

Hill Close Gardens

The hidden, hedged gardens of Warwick



Winter 2022

News from the garden

Writing this in October it's still very warm and it feels strange that in the not-too-distant future we'll be starting on our winter jobs. As written of before, some of the gardens are being renovated and this moves on apace and we've begun clearing areas, planting up, with others to be planted up in the spring. We also have plans to begin on other areas in the Spring.

Our Plant Sales have done brilliantly this year, so many thanks in buying from us, I hope you are enjoying those plants you bought. The proceeds from these sales helps us to maintain the gardens.

Apple Day on the 9th October was a great success where, being graced with good weather, we had over 400 visitors come to enjoy the gardens, buying apples from the gardens and produce and items from an array of stalls. This year's apple and pear crop were abundant which means we have enough to juice again this year. So, when you visit the gardens consider buying a bottle or two.

I'm sure, you struggled with the heat this year and getting enough water on to the garden. Some plants really struggled in the heat while others romped away, such are the vagaries of gardening. This year's

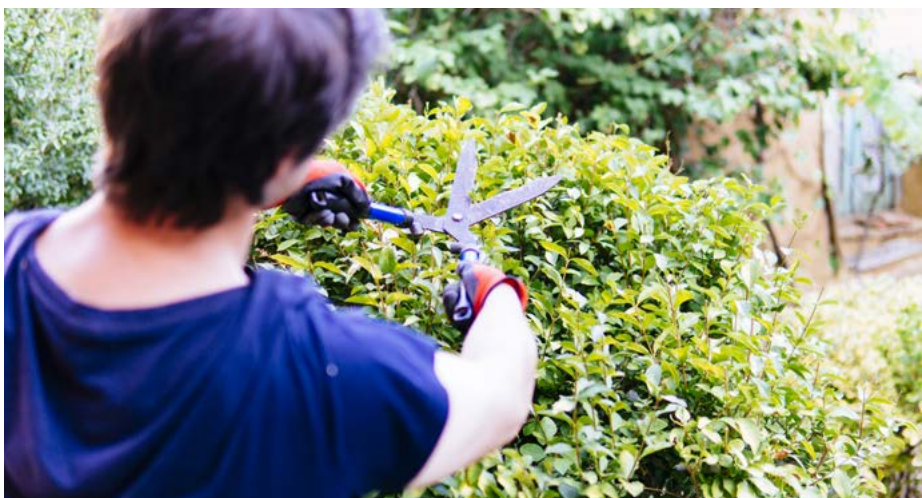


summer weather certainly showed us clearly how important it is to look after water and for a while we have been considering better ways to capture it when it's more plentiful. To this end we're looking at ways to store water from our buildings, particularly the large greenhouse. This will allow us to supplement mains water for watering plants, by using a large storage tank and filters to eradicate any pathogens. As well as water, another essential resource is the material we take off the gardens, including weeds and woody waste. We are currently considering better ways to make better use of these valuable resources. Our current composting areas

are small and it is difficult to turn over the heaps and it's hoped managing them differently will make this easier and allow us to produce better quality compost to return to the gardens.

As the days draw shorter and plants start to enter their autumnal/winter phases we're now turning more attention to the structural parts of the gardens, with hedges and fruit being the first to get our attention. The apples and pears will get pruned with the restricted forms being carried out first. Some varieties, such as the Bramley Seedling always feel like you're removing far too much of the wood, but being so vigorous, if you leave them, they'll soon take over. Some soft fruit will get a winter prune now too and the biggest task of all will be the hedges. We will be pruning the hedges harder this year to bring them down to more manageable heights, and although they'll respond with renewed vigour, we hope to keep them in check.

Thanks for your support and I hope this year has been kind to you.





Volunteers prepare to exhibit the fruits and flowers from the Gardens at two local shows.

Making a good show of it!

The Warwick Horticultural and Allotment Show, and a week later the Old Milverton Show, are important dates in the local horticultural life of Warwick. We show what we grow and choose the best of our fruit and flowers and vegetables. It is good publicity for HCG and supports the local, traditional horticultural shows. We were also awarded a number of prizes at the local Shows and, finally, a Gold Medal in Warwick in Bloom. All of this despite a very difficult year in the gardens either too hot, not enough rain and diseases!



‘Tree’mendous achievement Richard

Congratulations to Richard Tompkins, Assistant Gardener at HCG’s, who created a section of the very large display of Ginkgos which was awarded a Gold Medal at RHS Hampton Court Flower Show in the summer. Preparation for such a display starts many months before the show to ensure both the design is finalised and the plants are in perfect condition the week before the show. There is then the logistics of transporting everything and setting up the display in time for the judge come round the day before the Show opens Finally there is the exhilaration of knowing that a Gold Medal has been awarded. *Such an achievement! Well done, Richard!*

Thank you, goodbye, and best wishes

After 10 years as Centre Manager, Richard Hayward left us for pastures new. Richard was very much involved in the TVI Bleasdale Room project, being there from its conception to its opening last year. Richard oversaw the general running of the Centre, welcoming visitors to the garden and ensuring visitors to, and residents of, Warwick knew all about the gardens. We thank him for all the unseen work which he did and wish him well in the future.



There’s always room for tea and cake!

The tearoom has had another very successful year. Thank you so much for your support, especially all the amazing volunteers, without whom we couldn’t open and visitors wouldn’t be able to sample the wonderful cakes. It would be hard to choose a favourite: the apple cakes, made with our own apples, sumptuous gluten free orange and almond mini loaves or the Yorkshire Parkin made especially for Bonfire Night ! The tearoom will be closed during the winter months, but a self-serve area is available with hot drinks and snacks throughout the year.

We look forward to seeing you all again in February for Snowdrop weekend.



A sad farewell, the end of a chapter

In the summer we said a very tearful goodbye to Kate, our Playworker and very own storyteller. Kate enthralled the children and adults as she wove her stories, took them on adventures and produced wonderful art and craft creations. She nurtured and supported the children and their families, allowing and encouraging them to grow and explore the beautiful spaces our gardens offer. We wish her all the very best for her new role with the Warwickshire Library Service and hope she will drop by and tell us another tale sometime.

The children continue to find more and more ingenious concoctions in the mud kitchen and, much to parents despair, seem to revel in 'mud, mud, glorious mud' though the clearing up afterwards isn't always so much fun!

Over 250 children and their families have joined us so far this year, hunting bugs, feeding birds, picnicking with teddy bears and, most recently, learning all about prickly, snuffling hedgehogs. We've lots more planned so keep an eye on our Facebook page or our website.



STOP PRESS!

Since the huge success of our Hedgehog Day in October, we are working with a local Hedgehog Rescue to become a centre for hedgehog release so watch this space.

We have also been very lucky in having a Hedgehog House donated by one of our wonderful volunteers, Jenn Edwards, carefully constructed from a wonderful wooden wine case. *Thank you Jenn and well done !!*



Hill Close Gardens needs your help. *Spread the word!*

We have dozens of volunteers, who carry out scores of jobs every day of the week.

BUT, we still need more because there's so much we want to do. We'd love to...

- *expand our tearoom opening*
- *renovate more of our historic gardens - and keep more of the pesky weeds down*
- *offer more children and family sessions*
- *get more of those odd jobs done around the gardens*
- *increase the number of tours we can accommodate*
- *give more talks off site*

...and the list goes on.

You don't have to decide on just one area of volunteering because you'll become part of one big team.

But volunteering isn't just about giving, it's also about what you get out of it too.

- *You can make new friends*
- *Share the skills you already have and even discover ones you didn't know you had*
- *As a volunteer you have free entry to the gardens whenever you like, you can bring a friend when you visit and you have 10% off plant and produce sales.*
- *Come along to social events where you can meet other volunteers*
- *Receive support and training in areas of interest*

If you would like to know more, or know someone who you think would be interested, pop into the office and have a chat or drop us an email and someone will contact you to arrange a meeting - coffee and biscuits included!



Membership News

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our members, over 600 of them, for their continued support and commitment to the gardens. Not only for making frequent visits but also by giving their time; volunteering in the Tea Room, trimming hedges and weeding borders, mending fences and painting benches, preparing for children's events and even cleaning the mud kitchen! If you are interested in hearing about what opportunities there are for volunteering, call the Centre Manager on **01926 493339**.

And if you are a regular visitor, have you ever thought about joining? The individual entrance fee is £5 and if you visited once a month that would be £60 but membership is only £18. And there are even bigger savings for a family, £33 for a year for a family of four so you only need to visit 3 times as a family to pay for the membership!

Please note, we are currently reviewing our Membership fees for 2023.

Look out on our website for the new fees later in the new year.



Dates for your diary

SNOWDROP WEEKEND

4th and 5th Feb 11.00am - 4.00pm

SNOWDROP DAY

18th Feb 11.00am - 4.00pm

Open in aid of National Gardens Scheme and National Heritage. Admission £5

Snowdrops for sale from the plant nursery



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