



Newsletter

January 2024

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2023 proved an exciting year, as we've furthered our activities to protect and enhance our precious green space. We have lots of plans for the coming year. Please read on for updates on progress, forthcoming activities, and ways that you can help.

Community Garden update

The weather during our first full growing season was quite a challenge! Despite three bouts of heavy winter frosts, most of the plants that we sowed in the raised beds in late autumn 2002 produced good crops of early vegetables and attractive displays of wild and garden flowers. Throughout the spring and summer – and despite the long drought – we raised a succession of edible vegetables (including some giant Trombeta courgettes turned into excellent preserves!), salads, garden flowers, and pollinator-friendly wildflowers, tended by a group of volunteers. We are fostering a sense of community and the spirit of sharing, so it was great to see visitors to the park enjoying the facility to handpick some of the fresh produce.



Our group of volunteers meets weekly every Wednesday at 11.00 a.m. in the Community Centre coffee lounge, before undertaking an hour or so of gentle

gardening — sowing, planting, weeding, and watering. You don't need to know anything about gardening or undertake any physical activities if that's not appropriate for you. More importantly, the Garden provides a focus for social interactions and friendship, combined with the proven benefits of green space. Please come along and give it a try if you are free, or if have a friend or relatives who might benefit from this.

Hedges and trees

Thanks to regular weeding, watering, and mulching by our volunteers throughout the long summer drought, almost all the orchard and hedging trees that we planted in January 2023 have established well. This month, we will be helping staff from the PCC team to plant a dense area of 450 mixed woodland hedging whips on the perimeter of the upper field, as well as a small copse of hazel near the entrance to the lower field, as part of the Plymouth & South Devon Community Forest initiative. We will also plant six standard specimen trees in the We also have two Tamar cherries to be planted in the orchard and will be carrying out some further winter pruning to rejuvenate the neglected trees in the orchard.



Can you help with tree planting? Join us from 10.30-11.00 in the Community Centre Coffee Lounge or in the field through the afternoon. Tools will be provided.

Park benches

In June, we installed three park benches and we're delighted that these are much appreciated and well used by visitors. Its great to have somewhere to relax while enjoying this lovely green space, or to meet people for a chat. The weatherproof benches are made of 100% recycled plastic (each one is made from over 500 milk bottles) and should last many years. Thanks to W.C. Parson, Plymstock Townswomen's Guild, Plymouth Octopus Project, Gavin Lane, David Newell, and Colin Munn for the donations which enabled this. We'd like to install a few more benches around the park once we raise sufficient funds. Please get in touch if you'd like make a donation towards future benches.



Wildlife Pond and Bog Garden

We were excited to get strong encouragement from the Council for installation of a shallow wildlife pond and bog garden in the south east corner of the lower field. This is very important for our goal of improving biodiversity. This should provide an urban oasis to attract a variety of wildlife, including rare and threatened aquatic species like frogs, newts, and dragonflies. A water source and the associated variety of plants will also support birds and pollinating insects, contributing to overall ecosystem health. It will also have great educational benefit, as an ever-changing system providing many opportunities to learn about nature. Relaxation in natural green space has proven benefits for mental and physical health, and water bodies are especially calming!



PCC helped with the initial excavation in October, but this occurred much later in the year than we hoped. Our volunteers have been working over the past weeks when time and weather permits, but we still have a lot to do to finalise the landscaping and planting. The area will look a bit untidy until this is completed

in the Spring. We have erected a temporary fence, but in the longer term we need to raise funds for a permanent solution that makes entry to the area accessible but ensures safety for young children.

If you have a garden pond and are doing some maintenance work in the coming months, please let us know if you have aquatic and bog plants to spare (native species only, please).

Woodchip paths

Once the autumn rains start, access to the park becomes increasingly difficult as the entrances and areas around the steps become very muddy and slippery. In November, our volunteers have spread two lorry loads of wood chip in the most troublesome areas, and we've repeated it this month. We hope this helps!



Wildflowers

As well as the dedicated raised bed sown with a range of wildflowers, we have prepared a large area in the Upper Field, adjacent to the Community Centre. We were planning to sow this in the autumn, but the rotavation occurred much later than we had hoped, and the soil has been waterlogged by the extensive rains. As soon as conditions improve in the spring, we will begin sowing a range of native wildflowers that will provide a habitat and food source for pollinating insects and attract birds and other animals, contributing to overall ecosystem health. Ensuring that the diverse species become established and propagate in successive years will be a challenge, requiring lots of ongoing work by volunteers. We have also planted several hundred daffodil and crocus bulbs at various locations, and these will begin to brighten up the early park in early spring.



For Bees, Butterflies, and Moths

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