

# Gardener's Blether - January 2016

Winter is traditionally a quieter time in the garden department, mainly thanks to the weather! Early January brought us some hoarfrost, making the garden look all magical and enchanted. Then we've had some snow, and recently heavy rainfalls with a bit of flooding in the children's area. Storm Gertrude plucked the very last leaves of our grand beech tree and tipped every single one of our wheelbarrows, but thankfully there hasn't been any damage otherwise.



This rose is valiantly defying the frost.

We started the new year off in style with our Pruning Masterclass. Compliments to the attendees for persevering despite the bitter cold and snow! The end of the month then saw us getting some hands-on pruning practice, with the Walled Garden's orchard as a training ground. Thanks to our lovely workshop attendees, our apples and pears have now undergone their yearly winter pruning routine. The plums will have to wait until spring for their turn, to prevent silver leaf disease.

The polytunnel is showing signs of life despite the wild weather, and we continue to harvest rocket, salad leaves, chard, kale, and spinach in small but steady quantities. Find our produce at the EcoShop in Dunoon for a small donation.

Before Christmas, we planted some fifteen ornamental shrubs with the help of Community Payback, which were kindly donated to the garden by Dorothy Martin. Over the next months, we hope to lay out a path between them and add some seating create a reflection garden. We're still on the hunt for wood chip mulch and gravel – any pointers would be highly appreciated!

We've also taken first steps toward creating a bee-friendly wildflower meadow by covering some grassy patches in the children's area with cardboard and a layer of soil on top. This will make it easier for us to sow the wildflower seeds come spring, and saves us much hard work digging. The gravelly, low-nutrient soil is courtesy of the Ardentiny Hotel, and should be just what the wildflowers need to thrive.



The winter version of our polytunnel.

Our next Masterclass will take place on 27<sup>th</sup> March, and will provide an introduction to growing vegetables in your own backyard! Beginners and post-beginners are both welcome. Book your place by emailing me on [fran.klara.schmidt@gmail.com](mailto:fran.klara.schmidt@gmail.com).

Please also note that I have substituted the next scheduled Masterclass on 21<sup>st</sup> February with a workshop on medical and healing plants, which will take place on

17<sup>th</sup> April – sorry if this causes any disappointment!

The next Volunteer Action Day will take place on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> February, as usual in the company of our lovely National Park volunteers. Please join in if you like! This month, we'll put up some nesting boxes to help the local bird life (and ourselves: a hungry brood of young birds will eat several hundred caterpillars and caterpillars every day!), and continue with the wildflower meadow project.

You're also welcome to join me for our weekly Volunteer Thursdays! At the moment, we're sowing some early seeds indoors and are adding plenty of organic matter to the vegetable beds. There's also some pruning and planting to do – something for all tastes and inclinations. Drop me a line if you'd like to find out what's new or want to join in with one of our activities.



Our veg beds with a covering of sea weed and frost fleece.

Happy gardening,

Franziska

[fran.klara.schmidt@gmail.com](mailto:fran.klara.schmidt@gmail.com)