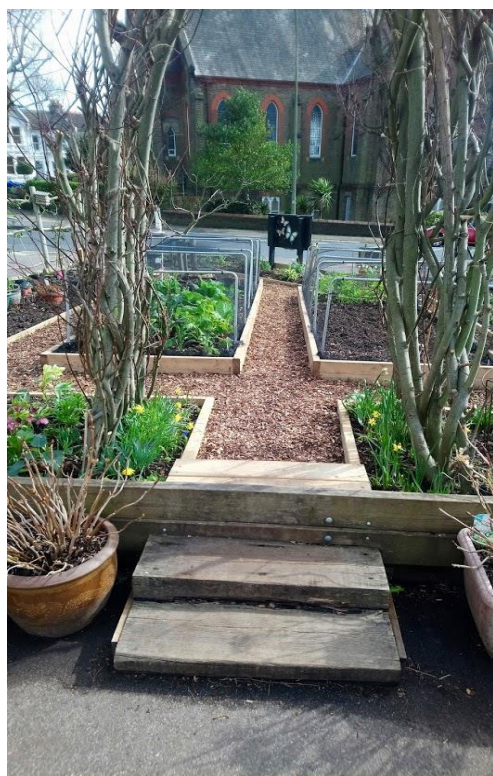
On a more practical note during the first few months of this year we renewed the wood on our raised beds, the edging around the borders and also added new wood chippings to the paths. We are very grateful to the council tree pruners for giving us a huge pile of chippings from some local trees. We grow vegetables in our two central raised beds and are hoping to continue to donate some of this produce to a food bank.

As we do not have our own mains water supply (just a water butt attached to the Montessori School) and the last few summers have been so dry, we need any future planting to be more drought tolerant but also attractive to pollinators. The online webinars booked through the Garden House in Warleigh Road - Rosy Hardy 'Right Plant Right Place' and Steve Edney 'Plants for the Dry Garden' - are a source of inspiration. Hopefully these ideas will help to reduce the amount of watering we need to do and so save a valuable resource.

We are entering South and South East In Bloom again this year (It's Your Neighbourhood and Our Community) so we will be working very hard to make the garden as beautiful as possible to gain a good result.

We are having our annual Plant Sale on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 11am - 4pm to raise funds for the upkeep of the garden so we are busy growing annual flowers, perennials, vegetables and herbs at home. We have also split and potted up some of the existing plants in the garden. Do come along on the day for some bargains, we would love to see you!

<https://www.facebook.com/StanfordAvenueCommunityGarden/>



## Friends of Hollingbury & Burstead Woods

In between the 'lockdowns' a socially distanced group of six managed to plant the wild daffodil bulbs we had ordered and some members have been collecting litter on their walks through the woods, but with our volunteers not able to carry out any work for more than a year there are a lot of outstanding tasks to attend to.

However, it is not only the pandemic that is causing us problems in getting back to our conservation work, but Ash Dieback disease. In 2012 the spores of this fungal pathogen were found on Ash trees in the south-east and it has now spread to all counties of England. It is thought that the disease arrived on imported nursery stock from Europe, but the spores could also have been blown across the channel. Unfortunately, some of the Ash trees in our woods have already succumbed and others showing signs of the disease. Our Ranger has inspected some of the areas where we were going to work and declared them off limits because of the proximity of suspect weakened trees. As there is a high percentage of Ash in our woods we are seeking further clarification from the Council's arboriculture team who we hope will carry out a survey and assess the situation.

This of course presents us with a problem in planning future work sessions so we are looking at other areas where we can work safely such as the chalk butterfly banks and the hedges. We've also asked our Ranger if she can ask about the viability of creating another chalk butterfly bank between the woods and the reservoir, that would certainly keep us busy!

However, it is looking almost certain that we will lose a large proportion of our Ash trees which will dramatically change the dynamic and look of the woods, but we must stay positive. Our group was set up in response to the Great Storm of October 1987 which toppled the magnificent Beech trees leaving only a handful standing. Our group rose to the challenge and embarked on an extensive replanting programme, increased biodiversity by introducing more varieties of trees, created glades and planted hedgerows and wildflowers.

And in September we hope to have a celebration for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our group, where, when or how who knows but we'll do our best to do something!

When the full extent of the disease is known, we will once again draw up plans and work with the Council and our volunteers to restore and improve our woodlands.

**We've done it once and we can do it again.**

Jill Spedding

Membership Secretary

<http://www.fhbw.org.uk/>

