

March 2017

In the very first gardening report was this comment: 'Gardens need time to get established and will evolve over the coming years.' How true this is! Of gardeners too!

Since the garden's incipience with copious amounts of Alkborough Flats silt, David (Witter) and others have waged a sustained campaign against thistles, twitch, bindweed, dandelions etc. The constant attention and the application of top soil from local building projects, commercial compost and 'museum' grown compost has resulted in an improved, fuller bodied, well worked soil. Garden waste and suitable waste from the Old School Canteen is now composted in two plastic bins.

The gardens have become established since the initial planting of irises in the Pear Tree bed and a large number of plants from John (French)'s stock. John saved snowdrops from the original School House garden which were planted in the Gate bed. As always some plants thrive, some don't, become too big or are in the wrong place. However, all the beds look very settled and the weeding is far less these days, helped by the perennials filling out, though we still have to be vigilant. Future plans include planting clematis and acquiring more up to date varieties of Victorian plants. We are not resting on our laurels.

The trial of planting spring bulbs in pots in autumn last year proved very successful. There has been a profusion of crocuses at the museum entrance, followed by tulips and hyacinths, adding colour to the greenery already in pots around the bench, bringing a taste of things to come. Daffodils in the Pear Tree bed and the smallest bed lift the eye and pot marigolds have been in flower all winter.

This last year leggy buddleias and an overgrown spotted laurel have been dug out of the Corner bed under the holly tree and perennials planted instead. The whole bed is now occupied and the plants are settling in.

With earlier advice from Normanby Park's Sue Hoyle and Paul Bentham the Playground gardens are a lovely Victorian themed area with herbs, hellebores, hydrangeas, fatsia, Michaelmas daisies, marguerites and many more perennials. The box hedge is filling out, the cotoneaster horizontalis has been pruned and the honeysuckle tied in as it covers the wall. Two new espalier pear trees have been planted either side of the gate. The Unseen Gardener's advice about these has been invaluable.

In the Pear Tree bed horizontal branches of the climbing rose have been trained along wires to encourage vertical flowering shoots to form to produce a less gappy shape.

The plants-for-sale tables have had a makeover to make them more accessible and eye-catching. We are grateful for donations of plants and we also pot up seedlings and surplus plants from the gardens.

It is fascinating each season to see what will do particularly well. Daffodils were a picture this spring. Hellebores are currently glorious. One summer huge red poppies were stunning. What will it be this summer?

You are welcome to don your gardening gear, do an hour or two's grubbing every fortnight or so on a Thursday morning and collapse and cogitate afterwards over a cuppa in the Canteen. Not by yourself of course. The rest of us will be there too.