

Gardener's Blether - March 2016

We've seen some lovely, still and sunny weather in March, and what a difference it has made, not least to everybody's gardening enjoyment! We've been very busy here at the Walled Garden and have used the dry spells to plant some vegetables that don't mind a bit of a chill, such as parsnips, broad beans and first early peas.

The vegetable plot has received a lot of our attention lately, as we have changed the layout of beds and paths to create easier access for people with limited mobility. The veg plot is now sporting long narrow strips of soil divided by paths, which will make work much easier and safer for folk. It does resemble a giant zebra strip just now, but soon it will look mainly green I hope!



The polytunnel has been a constant source of joy to us in the last weeks, as we could almost watch the plants growing in there. We can now harvest salad leaves twice a week as well as rocket, kale, spinach and parsley in smaller quantities, and continue to sell them at the EcoShop in Dunoon.

I have spent a lot of time recently sowing both flowers and vegetables into modules, and the polytunnel really is full to

bursting with seedlings at various stages of maturity. Speaking of those, we passed a very enjoyable, if rainy, Volunteer Action Day transplanting seedlings into larger pots with the National Park Volunteers and our volunteer Julie from Sandbank. The polytunnel was definitely a wee bit on the small side for the six of us, but miraculously we managed it without toppling anything!

Thanks to many helping hands, our new reflection area is nearing completion. This month, we laid down the cardboard and wood chip with the help of Community Payback, and created a edging from woven willow with the National Park Volunteers. We'll soon get some seating for the far corner and then all we need is for the shrubs to grow a wee bit bigger! I'm looking forward to seeing them grow and transform this part of the garden.

A big thank you goes to Dorothy for generously gifting the ornamental shrubs to us and to Andy for supplying us with wood chip. Merle and Dennis pointed us to their willow clippings just when we needed them, and lots of people dropped in and donated cardboard. We really appreciate all the generous support we have received with this project - it means that our reflection corner truly is a community effort.



The new reflection area nearing completion... except for the size of the shrubs, of course!

Surely the Easter Eggstravaganza was this month's highlight, and thankfully the weather (mostly) smiled upon us. Our volunteer Julie and myself had a lot of fun showing the kids how to grow peas, sunflowers and nasturtiums from seed and using home-made biodegradable pots. Most kids also planted a seed in our children's area, and we hope that many of you will come and visit over the coming months to see how your seedlings are doing!

From now on until the end of October, the garden is open to visitors on Saturdays and Sundays from 12 to 4, and on every first Friday of the month for soup and sandwiches. But as ever, please drop in to say hello and find out what's new whenever you find the gate open.



Enjoying the Easter Eggstravaganza

The next and final (for now) Masterclass will take place on 17th April, and will look at Herbal First Aid and healing plants more generally. The class is free to attend and everybody is welcome to come along, learn and share. As usual, there shall be some world-famous Ardentinny home baking, as well as tea and coffee. If you'd like to join please drop me a line on fran.klara.schmidt@gmail.com.

As ever, you're also welcome to join me for our weekly Volunteer Thursdays. There's plenty to get stuck in with – sowing seeds both indoors and outdoors, adding compost to the soil, looking out for those early weeds, transplanting

strawberries, mulching the ornamental beds... and much much more, depending on your interests and abilities. At the moment, we are on the lookout for some old windows to construct more cold frames with – there are three in the garden so far, but it would be fantastic to have some more to harden off all those seedlings and cutting with minimum fuss. If you happen to have one or several lying about, or know somebody who does, then we'd really appreciate a pointer.

Happy gardening,

Franziska

fran.klara.schmidt@gmail.com

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