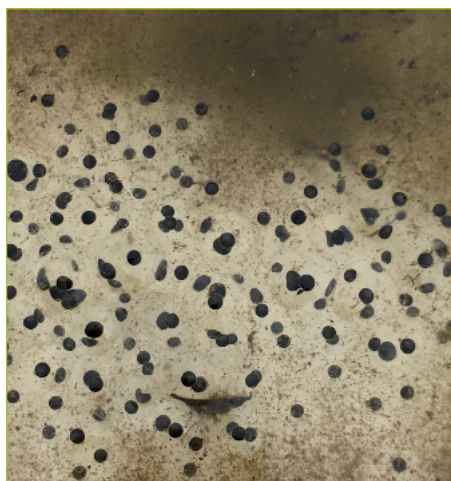


Nightingale News

For the Friends of Nightingale Garden

April/May 2022



Exploring the garden - learning & growing together

As part of our Learn and Grow Together project, we have scheduled some informal sessions throughout the year to explore nature in the garden and also do some simple gardening together. These are family friendly but everyone is welcome. Always free, with no booking.

We held the first one in February half-term holiday,



Paper potters busy in the garden - and sugar snap peas growing well at home

which was frog- and newt-tastic (see photo top left). Our second, in early March, coincided with our first frogspawn (photo above) and we also dipped this unusual-for-the-pond dragonfly nymph (see photo top left), which looked like a fat spider but with only six legs. We are varying the days and times of the sessions so more people can join at least one of them - and we are making factsheets for the website so you can also DIY. Even the youngest learners enjoyed pond dipping and sowing seeds to take away.

We are selecting seed varieties for the season, ease of sowing and growing, their taste and colour and also being good for pollinators. Later in the year, we'd like to take cuttings and divide plants. Let us know if you have any requests and if you'd like to volunteer with us. And we will order kinder weather for the next ones. It is not easy sowing seeds in strong winds and with chilly fingers •



Walking onions - looking for a new 'home to roam'

New collaboration: new orchard in the park

In early March, three of our gardeners had a first meeting with the City Council tree team to start to plan a new orchard in the park - to add to the existing fruit trees, replace some overgrown landscaping, and try out some ideas to further increase biodiversity.

This will be led by the Council, who will buy the trees, but it will need community support.

We are gathering ideas now, and there will be a formal

consultation later in the year. We aim to plant from the Autumn and attach some activities to the planting.

The park was created about 60 years ago, from fields. We'd like the new trees, of many kinds beyond just apples, to flourish for the next few generations at least. To grow into large specimens, providing blossom, shade, places to climb - and even some tasty fruit for everyone to enjoy •

Social events: there's a dragon in the garden!

In early February, for Chinese New Year, we welcomed a dragon to the garden, led by garden volunteers Mel and Julia - with lots of young dance assistants and loud drumming. We also shared traditional refreshments, stories, made decorations and learned some cooking skills. And in the sun - although it was quite cold •



In the garden: Mud Monster and Minibeast Mansion re-think

In 2020, Guy and Joe made the mud-monster, when we found we had an excess of 'mud' after the slab work for the veranda. He has given us a lot of pleasure but, recently, has rather suffered from the enthusiasm of small feet - he lost his ears and his eyes kept wandering around the garden. In early March, we retired him... to make a place for a waist-high table, which we think will be more useful for family-friendly activities nearby.

From February, Anne, a new garden volunteer, has been rejuvenating the top of the Minibeast Mansion, which started off as an alpine bed but has been rather neglected over the years. We spent a Scotsdales voucher, won by the Kindness Garden on Wulfstan Way, on some new plants. We transplanted some daffodils given to us by On the Verge Cambridge (see page 5), and it is already looking much better (see photo) •



Re-planting the alpine bed - we are especially looking forward to the pasque flowers.

In the garden: new fruit bushes and caring for the existing ones

In late January, we were gifted three new fruit bushes, lifted from a nearby garden: a boysenberry, honeyberry and tayberry. The honeyberry (*Lonicera caerulea*) is a type of honeysuckle with large berries (see photo) that 'taste like blueberries dipped in honey'.



Honeyberry; photo: J.Parkes.

Sounds very good to me. It grows like a shrub honeysuckle and we will plant it by the willow circle.

The other two are crosses between red raspberries and blackberries - and we already had a loganberry that is similar. It will be good to see which grow and taste best.

So, after a hasty clear out of our rather neglected 'fruit aisle', we now have a long row of soft fruit for nibbling on - from next year, probably. We might grow carrots between them until the bushes are established.

We also pruned and re-organised our blackcurrant bushes, which we will net until harvested by volunteers. The previous week, we had pruned our two redcurrants, which we will probably just leave for birds to eat. It is good to share!

In one of our long raised beds we have two jostaberries, which are a cross between a blackcurrant and a gooseberry. In the Autumn, we had a Sunday afternoon learning session to layer some of the lower branches .

All of these are thornless - so they are much more comfortable for picking and also gardening. We removed our gooseberry bushes to make more space for the blackcurrants. They weren't in a good place or productive and were very spiky - it was nice to give them away to passing garden visitors and volunteers.

An added bonus of growing these bushes, is that we can propagate them to make plants for other places - so even more people can enjoy them.

All but the new donations were grown from cuttings or layers from local gardens or allotments. We like plants for free •

Looking ahead: your ideas and your involvement

We are very keen that the garden design, social events and activities reflect the needs and desires of garden users and garden volunteers.

At the 13 March Spring Planning Meeting of our garden volunteers, we had a guided discussion to gather ideas and also think of ways of taking them forward. Despite the cold and damp, we had a very productive session and we will repeat this next Spring.

We have shared the notes on the garden website and hope they might inspire other garden users - and Friends - send their thoughts through too.

We have also asked the group of local families who regularly meet in the garden for their ideas and are keen to be able to act on them.

These are some of the ideas we gathered from gardeners and local families (see also the update below about the garden kitchen and the fuller list online):

- **'Bring and swap' events** - gardening or nature themed.
- **Produce growing linked with cooking together.** Like pizza herbs.
- **Plants linked with wellbeing** - plants, often herbs, that can be made into herbal teas etc.
- **Gardening skills for all ages** - especially for people new to it and/or gardening without a garden or in

small or rented spaces.

- **Activities that are fun for children**, including those that are messy, not easy to do in small gardens or flats or by busy parents. Ideas included ones that are seasonal and have a sensory focus - smell, taste etc.
- **Easter-linked events** (see page 6).
- **Nature-themed activities**, including ones that focus on mature trees in the garden and park. And ponds.
- **Local history-themed activities**, including stories by people who have lived in the area for many years. They could include the history of the bowling green (the garden website has some information on this).

In general, we tend to be limited by volunteer resources rather than funds, especially people to lead on the planning and delivery of activities. People who have the confidence and/or experience to do this tend to also be very busy with other projects. But, if you'd like to learn how - or gain more experience - we would be delighted to work with you. This can be until you feel more confident or even decide it is not for you. It is surprisingly exhausting volunteering sometimes - but also really rewarding. And you make the best friends.

We could also write for grants, or fundraise in other ways, to pay people to run activities for us - or work with groups who'd like to come in and use the garden. We are always enthusiastic to collaborate •

Siva's garden kitchen and shelter - update

At our March meeting, we discussed the final design details for the new 'kitchen' area in the garden. On 16 March, we met with the first potential contractor for this work, which is being managed by City Council staff.

It will be built between two mature trees, where the wood pile is at the moment and near the club hut. We'd like to be as sustainable as possible and will clad it in untreated UK larch.

We have a name now for it too - wanting to remember Siva, who was

a garden neighbour, good friend and a very enthusiastic community cook. She would have enjoyed using it.

We decided to keep the inside very open, for flexibility, and to use the walls as a rain-proof community noticeboard. We have wanted more noticeboard space for a long time. We can pin copies of this newsletter, alert people to nature sightings and maybe have a little gallery of artworks by the garden community. We'd also like to decorate the inside with some volunteer-made mosaic friezes. And we will add some

windows for light.

Taking advice from Emma J, a new volunteer who is very experienced with cooking in community gardens, we will aim to source one or more stainless-steel topped catering trolleys. To help us make top pizzas but without too much extra soil. But also we can wheel them out of the way when we want to use the area for other activities - like music and performance. We want and need to make sure it is accessible too. All in all, we are very excited about this •

For families: nature-swap poems

We are enjoying our 'nature-swap' poems - especially this owl who flew in for Chinese New Year. Thank you Julia. Maybe you'd like to do one for us over the next few weeks - you just need some chalk pens. The past two poems have been copied from a National Trust book we are enjoying: *I am the seed that grew a tree*, which has a poem for every day of the year. There is a copy in the Cambridgeshire Library collection too •



Five ways to be a CLANGER

CLANG is an acronym for the evidence-based 'five ways to wellbeing'. David Lynch, who leads the monthly wellness walks that start in the garden on Thursday mornings, has helped us think of ways you can CLANG in the garden.

1 | Connect - with other people

Good relationships are important for mental wellbeing, helping to build a sense of belonging and self-worth. They give you an opportunity to share positive experiences, provide emotional support and allow you to support others. Even if you don't have many friends or family

nearby, the garden is a good place to meet people. At events, through volunteering, or just sitting on a bench and making small talk about birdsong, flowers or the weather. And of course you can also join our free, monthly wellbeing walks - here we are in March sunshine!



2 | Learn new skills

Learning also improves mental wellbeing, boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem. It helps to build a sense of purpose and connection with others. Some people like to learn on their own and others prefer to be guided.

The garden is a stimulating place for both. It is full of plants and animals that might be unfamiliar to

you and all have their own stories. You could come to an explore session (see page 1).

The garden volunteers are constantly learning new skills - including from each other. Not just gardening but also construction. They even try a bit of natural dyeing and willow weaving from time to time.

3 | be physically Active

Being active is great for physical health and fitness but also mental wellbeing. It raises self-esteem, helping you to set goals or challenges and to achieve them. It also causes chemical changes in your brain that can help to positively change your mood.

The park and garden are good places to start to be more active,

with lots of benches to rest between walking - or running. Many people use the garden's tarmac path to jog away from muddy paths.

Gardening is a great way to increase physical strength and burn some calories - it is easy to do several hours without noticing it - and you can get pretty flowers to pick and tasty things to eat too!



4 | Notice (be mindful)

Paying attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing helping you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. This 'mindfulness' can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

You can take notice of the world

around you but also how your body feels and your thoughts and feelings. In the garden, this could be the warmth of the sun, the colours of the plants, movement in the pond, scent of herbs and the sound of birds - or children playing. And how they make you feel.

5 | Give to others (being kind)

Giving helps your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and a sense of reward. It doesn't need to be with a present or money. It can be small acts of kindness towards other people, or maybe volunteering in your local community.

In the garden, it might be as

simple as holding the gate open or thanking someone for doing it for you, picking up some litter, or spending time listening to someone you have just met. It could be arranging to meet a friend in the garden - when you can connect, learn, be active and notice your surroundings. Clanging together!



In the garden: re-building after the storms

We were quite lucky to not suffer too much damage from the Winter storms. We just lost some of the willow circle supports, a hazel/willow arch between two raised beds - and a lot of laminated signs. We don't like using laminated signs - they can't be recycled - but they



are a low-cost way of communicating with people and usually last quite a while. If we staple them to a post or tie them, they do, however, like to catch the wind and fly across the garden. We will soon try out replacing the signs on solid wood backs to see if this makes them last longer.

The arch was

Restored hazel and willow arch

getting a bit crunchy - hazel doesn't last that long - but we were keen to replace it because it is a good place to hang a willow and tissue lantern (see photo to the left). The hazel and old willow decorations have been retired to our dead hedge and we have used some of our new season willow to fill in between the new hazel and willow struts on each arch. Willow hoops make the structures stronger and are easy and fun to make.

We also used up some spare willow hoops to start to decorate the dead hedge, from the bench side (see photo). Thank you Jill for your hard work. Now, we just need to learn how to make attractive ties in willow to cover up the ugly plastic cable ties. And fingers crossed, we won't get any more storms this year •



Garden friends: On the Verge Cambridge

We have been amazed and delighted to watch the progress of the schools project for On the Verge Cambridge, including in two local schools: Queen Emma primary and Netherhall secondary (see our Feb/March 2022 newsletter). Jo and Ben have been working really hard, in not very friendly weather, to scrape the turf, pile it up and add logs and sand (see photos). This will then be



Graham at Queen Emma's, with a very big truck and grabber. He also worked on our green roof/brownfield bed at Nightingale. Photos from their twitter feed.

seeded with wildflowers suitable for the chalk grassland around the area. This is all to benefit pollinators and



other insects. It looks fun for the students too. The project has been funded by Natural England's Nature Recovery Programme and Cambridge Water's Pebble Fund.

These sand banks are also being made across the City by the biodiversity team at the Council - you can already see them at Lammas Land and Barnwell Drive •

Garden volunteers: Arbury Court

Some of our volunteers from Tzu-Chi Cambridge have a great new project with local community groups, by the shops in Arbury. They are replanting some large shrub beds with colourful bulbs and other plants good for pollinators.

In February, we were pleased to donate some spare plants from Nightingale and also local gardens. They have scheduled regular Saturday morning sessions, in case you would like to join in. See their website: tzuchi.uk for details and all kinds of other volunteering opportunities •



Events: Easter holiday get together

We will do something festive in the garden for the Easter break - probably a new trail, if last year's 'rabbits on the run' don't mind the competition.

We might need to tie more feathers to our trees too - Swedish style (see photo).

And let us know if you have any other ideas - maybe your country of origin has a special way of celebrating Spring or Easter that we don't know about and can share in the garden - or we could just make one up (probably involving chocolate) •



7 March 2022. The mirabelle cherry plum trees in full bloom. They could be the Southern boundary to the new orchard in the park (see page 1).

CALENDAR 2022

Sunday 27 March, 2 to 4 pm	Third Learn and Grow Together session (see page 1).
Sunday 17 April, 3 to 4pm	Informal get-together for Easter break.
Sunday 1 May 10 am to 12 noon	Fourth Learn and Grow Together session (see page 1).
Sunday 15 May, 2 to 3 pm	AGM of the Gardeners Group.
Sunday 12 June, 2 to 4 pm	Fifth Learn and Grow Together session (see page 1).
Saturday 25 June, 5 to 7 pm	Informal Midsummer evening picnic.
Friday/ Saturday 8/9 July (times TBC)	Friday evening bat and insect watching and setting an overnight moth trap for Saturday morning moth spotting.
Sunday 24 July, 10 to 12 noon	Sixth Learn and Grow Together session (see page 1).
Sunday 11 September, 2 to 3 pm	Autumn 'planning' meeting of the Gardeners Group.

Gardening sessions: will be held on most Sunday and Monday afternoons, from 2–4 pm, weather allowing and when co-ordinators are available. Contact the garden co-ordinators for more info (see contact box below). Check the garden website for updates before travelling far (see the QR code below).

A few thank yous for very recent support...

To everyone who has donated and/or signed up as a Friend of the Garden (see below for how to join).

To everyone who helped out before, during and after the Chinese New Year and Learn and Grow events (see pages 1 and 2), we have

a wonderful extended garden family.

To Peter Clarke and family for donating the new fruit bushes.

And, as always, to all our many volunteers who make the garden a special place for everyone to enjoy every day - including staff and

students at several language schools - it is lovely to get to know you and your cultures, even if it isn't always for very long.

To all those who contributed ideas - and thought of ways of doing them too (see page 3) •

This newsletter is produced by **Nightingale Gardeners** a constituted group run by volunteers for the **Friends of Nightingale Garden**. Join for £10, or as much as you can afford, annually (see the website for details). This helps support the garden for expenses like insurance, tools and plants. One-off donations are also very gratefully received: Nightingale Gardeners, Lloyds Bank; Sort code: 30 65 65 Account number: 631 76568.

You can **Paypal donate** via the garden website: [nightingalegarden.org.uk](https://www.nightingalegarden.org.uk) (or use the QR code to the right). Also online on Facebook: [NightingaleGardenCambridgeUK](https://www.facebook.com/NightingaleGardenCambridgeUK)
E-mail: info@nightingalegarden.org.uk Tel: 07792 531 400.
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