

August 2020



Potting Shed News



Garden Update

Over the past month we've been busy in the Long Garden hoeing the four main beds. Our visitors could have been mistaken for thinking we had the national plant collection of *Senecio vulgaris*, commonly known as Groundsel! It had really taken advantage of fewer gardeners working during lockdown and had covered the beds with a thick green carpet. We all went en masse, armed with hoes to tackle the opportunist intruder.

We forge on with our quest to sow and grow on thousands of wallflowers for our garden next spring. It is certainly more of a challenge than we had first imagined, but we will succeed, we have no choice! The garden volunteers have been working hard in several areas of the garden under the guidance of Katherine (Volunteering, Participation and Learning Officer). The cockerel pavilion slope was weeded in double quick time and now they are working their way through the Parterre beds, clearing the old bedding and saving the bulbs so they can be reused in the gardens. I think we have found a new gardener in Katherine. I will not forget going down to the Parterre in torrential rain to discover Katherine and her volunteers still working away, totally dedicated and a little bit crazy! Well done and thank you to everyone involved.

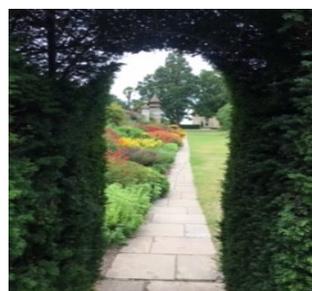
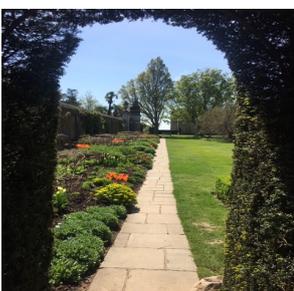
Everchanging Forecourt Borders

It's incredible to look back over the last few months and witness just how much the Forecourt herbaceous borders have changed. The enormous amount of growth and the different colour combinations which appear for a short while, fade and then give way to yet another pallet of colours. These subtle changes create a different mood and atmosphere.

Back in April, when we were pea-sticking the west facing border, the small clumps of green shoots were storing all their energy underground, ready to burst upwards. What a contrast to today where the plants pack the borders and jostle for attention with a profusion of colour!

The maintenance of a traditional herbaceous border can be a constant, year round occupation, yet fantastically rewarding. It's always a good idea to keep a notebook of all the successes and failures; plants that need dividing and moving; plants to order etc because you will always forget – well I do! When working on the border, I often think about all the gardeners from the past who have worked the soil and had an influence on the development of the gardens: John Fleming, Norah Lindsay, Graham Stuart Thomas and, more recently, Andrew Mudge.

Here's a tip from our senior gardener Laura who presently looks after the Forecourts: 'When designing your border try to plant out in clumps of the same plant, rather than singly depending on the space you have. Choose a smaller selection of plants and plant out in larger drifts for a more harmonious effect.' Below you can see the west facing border in April and again in July and the incredible difference.



Long grass management

The Garden Team have large areas of long grass to manage for the benefit of wildflowers and their associated fauna. The grass is left long to allow the wildflowers such as cowslips and knapweed to set seed. It is then cut and, most importantly, all the arisings are collected, because if they are left on the ground they provide too many nutrients for the soil, increasing the amount of coarse grasses that would grow. These would out compete the more unusual wildflowers and grasses. By managing our grasslands in this way, we have noticed an increase native wildflowers.

Summer fruit pruning of apples

Summer fruit pruning of apples and pears is carried out on the formally trained (restricted) tree forms such as cordons, fans and espalier. The timing of this is usually mid July for pears and third week in August for apples, this can be delayed by a week or two to reduce the risk of secondary growth. Pruning should not start until the bottom third of all new shoots has turned woody, reducing all 15-22cm new shoots to about 5cm, about three leaves above the basal cluster. All vigorous upright growth should be removed. The aim is to allow sunlight to ripen the fruits and to ensure a good crop the following year.



Learning the trade

Our apprentice gardener, Xanthe, has been busy recently getting to grips with certain tasks for the first time. She really enjoyed driving our little Kubota tractor and getting to grips with reversing the trailer. You can see her strimming the service drive and mowing down on the Parterre. Lots of pricking out in the nursery to be done, fruit pruning, topiary and hedge cutting await!



Things you can do in the garden this month:

*Watering is essential this month, so if you are away from home see if family or friends will take on the duties for you, they can always pick and use the fruit and veg while you are away.

*Group all your precious house plants together in a cool area, on capillary matting would be ideal, Placing one end of the matting in water.

*Prune Wisteria. Cutting back laterals and side shoots to within five or six buds.

*Deadhead flowering plants regularly.

*Make sure you check and harvest courgettes at regular intervals, they grow so quick, picking when small will ensure cropping over a long period.

*Taking cuttings of your favourite plants is an enjoyable task towards the end of summer. Tender perennials such as Pelargoniums and Osteospermum.

*Look through the bulb catalogues and order now for autumn planting. You can plant lots of lovely bulbs in pots and then just plunge into gaps you have in borders next year. The great plants woman Beth Chatto did this to great effect. Enjoy the garden.

Do you know your wildflowers?

How well do you know your wildflowers? I certainly could improve my knowledge. Most of these are common around the gardens.

