



Autumn Newsletter - October 2022

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.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter. Since our last Newsletter there have been two significant member events. Firstly our 'Going Wild in Brighton & Hove' Spring Seminar event on 27th June which received great feedback and about which there is an article later in this newsletter; and secondly the latest Update/Q&A Zoom meeting with CityParks senior managers, which have been very well received and are set to continue. The Forum has also launched a new member group map on its website to help identify groups by location and potentially connect them with new volunteers. Please read on to find out more.

MEMBER UPDATE/Q&A MEETINGS WITH CITY PARKS.

Feedback from the first two Member Update/Q&A meetings with B&H CityParks Senior Managers Paul Campbell and Mark Syrett (13th April & 9th August) has been excellent. These meetings reflect the healthy partnership between CityParks and the green space volunteer community. They give an opportunity for all members to hear the latest updates from CityParks and to ask questions. The meetings will happen every 4 months with the next being:

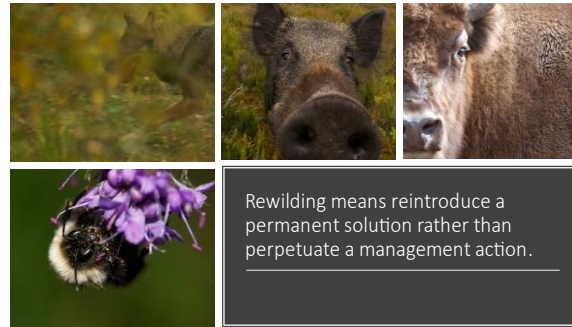
Tuesday 6th December (6pm) – Green Space Volunteer Update/Q&A Zoom meeting with B&H CityParks Project Team.

Please pencil this into your diary. The Zoom link for this meeting is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86208119359> Full details (including this link) will be emailed to all members nearer the date.

FORUM SPRING SEMINAR ‘GOING WILD IN BRIGHTON & HOVE’ (27th June 2022)

For those that missed it, this was a very interesting evening with presentations from three excellent speakers followed by an open forum.

Dr Chris Sandom from the University of Sussex considered the history of British landscape and the plants and animals within it. He talked about the point in history that re-wilding projects attempt to replicate; and how this may vary from site to site. He went on to talk about the constituents of habitats, such as the large herbivores which may be introduced. He referred to examples such as the Allerdale Wilderness Reserve in Scotland and the Knepp Estate here in Sussex. Applying the theory even closer to home, he shared his ideas for rewilding his own garden, with photographs of its development over the last two years.



David Larkin, Brighton and Hove City Council’s Conservation Manager, enlarged upon the theoretical, practical and administrative challenges of rewilding, referring to a site to the north of our city, the former Waterhall golf course. Sprinkled with references to landscape history and landscape management theory, he outlined the processes which had to be gone through to achieve agreement to the scheme and the practical challenges of making it happen, including extensive surveys, public consultation and engagement, and the seeking of councillors’ agreement.

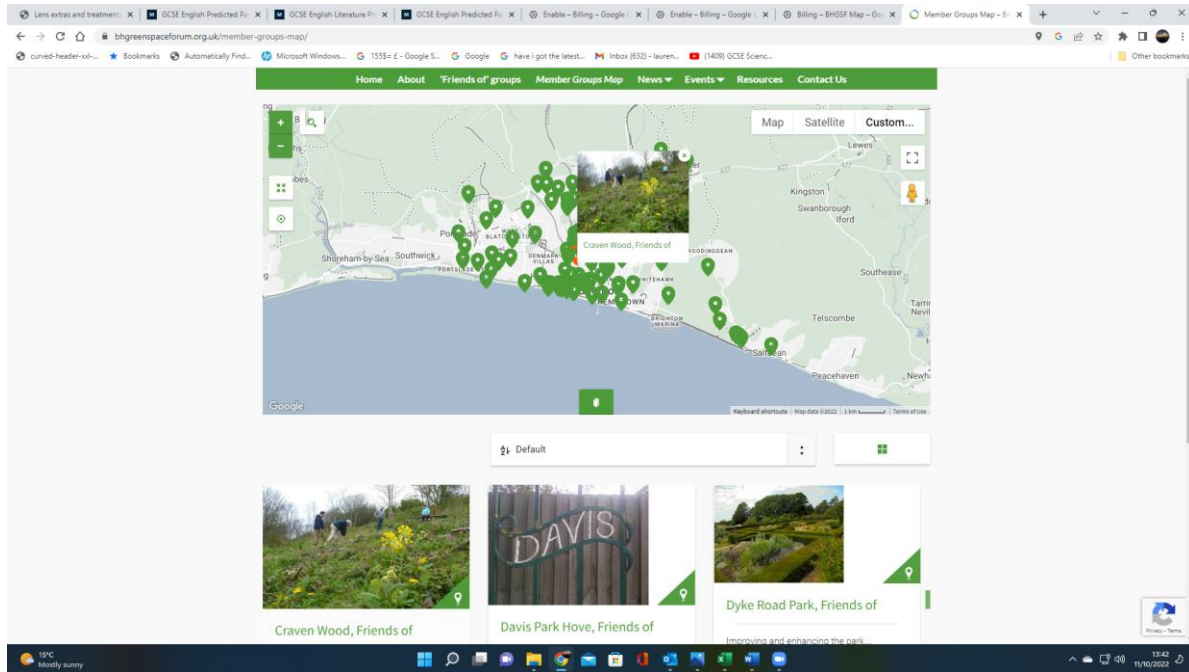
Paul Gorringe, the lucky man who has been appointed as Waterhall’s Ranger completed the presentations with a view from the ground. He looked at the practicalities of ‘making it happen’, the work with volunteers carrying out ecological surveys, ‘scrub bashing’ and creating access improvements, and the continuing engagement with the public. He described the cutting-edge stock management techniques of GPS collars, enabling grazing of particular areas to take place by brown Sussex cattle without having to use fencing, everything being controlled from, you guessed, a smartphone app!

The presentations used at the event can be found by following this link - <http://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/SpringSeminar2022V1.pptx.pdf>

James Newmarch

MEMBER GROUPS MAP

Our new Member Groups Map can be seen at <https://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/member-groups-map/> We are hoping it will help identify member groups by location and potentially connect them with new volunteers. Please have a look for your group and email us at bhgsforum@gmail.com if anything needs updating?



VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE TREE



Five huge oaks and a rowan that is arched like a 'portal into another world' are just some of the trees in the running for 'Tree of the Year'.

The Woodland Trust has announced 12 trees that make up the shortlist for their Tree of the Year contest and now people will be able to vote for their favourite.

The shortlist was chosen by a panel of experts from the charity's list of very old and important trees, the Ancient Tree Inventory (ATI).

The public can now vote for their favourite tree to win the Tree of the Year competition for 2022, with the winner competing for the UK in the European Tree of the Year contest next year. Vote for Tree of the Year – 2022 at the following link

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/tree-of-the-year/>

URBAN TREE CHALLENGE FUND – An update from Mark Syrett

Following last year's successful 138 Tree Urban Tree Challenge Fund bids, 101 trees were planted last season with 37 due this Autumn. All were registered on the Queens Green Canopy Register by each group for posterity. Local school children helped mulch Queens Park, this was followed up with children being encouraged to bring water with them to keep the trees alive whenever they visited. This was the highlight of the campaign, as the tree's water bags rarely emptied between scheduled fills!



For next season 294 have been applied for and at the time of writing 4 /4 groups so far have been successful (Preston Park, Knoll Park, Saltdean residents and Patcham Gardening group), totalling 170 trees to date, which are being ordered now to ensure supply. Planting will be via contractors to start to gear up the process. We are eagerly awaiting the outcomes from St Nicholas church, Happy Mountain, Dorothy Stringer School and The Level, which is a potentially impressive bid, addressing both flooding, noise and delivering colour!

King Charles has also kept open the Queens Green Canopy register so all new groups can also record their actions as part of the legacy. Next year we will be applying as one bid via the Council as we were allowed to this year. This allows the onerous application process to be bypassed by the last lucky groups who still wish to plant; equally we will also be able to work with smaller than min 23 tree numbers by aggregating them all into one bid. Let us know if you still have an area that needs planting? Volunteers will still be required to help mulch and water to keep them alive in these hottest of Summers we are now having!

If your group wants to register an interest, please e mail Mark.Syrett@brighton-hove.gov.uk BHCC will support you through the process.

CITY CENTRE VOLUNTEERS WORKING TOGETHER

Volunteers involved in some of our City Centre parks and green spaces have begun to meet periodically to share ideas and concerns.

Discussions initially focussed on the need to bring the Level cafe and toilet facilities back into use. But the conversations expanded to cover a whole range of issues including the need for a new future plan and strategy for City Centre parks, tree planting and replacement, community use and access, maintenance, events management, and the links with tourism and cultural events. There have been questions about the police hub set up at the Level, safety issues, and anti-social behaviour.

Our historic leafy spaces enrich the lives and wellbeing of our communities and we must commit to preserving them for future generations. If anyone would like to get involved in our discussions, or support our aims to protect and preserve green spaces in the heart of our City, please email us at m.e.winder@gmail.com

QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY – TREE PLANTING IN MEMORY OF HER MAJESTY



The Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) initiative was created to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. At the request of His Majesty The King, it is continuing until the end of March 2023 to give people the opportunity to plant trees in memoriam, to honour Her Majesty.

The QGC is a simple idea to encourage us all to get involved and plant a tree in gardens, on farms and in public spaces within communities where everyone can enjoy them. The QGC is creating a living legacy with over a million trees planted across the nation during the first planting season to March 2022. The extension of the QGC initiative will build on this legacy and serve as a lasting tribute to Her Majesty's extraordinary service.

The QGC East Sussex team would love you to get planting trees in the green spaces with which you are involved. Anyone planting a tree can take part by pinning it to the national Queen's Green Canopy digital map. Most gardens and green spaces can find room for some kind of tree - including fruiting and ornamental varieties.

To find out more about the QGC and to register your tree on the digital map, visit the site at <https://www.ruralsussex.org.uk/what-we-do/other/queens-green-canopy/>

ROSEHILL RESIDENTS

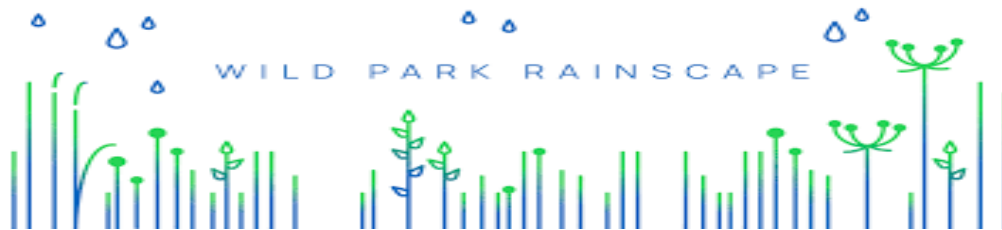


Residents at Rose Hill Court seniors housing scheme in Brighton transformed their communal garden during the pandemic by planting wildflowers, meadow plants and trees. These efforts have been recognised as the wildlife garden has been awarded 'highly commended' by judges in the recent BIG Biodiversity Challenge awards – Community Engagement and Habitat Creation Project of the Year.

In addition to planting, residents added bird baths and installed bird boxes, hedgehog shelters, rainwater butts, compost bins, vegetable plots and stopped mowing the grass. This has led to a significant increase in wildlife such as bees, butterflies, craneflies, crickets and a wide variety of birds. The BIG Biodiversity Challenge awards are run by the Construction Industry Research and Information. For more information see the following link.

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2022/rose-hill-court-garden-nominated-national-biodiversity-award>

THE WILD PARK RAINSCAPE



The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) has won funding to improve a small area in Wild Park, creating an attractive natural landscape. Designed around several shallow planted basins, known as ‘rainscapes’ which can hold water during heavy rainfall, it will help to reduce pollution and improve the area for people and nature.

The current drainage system takes highway surface water from a section of the A27 at the junction with Lewes Road, where it is held in a balancing pond near The Keep before being transferred via a 1km long pipe to soakaways adjacent to Wild Park, presenting a direct pollution risk to the aquifer.

The new system upgrades the pond to become the first element of an innovative ‘treatment train’ incorporating floating wetlands and a new layout to slow and treat the water. The pipe is intercepted along The Parkway, and the outlet is linked to vegetated swales (shallow channels) and basins in the park, designed to slow and treat polluted water before allowing clean water to filter in to the chalk naturally.

The team has been out and about in the area over the past six months talking to residents and community groups about the plans. They have completed all the background work to check out the technical feasibility of this (engineering, hydrology, geology), and this has informed the final concept design which they will be submitting to the South Downs National Park Authority for planning consent in October.

They are keen to support local people in setting up a ‘Friends of Wild Park’ for people to get more involved in the scheme as it progresses.

The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) brings together the South Downs National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, Southern Water and Brighton & Hove City Council and other partners to work together to protect our aquifer: the source of our drinking water in the city.



If you want to stay up to date, please email The Aquifer Partnership team at wildpark@southdowns.gov.uk or follow them on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

For more information, please see the following links.

<https://wearetap.org.uk/wild-park-rainscape/>

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2022/wild-park-rainscape-have-your-say>

RHS SOUTH & SOUTH EAST IN BLOOM AWARDS 2022



Congratulations to the following local groups who won RHS awards this year.

Rottingdean in Bloom – Parishes in Bloom – Gold Award and South East Winner

Stanford & Cleveland Community Garden – Our Community - Gold Award

St Wulfran's Churchyard Ovingdean – Churchyard – Silver Gilt Award

FO Brunswick Square & Terrace – It's Your Neighbourhood – Improving

FO Palmeira & Adelaide – It's Your Neighbourhood – Advancing

The Triangle Plot – It's Your Neighbourhood – Advancing

FO St Ann's Well Gardens – It's Your Neighbourhood – Outstanding

Norfolk Square Garden Project – It's Your Neighbourhood – Outstanding

Woodingdean Community Association – It's Your Neighbourhood - Outstanding

Member groups are encouraged to participate in these RHS awards, particularly 'It's Your Neighbourhood' (IYN) which is free to enter. IYN is a grassroots community gardening campaign helping people to make lasting improvements to their local area.

Any group can enter the IYN award scheme, the only proviso's being there must be hands on gardening (or conservation effort) and must be composed of local people. IYN is not competitive, entries are visited by a friendly assessor who will visit between mid-June and mid-July and spend up to an hour on site. The assessor will provide advice and a report highlighting the successes and advising on what might be improved.

RHS IT'S YOUR
NEIGHBOURHOOD

For more information on RHS South & South East in Bloom and IYN please visit their website at <https://www.sseib.com/campaignspt/its-your-neighbourhood/> The Forum will write to all members once entries are invited for 2023.

TREE LOVERS GET A SPECIAL THANK YOU

We Love Trees – was the title of a quirky celebration event attended by dozens of volunteers from local green spaces groups. Paul Campbell, Head of Parks Projects & Strategy introduced Caroline Lucas, Brighton Pavilion MP who paid tribute to the people who raise funds, support, develop, and care for trees in Brighton and Hove. She said she was immensely proud of the city’s internationally recognised tree collection and the work done here to protect it.

She told people that the Council has increased its investment in trees so that the tree population is not just surviving but thriving as part of the wider biosphere. They have recruited a number of new roles including a new full-time Arboriculture Manager, a full-time Ash Dieback Coordinator and a full-time Tree Enforcement Officer.



Funding identified or secured over the last 24 months includes over £360,000 of external and internal capital funding for tree planting and stump replacement, and £1million funding from the Council’s Carbon Neutral Fund for street tree planting and the planting of new woodlands over the next five years. This funding has already enabled the Tree Planting Officers and the wider team, in planting 425 trees and 2530 saplings.

Caroline highlighted several special trees including the famous, Preston Park Elm twin (photo 1) which was identified in the Queen Elizabeth ‘Ancient Canopy list’ of 70 important trees in the UK. She talked about the special English Elm trees in the Royal Pavilion Gardens (photo 2) where the event took place and the ancient Yew trees in Stanmer church yard.

The event was organised by members of the Council’s Tree Forum who include Vivienne Barton, our own Forum committee member; Penny Hudd from Plant -a- Postcode and Paul Campbell, Head of Parks Projects & Strategy.



CORPORATE & BUSINESS VOLUNTEERING WITH CITYPARKS RANGERS

Most of you reading this newsletter, will probably already volunteer with CityParks in some form or another. Working with local friends of, community groups or groups like the CityParks Ranger volunteers.

I would like to use this space to highlight another type of volunteering that the Rangers are involved with. Many companies nowadays use their 'team building' or 'giving something back' days to carry out conservation tasks. In the coming weeks we will be working with American Express, Southern Water, Legal and General, Avison Young, Vodafone and we'll also be working with our long-term collaborator in conservation, Responsible Travel (pictured below).



The autumn and winter period from our point of view is the best time of year for conservation activities with large groups, the best time for chopping stuff down, because there are no birds nesting and the best time for tree planting because roots can get a good soaking over winter.

I mention this here, because it is highly likely as a reader that you also have an interest in conservation and volunteering and it's possible you may wish to do even more (in work time!). If you work locally, you may wish to highlight this 'opportunity' to your employer. If you can get together a group of between 8 and 15 people and would like us to organise a conservation day for yourself and your colleagues, please get in touch at cityparks.volunteers@brighton-hove.gov.uk

BRIGHTON & HOVE WILDLIFE FORUM



BHWF has a new website with lots of info about what is going on and things you can do at home to help nature. Visit www.bhwf.org.uk to check it out.

BHWF continues to support BHCC's **Wilder Verges** project. In late summer we completed surveys of the 25 pilot verges selected for a targeted mowing regime to boost biodiversity. It was lovely to see first-hand wildlife thriving in areas which previously would have been almost devoid of life. Accompanying likely benefits of the project were cost savings, reduced carbon output, reduced risk of RSI injuries to maintenance workers, all while making our city's spaces more vibrant and interesting, connecting people with nature on their doorstep.

On Surrenden Road, a comparison between intensively mown verges and those managed for the Wilder Verges project revealed, in addition to a greater abundance and variety of flowering plants, the pilot verges supported 26 different species of animal, including butterflies, bees, beetles, spiders and birds, compared to just 2 species supported on the intensively managed verges, the ubiquitous Black Ant and a passing Green Bottle Fly.

Given the scale of the expanse of our city's verges and how they connect our green spaces, the contribution to biodiversity this project has already had is fantastic. It is hoped that the reach and ambition of the project will increase year on year, and the more positive support the council hear from the public the more likely this will happen. So please email your local councillors and City Parks to let them know!

In September, BHWF members met at Whitehawk Hill for their annual walk. Led by plant ecologist, and member of Friends of Whitehawk Hill, Richard Bickers. The group was treated to a fascinating morning learning about the countless wonderful chalk grassland specialist plants found on the hill including Round-headed Rampion and Autumn Lady's Tresses.

There was also a fleeting glimpse of a Long-tailed Blue Butterfly. Butterfly enthusiasts travel from all corners of the country (and beyond) to visit Whitehawk Hill for a chance to see this lepidopteran at the very northern tip of its range. This walk was all the more poignant due to the future development threat from the housing allocation placed upon this designated Local Nature Reserve. So many of our city's green spaces are under threat from development and the role of BHWF and BHGSF is likely to become ever more important over the coming years. The national government's policies are becoming ever less supportive of a sustainable future for nature and humanity. We must coordinate efforts to push back as much as we can locally and create a liveable future for generations to come. One where nature and our community live alongside one another to their mutual benefit.

Kim Greaves

MEMBER GROUP UPDATES

Many thanks to the member 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/> or see our new member group map at <https://bhgreenspaceforum.org.uk/member-groups-map/>

INTEGRATING NATURE AND HERITAGE ON BRIGHTON SEAFRONT

The Madeira Drive Green wall - the only Local Wildlife Site of its kind in the UK - is now firmly integrated into the proposals to regenerate Madeira Drive.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the planting of the original wall. Whilst over 100 specimens of these old Japanese spindle plants survive, the wall is now home to over 100 species of flowering plant, and a range of birds and invertebrates.

Forum member group Building Green has been working with the Council for over a decade to ensure that the importance of this green feature is recognised, protected, and enhanced for the future.



The planning application (including a very informative video) can be seen at <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2022/madeira-terrace-restoration-planning-application-published> and is now live for the first phase of restoration of Madeira Terrace.

We are pleased that the green wall is celebrated and prioritised. The aim is to protect existing planting, especially the old Japanese spindle, and in time restore the green wall to its former extent - almost a nautical mile from the Sun Terrace to Duke's Mound. Together with the improvements at Duke's Mound, Black Rock and the vegetated shingle habitat, this part of East Brighton promises to be a richer place for people and wildlife.

Work is underway on a film to celebrate this work.

Contact: info@building-green.org.uk or visit <https://building-green.org.uk>

James Farrell

BENFIELD WILDLIFE & CONSERVATION GROUP UPDATE

Preserving and protecting Benfield Hill Local Nature Reserve

Some of our volunteers have been working all summer on Benfield Hill Local Nature Reserve. Much of our focus is through hands-on activities. Indeed, if left unchecked and not maintained, this wonder of the South Downs would quickly become overgrown and lose its unique characteristics.

To prevent this, our volunteers help all year round (every Tuesday 10am – 2pm) to remove invasive species such as Bramble, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Dogwood, and Privet. By limiting the advance of scrub, the wildflowers, insects, and birds which call this place home, will continue to thrive.



We had our annual flower walk in July, attended by 12 people and we counted over 70 species of wildflower, including many indicator species of pristine chalk Grassland such as Milkwort, Kidney Vetch, Dropwort, Lady's Bedstraw, Fairy Flax and many more.

Sadly the glow-worms were down in number this year and we are considering what to do to help them thrive. A real plus is that the Dormice are doing really well. We have had 6 nests of young this year so far and 10 animals on each of the June and July monitoring visits.

We are starting our autumn /winter programme of work from 27th September. Given its valuable status, Benfield Hill was recognised as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), by the Council (BHCC) in 1993, the first in the city. We are planning a celebration to commemorate our 30th anniversary next year. We are also aiming to recruit more volunteers, including younger people and are planning weekend task days on Sunday 23rd October and Saturday 26th November from 10.00 till 13.00.

For more info contact Sally Hubbard on 07941 288625 or email benfieldlnr@gmail.com

Follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/BenfieldWildlifeandConservationGroup/>

Sally Hubbard
Chair BWCG

STANFORD AND CLEVELAND COMMUNITY GARDEN

Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden volunteers have been concentrating on some fundraising, including a plant sale for garden maintenance, and opening for the Macmillan Coastal Gardens Trail. We were thrilled to be awarded a Gold 'Our Community' award and Outstanding for 'It's Your Neighbourhood' by RHS South and South East in Bloom. Many congratulations to all the other In Bloom groups who work so hard in their green spaces.

We are back to post covid full working force and managed to produce a wide range of flowers and vegetables, with an overall good return, that required a lot of TLC to survive the drought. Ever mindful of our lack of a mains water supply and concern for the environment, we planted accordingly but still had a very full-on watering rota to ensure the garden flourished. We were pleased to be able to offer some produce to the local church group, pull carrots and pick raspberries with curious visiting children.

On a very sad note, the large and beautiful elm tree that shaded the planters we created on the other side of the road in 2019 succumbed to Dutch elm disease and had to be cut down in July. This has dramatically changed the physical landscape and look of the garden and means we may have to rethink the planting as we had planted specific shade loving plants and now of course there is no shade.



On a more positive note, we were lucky enough to be nominated by Councillor Leo Littman for a plant voucher from the Brighton and Hove Queen's Jubilee Planting Scheme. We chose mainly shrubs and perennial plants so these will be a lovely memorial to the Queen.

With the sudden arrival of autumn, the garden continues to provide colour and interest, particularly the 'signature' sunflowers which always draw attention and comment from the many visitors and passers-by. It is so apparent that the garden continues to be such a great community asset and well worth all the effort.



PATCHAM GARDENING NETWORK



The newly formed Patcham Gardening Network is a group of local gardening enthusiasts who meet once a month to share and enhance their gardening knowledge. We are building a community for local gardeners of all abilities to indulge their passion further and are getting involved in local horticultural projects to keep Patcham looking beautiful. Our meetings are held on the last Wednesday of each month at the Ladies Mile Function Hall, where we invite speakers to share their gardening wisdom.

This year we have enjoyed Sue Craske discussing ‘how green are our gardens?’ We heard from Pete Wood, head gardener at One Garden Brighton, about how the award winning walled garden was brought back to life during the Pandemic on a shoestring budget, with minimal staff. Pete the Pond demonstrated the fundamental importance of wildlife in all gardens great and small; and Kate Bradbury joined us to talk about how she gardens in harmony with nature in her Portslade garden.

In October, we are going social with a ‘getting to know you’ event, where local gardeners can meet each other and talk all things gardening. We are an affiliated member of the Royal Horticultural Society and are organising a trip to Wisley, on October 15th. We are planning more garden visits for 2023, especially to gardens not always open to the public.

Joe Whelan, head gardener at Nymans is speaking at our November meeting and we are running two Christmas wreath workshops with local florist Tony Dunn.

Membership is open to all at £20 per year, details can be found on our website:
<https://www.patchamgardeningnetwork.uk/>

We look forward to seeing you!

Nicola McGinty

Secretary, Patcham Gardening Network

REGENCY SQUARE AREA SOCIETY GARDENING GROUP

Inspired by the Green Spaces Forum Spring Seminar, we're experimenting with wildflower planting in Regency Square this autumn. Our experiments won't be in the form of wildflower meadows. Our aim is to prevent our borders looking like wastelands in mid-summer – see parched borders photo..



After the second significant heatwave in three years, we have to assume that heatwaves and drought are going to be a regular occurrence and plan accordingly. Some parts of the Regency Square garden seem little affected by heat and drought. At the top of the garden and in the pocket plots below the steps, shrubs do little more than wilt, then bounce back as soon as it rains. But the central sections of the garden turn to dust every summer, we think because of what lies beneath: the underground car park, generating heat from below. Some borders are also bounded by south-facing retaining walls which, according to experts on Gardeners' Question Time, act as storage heaters.

Obviously, it's a case of right plant, right place. Cityparks are encouraging us to keep trying and to be patient. So, we're going to experiment with species that thrive on the cliffs at Black Rock. If Valerian grows out of cracks in the pavement, surely it can survive in Regency Square?



Gill Wales
RSAS gardening group leader.

END