

Nightingale News

For the Friends of Nightingale Garden

October/November 2021



Our first Mid-Autumn Moon Festival

On 21 September, we hosted in the garden our first Mid-Autumn harvest/Moon Festival. It was fantastically well attended, with lots of people of all ages, many were new to the garden and also to Moon Festivals.

The Cambridge group of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation UK helped plan and deliver this - bringing together people of Chinese-origin with the wider Cambridge community: "it could easily be my best moon

festival abroad, and I believe many guests thought the same. Everyone was just so relaxed and enjoying themselves - much missed since COVID-19".

We harnessed many skills from our volunteers: baking, calligraphy, dancing, flute-playing, gardening, singing, story reading, tea serving... but also the soft skills of helping families chalk, make lanterns, fly parachutes together.



Traditional moon cakes...

We all really enjoyed meeting so many new people and hope it will be the first of many such collaborations.

The garden volunteers are really keen to host other celebrations special to our garden's communities, continuing with St Martin's Day on 11 November (see page 6). We learn so much from other people and their special events - and it is also just really good fun. **Hsin-Ling Liang (Tzu Chi Foundation UK), Julia Leong and Rebecca Jones, all garden volunteers** •



Professor Tsai's very elegant calligraphy...

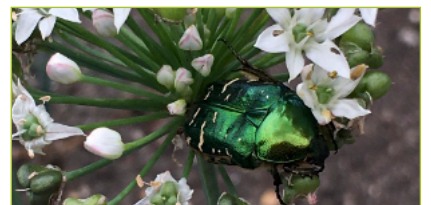


Moon rabbit story telling...

For families: not-so mini beast trail

For October half-term, our garden volunteers will make a new trail for the garden. It will be almost all beetles... with a few other minibeasts to keep them company. It will be linked with the

beetle habitat work we are doing. We will keep the rabbit and small doors trails too. We hope you enjoy spotting them all! •



Garden design: creating a community garden in South London

This Autumn, I have continued my involvement in developing a community garden attached to my sister-in-law's church community in South London.

We have twinned St Swithin's in Hither Green with St James' church in Wulfstan Way. Both churches want to make their outside spaces more friendly to people and also nature. Guiding principles were also chosen to reflect our care for Creation as a practical expression of faith.

I have really enjoyed helping to design the St Swithin's space, starting with a long sensory garden border (see photo). We aim to have plants that are colourful, scented, tasty, have different textures and tone and also move.

It has been great to use willow and plants propagated by Nightingale volunteers - alongside plants donated by the St James' community - to help start the church community off in London. It is so good to see residents in a leafy suburb like Queen Edith's support those in a more urban one, if only from a distance.

I have also learned a lot from volunteering at St Swithin's and hope it can be useful at Nightingale and at St James. **Jennie Brandon, volunteer (and Co-Chair)** •



St Swithin's: before and after part-clearing the 'sensory run' bed. It will become the wheelchair access to the church. The church community want it to have all-year-round interest but it also needs to be safe for their more vulnerable members including some children who have autism. We have a volunteering session planned for mid-October with some of the St James' youth group.

Habitats in the garden: 'dead hedging' our bets for beetle mania

Each year, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the Wildlife Trusts select a 'Wild About Gardens' project. For 2021, we were very pleased to see it is 'Bring back our beetles'. On their website, they have some really good guides to ways to make your space more beetle friendly including beetle banks, beetle buckets and dead hedges. There are ~4,000 species of beetles in the UK. They are an important part of the foodchain. They also keep some garden pests under control - and for free! And are often very attractive (maybe not the one in this photo).

For some years, we have had in the garden some 'stag beetle logs'. Earlier this year, we made another beetle/butterfly mound and we have been slowly making a dead hedge, next to it. We have a growing mountain of spare twigs and branches in the slow rot bins, which are threatening to take over the garden. So, by the end of November, we hope to finish the hedge. We hope it is a bit

attractive and will be very tasty for our resident beetles when it starts to rot down. **Julian Hickling, volunteer (and Treasurer)** •



For learning: willow weaving

November is the start of willow coppicing season - once the leaves have fallen and the plants become more dormant. At Nightingale, we harvest our annual crop to use in the green or to dry for later use. Fresh willow can be used for living willow structures, or for cuttings to make a hedge - just as long as there isn't any pipework nearby for the thirsty roots to damage.

This season, we hope to donate some of our fresh willow to St James church for advent wreaths, to Abbey Orchard to make some living structures and to Marmalade Lane co-housing for some hedge filling.

At our late December meet-up at Wulfstan Way (see page 6), we'd like to use some of the shorter lengths to make smaller tree decorations.

Several of our volunteers will meet in the garden to make some small projects together. And, over the past

few months, I have enjoyed using some leftover dry willow from the garden to learn how to weave at home. Jennie aims to use some dry willow in the St Swithin's garden too (see above). It is a useful crop for us! **Kate O'Neill, volunteer** •



Our volunteers: bespoke illustrations from Francesca Luisi

After completing horticultural studies at Bottisham College, and my Illustration degree at Cambridge School Of Art, I was excited to tie these two subjects together by creating poster, flyer and membership designs for Nightingale Garden.

I am so pleased to be a part of the volunteer community at the garden - and the many opportunities it has presented me: from my first job in the gardening sector with a local gardener to building my creative portfolio.

I am very happy with how the designs have turned out and hope they will bring lots of people pleasure.

You can find my portfolio on Instagram at @francesca_luisi_design or contact me on francescaluisi@hotmail.co.uk. **Francesca Luisi, volunteer** ...And we love to work with her too... **Rebecca** •



It was good to create hand written text for all the publications...



My map of all my favourite features of the garden. The 'spotted' rabbit also became a moon rabbit for the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival poster.

Other community gardens to visit: Clay Farm Community Garden

Over the Summer, I was pleased to volunteer at two of Clay Farm Community Garden's drop-in Saturday morning gardening sessions.

Rebecca and I joined with local residents to weed some of their new beds and move some plants around. I am a new resident of Cambridge, moving from France with my partner, and it allowed me to discover a new area of the city.

Clay Farm ('new Trumpington') isn't far from Nightingale. It was very good to experience a different growing space, with very different soil, plants (and rabbits), but also to meet new people, which can be difficult during a pandemic. This was a very good opportunity for me to learn more gardening skills and create a positive change in my community. I also picked some produce for a tasty dinner (see photo).

Within a couple of hours, I came back home with a great sense of accomplishment and I realised it was more than just gardening; it was about helping my community and making new friends.

The Clay Farm gardening sessions and social events are advertised on their garden website (clayfarmgarden.org) and Facebook page (clayfarmgarden) and we hope to attend more of them. **Marion Genotte, Nightingale - and Clay Farm - volunteer** •



"Having some fresh and healthy food on the table really put a smile on my face."

Four ways to make a garden more 'SenSory'

1 | Scent

A favourite scent of garden users is from annual sweet peas - but we aren't very good at growing them at Nightingale because they need dead-heading and a lot of water. Any leaves of our herb plants, including fennel, and lavender flowers, smell good. More unusual choices are the Korean mints (see photo). They are great for pollinators and some smell like liquorice.

Scented pelargoniums can smell of

roses, pine, oranges. For lemon scents, lemon balm is an easy choice and lemon verbena, but it doesn't like very cold weather so is best brought indoors over winter.

Many of these make very good 'herbal tea' and some are delicious flavours in cooking. Mary Berry includes finely chopped lemon verbena in her lemon drizzle cake recipe - a garden volunteers' favourite.



2 | Movement

We choose wind-wafting plants to make the garden even more interesting - see the photo of achillea and Carthusian pinks. *Verbena bonariensis* is 'a good mover' and also great for pollinators. And willow, which dances well in a breeze. A more unusual plant is *Gaura lindheimeri* - there is a variety called 'whirling butterflies', with delicate flowers at the end of stalks.

We love it.

For 2022, we are going to try some walking onions in the garden. They are much slower movers: their little bulbs are held at the top of flower stalks, which dry, dip down touching the soil and then make new plants, slowly spreading across the garden. They taste really good too, like small red onions.

3 | Texture

We encourage people to touch plants in the garden - it is all part of the experience.

For texture, usually, people think of the soft, furry leaved plants, like *Stachys byzantina* (rabbits ears or lambs lugs). Children love it and it is really easy to grow. A much larger white furry leaf is found on silver sage, which we grow in our little sensory bed. It also has amazing spines of white flowers (see photo), which are 'sticky' to touch. It smells

strongly too.

As a contrast, we grew some African thistles, which have purple daisy flowers but evil spiky stems. We were accused of being cruel growing them in the same bed. Another unusual texture is 'hairy', like borage and comfrey leaves. And garden users often comment on the cardoons; they have purple flowers and then turn to very fluffy seedheads. We find chunks of them all over the garden (and park).



4 | Taste

Taste can accompany scented plants but some plants have their own hidden flavours.

We like to invite people to try nasturtium flowers and leaves (see photo). They are very peppery but the flowers are also sweet. They are great to nibble from the plant or in salads. And they self seed very well.

A tasty favourite are the raspberries (see Aug./Sept. 2021 newsletter) but we are also growing some jostaberries, which taste like a cross between a blackcurrant and a

blueberry. Our plants were layered from a cutting we got from Incredible Edible several years ago. We hope, in 2022, they will be mature enough to crop fairly well.

And we can propagate them further by layering. They make good jam too.

A more unusual crop of the garden is our wine cap mushrooms, which have hardly cropped this year. We are growing them under some blackcurrant cuttings, which will also taste good - if the birds don't get them first.

New features: play house

When we have sufficient funds and also time, we are planning to make a playhouse. This will be behind the new four-part bench and between two mature Swedish whitebeam trees at the side of the polytunnel (see photo)..



It will be made by volunteers and will be open fronted for good ventilation and wheelchair (and buggy) access. We will size it for just a few small people but also with enough height that adults can sit and join them - or retrieve them when it is time to go home (or spot more rabbits). We will make some simple boxy furniture to support imaginative play. We will try to use as much waste/recycled materials as possible, mainly wood, but will need to buy some timber and roof materials.

Let us know if you have some good ideas for ways to decorate it. We think we will go for something 'natural coloured' under the trees but want to make it fun - with some cut outs for windows and spy holes.

Do contact us if you'd like to sponsor some materials. When we have more detailed plans, we can better estimate how much it will cost. **Julian Hickling, volunteer ('master carpenter' - not) •**

New project: outdoor kitchen and activity preparation area

Soon, we hope to make some progress with the outdoor kitchen and activity prep area project. This will be between the Swedish whitebeam trees, where there is currently a woodpile covered in a green tarpaulin

First, we are waiting for drafts of the the contract from Cambridge City Council. Then we can find a contractor and finalise the design. We need to work out how much and what we can do as volunteers and what we need a contractor to do. We would like to source the material sustainably, including using waste wood from

local building projects.

We now have longer to complete the project, by September 2022, but hope we can have it ready for the warmer months earlier next year.

Several of our volunteers are keen to use mosaic designs inside the shelter and we'd love to hear your ideas of other ways to decorate it. And it will be dedicated to our good friend and much missed Siva. We'd love to have an opening event to celebrate it and her life.

Hopefully, we can update you more in the next newsletter. **Rebecca Jones, volunteer •**

Volunteering for other places: Water Lane community garden

Over the Summer, it has been really good to work with Nightingale volunteers on a new project for Cambridge City Council Streets and Open Spaces (SOS) Community Engagement team.

Water Lane community garden, in East Chesterton, is a small streetscape plot, created by blocking off Water Street from through traffic from Water Lane. It is a popular cycle route too.

By Summer 2021, it was very overgrown, and at a high risk of traffic ingress, which was damaging any plants trying to thrive there.

Working with local residents and regular SOS 'green team' volunteers, it is now being transformed into an attractive neighbourhood green space, with plants friendly to pollinators and that are also drought resistant. We even have a bug hotel, made by volunteers.

I got to know the Nightingale volunteers through volunteering there, before I started working at the Council. They have propagated for us at least a car full of drought-tolerant plants. We planted the first of them on 9 September. Council staff have also learned from the experience of gardening at Nightingale, including which plants like to grow in crushed ceramics ('baths, basins and loos'), because it has been also used on the Nightingale green roof and ground-level brownfield bed (see Sept./Oct. 2021 newsletter). These plants are just a starter pack for the Water Lane garden and they can, in

time, be supplemented or replaced by any other plants neighbours of the garden prefer. **Stepan Slavin, Community Engagement Officer •**



A new home at Water Lane for the first of the Nightingale-propagated plants.

Events/festivals: St Martin's Day

One of my favourite times of the year as a child - and adult - growing up in South-West Germany - was celebrating St Martin's Day (Martinmas) on 11 November or its eve. This is also the end of the traditional harvest period.

St Martin of Tours, France, was a Roman soldier who later became a Bishop. He is famed for cutting up his cloak to save a poor man in a storm but is also a 'friend of children and patron of the poor'. His day is celebrated in Germany and many other European countries, but far less in the UK.

In 2020, during lockdown, my son and I could be seen doing our own little lantern parade around Queen Edith's, which felt a bit sad (see photo). So, I was delighted when the other garden



A goose lantern feeling a bit lonely in 2020...



Sweet brezels, typical of South-West German celebrations but made this time in Queen Edith's.

volunteers liked the idea of trying a family-friendly event at Nightingale Garden for 2021.

We are still working out the details, so do let us know your ideas and if you'd like to help.

We'd like people to walk to the garden with their lanterns, probably for 5pm. Then, in the garden, we can have lights, more lanterns and a cosy fire. We can tell the story of St Martin, talk about the charitable aspect to the celebrations, sing some songs and then process with our lanterns around part of the park.

In Germany, people share soft brezels (see photo) but other countries have their own sweet treats.

Most of all, we look forward to meeting you (again)! **Julia Leong, volunteer** •

CALENDAR 2021

- 1 October** Start of Autumn/Winter garden opening hours – 'at least 10 am to 3 pm'.
- 23-31 October** School half-term holiday - with a new minibeast trail.
- Thursday 11 November, early evening (TBC)** St Martin's Day celebration in the garden.
- Sunday 28 November** Last regular gardening session of the year.
- Sunday 19 December, afternoon (TBC)** Family-friendly meet-up at Wulfstan Way shops. With Queen Edith's Community Forum.

Gardening sessions are held on most Sunday and Monday afternoons, from 2–4 pm (sometimes 4–6 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).



28 September: our tallest sunflower is still looking good, despite squirrel attacks...

A few thank yous for very recent support

To everyone who has donated and/or signed up as a Friend of the Garden, in person at the recent 'Skip Day', in the garden itself or online. It has been lovely to see how much people appreciate what our volunteers do (see below for how to join).

To everyone who helped (or 'starred') at the recent Moon

Festival including Professor Tung-Hu Tsai for hours of creating the most lovely calligraphy gifts. To Yuehwen Chiu for arranging the special singing. To Feng Lui and Josie for the beautiful dancing. To Yuki Lin, from mandaringo.co.uk, for the storytelling and such great photos. To Sam Catton for bringing the parachute along - it looked

stunning. To Vanille Henry for the lovely flute solo. To Jessica Chen from Kang Chiao Bakery, for the beautiful and delicious moon cakes. To the Laskeys for being such good neighbours to the garden - we especially love your plant cuttings.

And to all our many volunteers who make the garden a special place for everyone to enjoy. •

This newsletter is produced by **Nightingale Gardeners** a constituted group run by volunteers for the **Friends of Nightingale Garden**. Join for £10 (or what 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: 63176568.

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