



# Bishop's Waltham Gardening Club



BWGC

Registered Charity No.  
1169353

It's difficult to be upbeat at the moment in these worrying times but having the opportunity to get to the allotment, or into the garden, has brought with it a sense of normality and peaceful tranquility. The deep blue skies we had for most of April uninterrupted by incessant vapour trails, the wonderful bird song louder than ever without the background hum of traffic and the clarity of the air have all been a definite bonus to counteract the doom and gloom. There has been some welcome rain recently but let's hope it knows when to stop so we're not grounded indoors for too many days this month.

The allotments being open, albeit without the convenience of having the 'Shop at the Shed' and all the benefits it brings, has enabled many to take their daily exercise tending their plots. Everyone has been very respectful of the social distancing rules and many of the plots are looking wonderful with having plenty of care and attention. You will have noticed that all the driveways and paths have been mown, a massive undertaking by Trustees Anthea and Larry with help from John Hayes and Brian and Sandy Hutchings. This has prevented the need for the mowers to be used by plot holders and the complication of making sure that everything was sanitised before and after their use.

Although the shop has been closed, Trustee Tim Gover who sources the stock, made sure that everything was sold prior to lockdown to reduce waste. He is now busy trying to find a new main supplier as 'Warwicks of Wickham' had already given us notice that they will be closing in September. This is sad news as they have always looked after the club very well and always been prompt with deliveries at discounted prices. If anyone has any good contacts for supplying the kind of hardware we sell such as netting, fleece, canes, chicken pellets, bagged compost, seed potatoes through to tomato feed, please let us know.

The monthly meetings with speakers up to the end of June have all had to be cancelled by our Trustee in charge, Nicole Jones. We'll keep you informed as to what will be able to go ahead in September, depending on Government rules at the time. The Red Lion St plant sale and the annual Show are also both fatalities. However, Colin Carter managed to cancel the printing of the Show guide in good time and most advertisers want to keep their adverts for next year and so all

his work will be not be in vain and the guide will be ready for 2021 without too much alteration!

Ann Magrath and Nicole Jones have reported that the 'Strulch' mulch applied around the trees on the community orchard has been very effective in keeping the weeks at bay and I notice that a few have been using it on their allotments. Feedback would be useful please. Sarah Macleod has also been tending the garden at the railway line which has been appreciated by so many as they take their daily exercise that way.

Our monthly Trustee meetings have continued very successfully via Zoom and our new members have settled in quickly and efficiently into their new roles for which we are all very grateful. At our last meeting we discussed the Student Grant that BWGC now awards every year to to a local student as part of our charitable work and Sue Curtis, our secretary, has kindly put this information together to tell members more about it first and then it will go as an advert into the Parish Magazine and be sent to Swanmore College. We really hope that we will be able to help a local student to train into the world of horticulture; all we require in return is a short regular update on how their training is going.



Community Orchard Update - April 2020

Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015 is a date seared on my memory and no doubt, the memories of the thirty or so volunteers who met in Priory Meadow to plant an orchard. The conditions were possibly the worst I have ever encountered in my entire Horticultural career!

Fast forward five years and only 10 of the original 25 trees have survived. However, they have since been added to with 4 replacements and 4 other new trees,

the latter consisting of 2 Crab Apples. One, a 'Golden Hornet' which, as its name suggests, has yellow fruits and is a popular and reliable variety, the other is called 'Neville Copeman' and is particularly lovely, with purple foliage and pink flowers which will be followed by orange-red fruits.

A new apple has been added. 'Ambassy' is a crisp, juicy, red early eating apple, ready in September, following on nicely from 'Discovery', which is an August apple.

Lastly is 'Langley Bullace', an old Victorian damson-like fruit tree once often found growing wild so is hardy and may cope well in our difficult conditions. Its fruit is ready in September and is perfect for preserving as well as cooking!



Over the last five years we have experienced flood, drought, plague and pestilence – at least it feels that way! Boggy, waterlogged soil in winter turned to concrete in summer. Cold night, late frosts, strong winds and other climatic conditions affected blossom and pollination and played havoc with plans to plant more trees. Weeds flourished while trees struggled and we small band of volunteers tried our best to cope with feeding, weeding, edging and mulching as well as experimenting with different techniques and materials to improve the trees' chances of surviving and thriving.

And are we discouraged....? Well yes, sometimes we are but not for long!

As I write this, temperatures are hitting twenty-five degrees, unusual for mid-April and it is four weeks since we had any rain but in the orchard pears, crab apples and the bullace are all flowering, apple buds are ready to burst and the quince is in full leaf, all showing promises of things to come.



Go and wander in the orchard, take your exercise there if present 'lockdown' continues and though you may have missed the blossom, watch as the tiny fruits swell and the leaves unfurl, get to know each tree and enjoy the natural tranquillity of the meadow; count the butterflies, listen to the birdsong and the lazy buzzing of bees.

We are now a very small team – only four active members since one of our volunteers has moved away. We need a few extra people to help maintain this very worthwhile Community Orchard. **If you could give some time to help, please contact me via the BWGC website.**

Ann Magrath

## *Surplus plants*

Now would be the time when we took a look at what we have grown for the allotment, greenhouse and flower bed, and grow on any surplus for the Red Lion Street sale. Unfortunately as we have announced before this has had to be cancelled.

We thought that as many of us will still have those surpluses, rather than waste them they could be exchanged down by the allotment shed. From 23<sup>rd</sup> May there will be tables put out so any one with excess plants can leave them out for others to take.

We will rely on your sense of fair play not to take more than you donate, or if you feel you have to have something, but have nothing to donate, a donation to Club funds when the shop is open will always be welcome.

Of course we need to treat each plant as a potential source of infection and it would be wise to handle them with gloves as hand washing facilities at the shed are closed.

### **Butterfly Garden and Community Orchard**

Developing and maintaining these two areas in Bishop's Waltham forms part of the Club's charitable activities. The Trustees are pleased to report that despite the constraints we are all living with at the current time they are not being neglected. Ann Magrath and available helpers have ensured that the orchard area is being kept tidy. She has two new donated trees to plant but the wet conditions through the winter meant that the growers could not send them until very late in the planting season and now of course it is terribly dry and the water supply for Priory meadow cannot be accessed. The weather is never right for gardeners! However the blossom on the trees has been beautiful and we'd urge you to make a detour down there in your exercise expedition to check it out.

The Butterfly and Chalk gardens at the entrance to the old railway line are also maintained by volunteer members led by Sarah McLeod. Usually two people spend an afternoon each month from April onwards to trim and tidy. Sarah has been and trimmed it herself and maintenance will continue even if not to the usual pattern. In the meantime it is looking very fine and I recommend you have a look if you are passing. The gardens give the many members of the public who walk along the old line's pathway a great deal of pleasure.

## ***From the Allotments***

At the time of writing we are still in lockdown, with all the facilities at the allotments shut.

The driveways will remain shut until lockdown restrictions are lifted or modified. When they do reopen there will be no parking on the driveways, drop off only and parking will be under the trees at the side of the plots.

We are allowed to tend our plots as exercise and many people are taking advantage of this – the plots have never looked so good!!

Demand for allotments is high, so please do make good use of your plot. Let me know if you no longer want it and I can allocate it to someone else who is desperate for an allotment.



Please remember that the use of hoses is still on a trial basis. The water bill last year was extremely high. If it is excessive again this year we will probably have to revert to using watering cans only.

I attach the following for your information. The RHS website has more information on watering.

- The key to successful watering is to water thoroughly. **Avoid watering on a daily basis.**
- Light watering will encourage surface rather than deep roots leaving plants more susceptible to drought. Instead make a single thorough watering of plants that need it, not the whole plot.
- **Watering every 10-14 days (if there is no rain) is a general guide.**
- Dig down a spade's depth to see if there is moisture in the soil. If so watering is unnecessary. Bear in mind sandy soils can look dry but still contain available moisture, and clay soils can look wet, but the moisture is held too tightly for the plants to access.
- Watering a plant when it does not need it can increase the size of the plant, but not the size of the part to be harvested.
- Keep vegetable growing areas free from weeds. A surprising amount of water can be taken from the soil by weeds.
- **Mulching will stop weeds and retain water.**
- Overwatering will exacerbate slug and snail problems
- Always try to water in the cool of the evening or very early in the morning so less water is lost immediately to evaporation.

Wishing you all a happy and successful growing season, Anthea

## **FUNDING FOR TRAINING IN HORTICULTURE OR ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION FOR THE YEAR 2020 – 2021**

As a local charity BWGC sets aside funds to make a small grant initially for one year to local people aged 16 and over who are undertaking a recognised course of full or part-time training in horticulture at a college, or on a recognised training scheme. We have this year decided to widen the range of subjects for which applications can be made. Now students planning to attend or already on courses, in environmental or land management, conservation and ecology can apply.

The Trustees of the Gardening Club feel that in the current situation people may find it more difficult to finance themselves on training courses which is why they have widened the range of courses and increased the amount available to £200 per term.

The Club introduced this scheme 3 years ago and, having funded one student for 2 successive years, we now have the opportunity to support others. All we require in return is a short, regular update on how the training is going.

The funds are to assist with the cost of items such as fees, the purchase of learning materials, tools and equipment, protective clothing, travel to college, or to make visits related to the course.

If you think you may be eligible to apply for financial assistance, or would like more information, please contact the Secretary through the Club's website, emailing [webbwgc@outlook.com](mailto:webbwgc@outlook.com). Alternatively if you know someone who is or may be eligible please pass this information to them. Applications should be received by the end of August 2020.