



The Nanpantan Gardeners NEWSLETTER

2021

THE WALLED GARDEN IN 2021



WINTER

Spring treated us to extremes of weather and temperature but eventually a welcome relaxation of lockdown regulations.

The start of 2021 saw the country once again in lockdown due to the continuing Covid pandemic, Fortunately we were still able to visit the garden - when weather permitted!



SPRING



SUMMER

Autumn brought us a reminder of the beautiful part of the world we have the good fortune to work in. Good crops of fruit and vegetables were our reward for all those hours of hard work put in during the year.

As ever Summer brought a mixture of weather and temperatures. As can be seen, we made hay while the sun shone!



AUTUMN

GARDENERS

There continues to be a small core of volunteer gardeners at Nanpantan. During 2021 some gardeners took a break from working in the garden for a variety of reasons. Fortunately we were joined by some new volunteers who helped ensure that the garden was well tended and kept in good heart.



Long standing gardener Tony persuaded his sister Maria and her partner Kevin to care for his plots this season. As can be seen they also worked hard on other projects within the garden.



We were delighted when four 'youngsters' expressed an interest in volunteering in the garden. Despite abundant enthusiasm and ideas the foursome sadly came to the conclusion that it was one step too far for them at the moment with their busy working lives.



Kevin and Maria's enthusiasm for working at Nanpantan transmitted itself to their neighbours Richard and Marion who will be taking over plot 3a from this year. As can be seen they have already turned their hands to communal tasks within the garden.

Pat Drake who first volunteered in the garden 20 years or so ago is helping to tend the wildflower areas and is hoping to take on a small vegetable plot.

BENCHES

Gardeners wishing to rest their weary selves can once again do so on the two benches at the bottom of the garden.



The new seats were made by our son who also provided the wood.

TOOLS

Eagle eyed gardeners will have noticed some new tools in the chalet.....

.....some of these were bought with money given to the garden for our contribution to the Arts Event in May



.....while others were kindly donated.



Reciprocating Hoe

This uproots weeds on both the out and in stroke - David and I saw these being used with great enthusiasm in gardens we visited in the summer.

Claw Cultivator

Donated by Pam for those who need to be careful when breaking up the soil



Donated by Tony, this box of tools and sundries contained very useful long handled hand tools similar to these.



Yet to make an appearance in the chalet are some garden forks and spades and edging irons donated by our son on behalf of his employer, Wickes.



If you can think of any other tools or sundries that would be useful in the garden please let me (Sue) know and we will see if we can source them.

THE GARDEN

One of the lovely aspects of having new gardeners at Nanpantan is that we see new ideas for cultivating and types and varieties of crops that we might not have considered growing before.

Perhaps reflecting her Italian heritage, Maria grew a great variety of beans, opening our eyes to possibilities other than just the classic runner and French beans.



There were many successes during the year including Pete and Pauline's bumper currant crop



Sadly there were also the inevitable failures, namely with courgettes, usually so prolific and with tomatoes which suddenly succumbed to blight.



The reason for courgette failure seemed to be down to slug damage, so gardeners used their ingenuity to try to deter the slugs' predations. The most successful of these seemed to be the placing of aluminium foil scattered with slices of cucumber around the plants.



It is thought that the cucumber reacts with the foil and gives off a scent which repels the slugs.

NB The foil was subsequently washed and recycled.

TAP

As can be seen, Scott had some fun and games fitting the much needed new tap in the garden. Unfortunately, having failed to find the stop tap out in the adjacent field, getting a soaking was the only way to accomplish the task!



FLOWERS



The herbaceous beds did well this year. In the autumn I was, with help from some other gardeners, able to remove the large bank of day lilies from the long border. They had become very congested and took some digging out.



This area of the border had not been dug for 20 years or so.

Even so I was surprised at the quantity of bracken roots that needed to be removed. In all I

filled two wheelbarrows. Some of the day lilies will be replanted along with a tree peony which I hope to transplant soon from its home on Plot 3a.



WILDFLOWERS

I have started to encourage the growth of wildflowers in two areas of the garden. At the bottom of the garden I removed the blanket of nettles from the bank of old compost heaps and then introduced a variety of wildflowers suited to this shady spot, some transplanted from elsewhere in the garden, others grown from seed.



Self sown bugle (ajuga reptans)
on the greenhouse base

On the old greenhouse base I did likewise, this time choosing flowers more suited to this open site with very poor soil cover.

With Pat Drake's help I will monitor what grows, removing thugs such as creeping thistles and docks.

There are still many stinging nettles within the garden and orchard for to provide food and shelter for those insects that enjoy them.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE



The Walled garden at Nanpantan covers a large area and requires a lot of hard work to keep it from reverting to the wild. For the last couple of years farmer Marie has been mowing parts of the large grassed areas and putting sheep on to eat down the grass in others.



In Spring the appearance of wildflowers such as this milkmaid (also known as Lady's smock and cuckoo flower) made us think that rather than aiming to get the grass back to a lawn-like finish we should be trying to get the area back to the flower-rich meadow that the garden replaced. This will be of benefit to the local wildlife as well as to us.



These wild poppies appeared on the newly created wildflower bank at the bottom of the garden. Hopefully they will start to colonise other areas in the garden.

We intend to mow paths through the grass like those seen in the Google Earth image from May 2021. This will provide a direct path across the garden from the gate and down to the 'tip'. Bee keeper Fiona found this very useful when pushing heavy loads up to the orchard.



BIRDLIFE

Although the wide open spaces of the Walled Garden are mainly only of interest to larger birds, there are numerous species of smaller birds in the surrounding woods. Obviously we would like to encourage some of these birds into the garden where they can do such good work controlling pests.



We were very pleased, then, when Rob Stinchcombe, (son of Ernie who worked in the gardens from 1932 until 1986) looking for occupation when on furlough decided to make more nest boxes for the garden. Reusing old timber he made four boxes which he put up in the garden and orchard. We were delighted when a pair of great tits raised a brood in this box on the wall near the chalet.

VISITORS

2021 saw the Walled Garden receive visitors from the general public for the first time. At the end of May an arts event curated by artist Jacqui Gallon entitled 'Time Place Memory' was held at Nanpantan Hall.

Having visited the exhibition in the Hall, visitors could walk down through the woods to explore the walled garden and orchard and then continue to the farm where refreshments were served, Around 400 people visited the garden in the three days that the event ran and the hard work done by we gardeners was much appreciated.

After a cool and damp May we were very fortunate that the sun chose to shine during the event - so much so that visitors were grateful to sit on the newly completed benches in the shade of the oaks.



Rob Stinchcombe (pictured with David and me) kindly cleared the boiler house of its years of accumulated debris. Having memories of it in its heyday Rob was able to arrange things as they had been back in the day. The boiler house and head gardener's office certainly generated a lot of interest and reminiscences from visitors,



Photos and information boards explained the garden's history and what we volunteers are hoping to achieve.



MORE VISITORS

Later in the summer the garden received a visit from members of the U3A Garden Group of which I am a member. Again people were impressed by what has been achieved.



MESSENGER PLAQUE

During the Arts Event visitors were able to see crafts people at their work. Among these was Damian Witty, a stone carver who asked what we would like him to create during the three days. After some thought it was decided that a plaque showing where the Messenger greenhouses had stood would be appropriate.



It was fascinating to watch the letters emerge from the slate.



Later in the summer we gardeners and others involved in the Hall and the Arts Event gathered for the unveiling of the plaque - by Rob who still can't understand why the greenhouses were demolished!



....AND FINALLY..... a few more photos too lovely to omit!



Rosa mundii



Small but perfectly formed



Who said green is boring?!



Self sown poppy



Wonderful nature softening the edges of the stone pile

