



Barbican Wildlife Garden Activity Log May 2023 to end October 2023

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Section A - Community Participation

May

Labour candidate at the next National election, Rachel Blake, visited the Garden on 5 May.

Sarah and Susanna from St Georges Park in Farringdon visited on 10 May to get advice on pond construction and maintenance as they are considering adding a pond to their garden. We have agreed to stay in touch and collaborate as neighbouring gardens.

We have also been approached by Museum of the Order of St John who are developing a project to form a gardening club with a local school, based at their garden in Clerkenwell and have asked us to support them which we have agreed to do. This will involve at least one organised visit and possibly other forms of collaboration.

Christine from Inner Temple also wishes to visit, date to be confirmed.

Volunteers are creating a leaflet for Nic Secret Garden and Rescue Nursery to be used at OGSW and the BWG has agreed to cover the printing costs for Nic.

Activity log for January to April has been supplied to GAG for their next meeting.

Ryan, a member of Friends of City Garden, has joined the group.

Corresponding with Ben Bishop at CoL to identify some funding for planting for the tree pits on Fann St. Initial plantings are dying due to heavy use by dogs and associated trampling.

Volunteers hosted a young resident, Milan, for his birthday on 14 May along with 11 of his friends for an impromptu "bird watching" session. Thoroughly enjoyed by all, and excellent feedback from Milan's parents. Volunteers have been made honorary members of the Barbican Barn Owl Brigade by Milan and a new record of 11 people in the bird hide was set.

Path through meadow and grass around meeting area mown on 4 May. OG signage put up on 17 May. Paths weeded on 17 May to prepare for more spreading of wood chip by FoCG on Sunday 21 May ably assisted by some group members. Some cutting back of overhanging branches along paths ahead of OG. Fann St hedge threaded to reduce path obstruction.

First workshop took place on 24 May and was well attended by 16 people including 10 visitors. Konstantinos Tsiolis came with Ben Bishop and will carry out the pollinator survey in early June.

James Newbury from McGees, the contractor involved at 1 Golden Lane, visited the Garden to review how they might help as part of their community contribution. His boss will visit on June 22 with a carpenter to look at ways to increase our rain harvesting capacity.

Visit by new outreach worker at the Neaman Practice and she will email us to explain her role.

IYN judging set for 5 July with Lisa Wilkinson at 4pm. A summary of the year is being prepared to give to the judges during the visit.

Fortune Street Funday will take place in September and one option is to combine with FoCG to have a stall and activities.

June

Path cut first week of June ahead of Open Gardens. Plants donated from Nic's nursery (violets), Fiona (house begonias) and Kathrin (Morning Glory seedlings) for OG plant sales. Open Garden Weekend a great success with 890 visitors across the two days (670 on Saturday). A total of £214.50 was raised from refreshments and £59.47 from plant sales. The garden was written up in the Evening Standard in the lead up to the weekend and Kabir Kaul came by on Saturday and made a video in the garden and posted it on Twitter and it had a good response.

Half remaining wood chip for paths bagged up. About 6 bags remaining on ground in compost area.

Half yearly group meeting to be held on 5 July to discuss maintenance items for the garden over summer.

James and Roger from McGee, a local contractor, attended the garden and have offered to build further rainwater harvesting capacity in the compost area, as well as upgrade the existing set up behind the bird hide. A proposal has now been received and forwarded to the BEO for approval.

Workshop on bees, given by Sarah Hudson, well attended by 24 people including three common councillors, Golden Lane Estate residents, and several residents who do not regularly visit the Garden and were very impressed.

July

London in Bloom judging took place on 5 July with Lisa Wilkinson.

Proposal from McGees has been forwarded and they wished to start on 10 July but we haven't had approval from the BEO yet so the start may have to be deferred.

Offsite meeting held on 5 July to discuss jobs and issues that we don't usually have time for on a Wednesday. A table of actions has been documented for activities starting in July covering:

- Refurbishment of benches and buildings (with a clean out at the same time)
- Relocation of compost and expansion of capacity if possible
- Plantings for the herbaceous border resilient to climate change and to extend flowering season for pollinators
- Action needed on Annes pond which looks to have no life in it (see environmental responsibility)
- Short time on Instagram at the end.

This meeting was followed up by a walk around of the garden on 12 July, specifically dealing with the compost capacity, ponds, benches and other woodwork. A revised action list for summer activities was included in the 12 July checklist.

Work on the noticeboard continues with the proof for board 1 now received. Some small tweaks have been needed but otherwise it is ready.

Remaining wood chip spread near bottom gate on 5 July. Remainder bagged on 19 July ahead of relocating the compost bins. Logs in compost area moved to scrub barrier and copse; large trolley needs to be returned to gardeners store on Ben Jonson.

Two medical groups visited the garden from nearby - Maggie's at Barts on 19th and a dementia group with a local resident on 18th July. Konstantinos Tsilis also visited on 18 July for second pollinator survey. We have been invited to a butterfly workshop on GLE on 22 July and to an Urban Nature Project event by NHM on 8 September at Camley St, Kings Cross.

Helen Davinson approved the McGees work to increase water harvesting capacity week of 17 July and final measurements took place on 20th July. Work commenced at month end with the removal of the tree from the compost area.

Chateau sorted out on 19 July with some tables and chairs removed and tool needs, three border forks and one landscape rake required. Cobbled path to the side of meadow pond scraped back and re-exposed.

We will be participating in the BA open day in TM on 3 September, running a stall with information on bees and butterflies and being available to talk to people about the BWG and its work. Jules may also run bug hunt and we may have a drawing activity for children.

Jo submitted a funding application to the Culture Mile Action Funder site for plants for the herbaceous border. Also requested the BEO whether a bench being removed from Gilbert Bridge could be relocated to the garden.

August

Volunteers from the Natural History Museum have contacted us to ask whether they can visit on 23 August. Visit went ahead and coffee and refreshments served at end. Also representatives of the Garden will be attending the NHM's Urban Nature Project day at Camley St, Kings Cross.

It is now bulb ordering time so group has been asked for suggestions about what we should consider buying this year. Jo will circulate a list for comment before ordering.

Ben Bishop has contacted us asking to install climate change sensors in the garden.

Path work continued in order to keep them clear for visitors.

A draft of the second information board has now been circulated. A few tweaks are needed and a meeting is planned for mid September to finalise.

The sum of £88 has now been received from LPGT, from OGSW. ActionFunder BID closed on Monday 21st August so now waiting to hear if we have a grant for replanting the pollinator bed. A cherry tree is to be donated to the garden from an allotment on the Peabody Estate (will be transplanted in October).

McGees finished the new water harvesting facility mid month and installed the new water butts. Bulb order placed using the £200 donated by a Barbican resident.

At month end, bird hide and conservatorium treated with eco friendly wood sealant (www.ecowoodtreatment.com) Seats still to be done and McGees will paint the new water harvesting facility. Locks ordered for the taps on the water butts.

September

BWG participated in the BA summer party on 3 September in TM. Information leaflets provided to residents, as well as a bug hunt and drawing activities for children. Donation made to Bumblebee Trust for the leaflets they sent.

Jo and Francis participated in the Camley Street event hosted by the Natural History Museum's Urban Nature Project, which focusses on providing support for biodiversity in city settings. Excellent networking opportunity with good talks by GiGI (about recording observations), Konstantinos (on pollinators) and Grow to Know, set up in the wake of the Grenville fire. Decision that we would try to create a new nesting area for solitary bees the herbaceous border as part of the revamp of the border in the autumn. Both Victoria from GiGI and Becky from Urban Nature Project have been invited to the Garden and Victoria has been asked to speak at a workshop next year.

Jo and Nic attended LiB awards ceremony 21 September, both Nic's Garden and BWG awarded Outstanding. Really fabulous afternoon and a delight to see the pleasure on the faces of other winners, especially some of the younger gardeners just starting out.

Funding application to Culture Mile successful and we have £1000 to replant the pollinator bed. Want to form a small working group to steer the process including developing a planting plan (for range of pollinators, and early and late) and also a bed preparation plan. Work began on compiling a plant list and Sarah Baker from the BID scheme will be visiting on 11 October to see how the project is coming along.

Heath Hands, a group from Hampstead Heath, visited the Garden on 22 September, an excellent opportunity for like minded discussion. An invitation was issued to the BWG to the Heath including Kenwood House. James from McGees, who built the new shelter (provisionally called the Keep) in the compost area, visited again on 27th with the contractors who worked on the project and photos taken with the BWG volunteers. Joanna Leydon, the new person at CoLC responsible for the BAP, is visiting on 11 October.

Rosamund Herington, a member of GAG and also of the Kent Gardening Trust, visited the Garden on 5 October, ahead of a visit by the KGT on 24 October. They are interested in wildlife gardening so an opportunity to share experiences.

The autumn bulbs arrived week of 25th September. They will be photographed and a thank you sent to the resident who £200 donation paid for this year's bulbs. The first Information Board also arrived the week of 25th and looks fantastic. Currently being stored in the new Keep until it can be installed.

October

Agreement in early October to participate again next year in London Open Squares weekend but with reduced hours both days (11am until 4pm). Victoria Kleanthous, whom we met at the NHM day at Camley St park, has agreed to speak at one of our workshops next year.

City of London police have confirmed that, subject to operational requirements, they will be able to trample the meadow again this year on 15 November, and again on 6 December. Joanna Leydon, the new Waste Strategy and Biodiversity Group Manager at CoLC, visited the Garden on 11 October. Sarah Baker from Culture Mile (who provided funding the replanting of the pollinator bed) will be visiting the Garden on 1 October. Also the Kent Garden Trust visited on 24th October with Jo giving a short talk and Ben Bishop speaking on climate resilient gardening.

Plimsoll Productions contacted BWG through the website about a natural history series they are proposing to make for the BBC. They wish to include a central London garden as part of the programme and have approached about the possibility of using the BWG. Spoke with Jo on 19 October and they have been directed to Helen Davinson should they decide to proceed.

Section B - Environmental Responsibility

May

Ivy on Cobalt building cut back on 4 May at the request of the building managers. This is so investigation of water ingress can take place. No active nests found in the ivy but evidence birds including wrens and dunnocks are using the back of the scrub barrier.

Started adding water to the meadow pond on 21 May with four cans, another four on 24 May. Ten then added on 31 May as water level very low. Anne's pond holding well.

Significant sightings: dragonfly observed in long grass near meadow pond;

June

Anne's pond water levels still good and birds and frogs observed using it. Ten more cans of butt water added to meadow pond on 7 June. Last of butt water put into meadow pond on 14 June (4 cans).

Pollinator survey carried out on Monday 5 June by Pollinating London Together. Candy Blackham from LPGT visited on Tuesday 6th to take pre-event publicity shots of the Garden. Konstantinos visited again on 28 June to carry out another survey but deferred it for weather conditions and stayed for the bee workshop instead.

There may be a problem with Annes pond that requires investigation. A sick frog was observed and given the level of leaf mulch in it, the oxygen levels may have become depleted. While spawn was laid this year, we had no tadpoles in this pond.

Significant sightings: leaf cutter bee observed during the workshop;

July

Annes pond appears to have developed a problem and now seems to have no life in it. The sludge build up may have deoxygenated it so decision made that we should dredge it in the autumn, cut back some overhanging branches and add some oxygenating plants. In the longer term we need to look at the edge treatment. This issue was discussed during 12 July walk around and it was agreed that external expertise was needed before finalising what actions should be taken. Meanwhile, some cutting back of the pyracantha was carried out with this and broom to be trimmed further. The bird cherry and other which overhang the pond should be cut back in Autumn. Cutting back of dead bird cherry branches took place on 19th July.

Some cutting back around the edge of the meadow pond to try to better define the bank. Lots of small frogs and other pond life visible along the edge so disruption minimised.

Second pollinator survey conducted by Pollinating London Together on 18 July. Still to decide location for bee hotel, so decision to ask Konstantinos advice.

Last of butt water added to meadow pond on 19 July.

Preparatory work carried out behind compost bins so that composting can be relocated off the concrete slab and onto the ground. Also decommissioned shrubbery composting, with the intention of adding the meadow and leaf arisings this fall to compost directly onto the garden and composting in situ.

Dredging of Anne's pond begun, with little sign of life. Clear that oxygen levels in pond have become too depleted for life so we will have to ensure leaf removal from now on and also manage the overhanging foliage.

Significant sightings: dragonflies and damselflies observed despite the lower water levels showing that the larvae are surviving well;

August

Pond skimming and dredging continued in August. Waders to be supplied by the gardeners so that centre of pond can be dredged as well. Pebble path around meadow pond re-exposed.

Area cut back around cage bird feeders to assist cleaning. Also tree cut back to stump in new compost area.

Konstantinos carried out another pollinator survey on 23 August in sunshine. Agreement reached with him for bee hotel to be mounted near the rosemary in the pollinator bed, with the rosemary to be pruned back to keep it clear. Metwin to be asked to mount it.

Significant sightings: Insert text

September

Compost bins have now been relocated and rebuilt further north, moving them off the concrete slab and onto natural ground which will improve composting. Will Ross, composting expert from Middlesex St came along to help.

Moth survey by Sarah Hudson but conditions too windy so only two moths in the traps, a box moth and a yellow underwing. Ben, Charlie and Ella from CoLC accompanied Sarah on the survey.

Helen Davinson has agreed for Metwin to install the bee hotel.

Work continued on Anne's pond to keep some of the surface clear. Eight (8) cans of water (from new butts) added to meadow pond on 20th September, following rain. Water level now healthier at the end of the month and dragonflies still being sighted.

Spot watering of all whips and new plantings continued throughout the month. Compost bagged up for use at the end of the month. Teething problems with the new water butts sorted out by McGees and photos taken for use by McGees on social media.

Significant sightings: large bumblebees seen coming and going from the dead wood in the copse and spinney indicating what an important habitat this is becoming;

October

Post for bee hotel cemented into the ground in the herbaceous border near the rosemary, ready for the bee hotel to be mounted. Group members to research into hoverfly lagoons as our current attempt is not proving terribly effective.

Three (3) cans of water added to Annes pond and four (4) to meadow pond on 18th October. Water butt levels at end of month: 2 full and 2 half full out of the six butts.

Decision taken to start tackling the parrot weed in the meadow pond from beginning of November but for extra care to be taken with pond life especially mayfly/dragonfly larvae.

Significant sightings: Insects continuing to forage in the Fann St tree pits into October; carder bees still frequenting their nest in the shrubbery; queen bumblebee nesting on edge of fernery near meeting area;

Section C - Gardening Achievement

May

Activities:

Foraged skimmias planted near Anne's pond and in herbaceous border near rosemary (together with marjoram). Comfrey, ivy leaf cranesbill and nipplewort thinned in the herbaceous border to create space for new plantings. Thyme and rosemary plants relocated.

All whips watered and growth cleared from around those in the orchard and shrubbery. Clumps of spent snakehead fritillary bulbs planted in the NW, SE and SW quarters.

Pellitory in the wall thinned in the bed near front gate. Old branches cut back from the palisade. Also cutting back along the paths started ahead of OG, and overhanging bird cherry at top of steps trimmed.

Spent bulbs left by a resident planted in the fernery including 2 pots of blue bells, 2 pots of scilla siberica, and 2 pots of ornithogalum. Allium bulbs planted in the herbaceous border.

Bind weed preferentially removed from the SW quarter of the meadow. Nipplewort and sow thistle thinned from herbaceous border.

Fann St hedge cut back on street side at end of month. Weeding and watering of tree pits on Fann St with some original plantings surviving the dogs and skateboards.

Garden Observations:

Buttercups in flower from start of month; speedwell spreading all over northern half of meadow; new cluster of native bluebells has appeared at the NW corner of the meadow; first Star of Bethlehem appearing; mares tail, water mint and spearwort, good oxygenators, spreading well by the meadow pond; greater celandine in flower in the shrubbery; yellow rattle appearing throughout NE quarter of meadow; clumps of hedge bedstraw, common vetch, campion, mugwort, ox eyed daisy and wild marjoram; teasels growing well in north of meadow; raspberry, golden raspberry and currants all starting to show fruit along the palisade; pear tree now in flower; honeysuckle near top entrance flowering mid month; common vetch now flowering and also a good clump of bladder campion has appeared in the NW quarter; first ox eye daisy noted on 17 May; end of month yellow rattle spreading to SW quarter of meadow; poppies, kana-weed, ox ey daisies, corncockle, hemlock, bladder campion all flowering; cow parsley flowering in meadow orchard; watercress and water mint flowering in meadow pond; nepeta and borage flowering well in herbaceous border.

Rescue plantings - foraged skimmia planted behind Anne's pond; foraged skimmia and marjoram planted near the existing rosemary; spent bulbs donated by Mihai planted in the fernery and herbaceous border including allium, blue bells, scilla siberica and ornithogalum;

June

Activities:

Clearing around pear trees, crab apple whips and cherry sapling. All watered well. Scrumptious apple has mildew.

Second week of June had to use the hosepipe to water the orchard as the Garden is very dry from lack of rain. Bunyan ramp hedge also watered. Whips that couldn't be reached by hosepipe watered with cans, including Fann St pits.

Two (2) echinaceas donated by Nic planted in the herbaceous border. Watered well following week, together with miscellaneous selection in herbaceous border. Last week of month snapdragons, rescued from elsewhere in the City, added to herbaceous border.

Bind weed removed from climbers on the palisade and new growth tied and threaded in. Goji berry very sick so trench dug around it before thorough watering. Nettles thinned near goat willows at edge of meadow orchard.

Garden Observations:

Common mallow and meadow cranesbill now appearing; plane trees on Fann St border are already shedding their leaves through stress and centre of meadow is already brown in second week of June; annual larkspur observed for the first time in NW quarter of meadow; ragwort now flowering in several places; new flowering rush in meadow pond.

Rescue plantings: 2 echinaceas donated by Nic into the herbaceous border; 7 snapdragons planted in herbaceous border.

July

Activities:

Nettles thinned around the goat willows. Second week of July, more nettles thinned out to provide more space for the ornamental cherry. A couple of recent whip plantings were also being strangled. Running repairs to the palisade and some rethreading.

Three more snapdragons and one wood aster planted in the herbaceous border. Four skimmias and a hellebore in the spinney, all left over from OG. Twenty four (24) echinaceas seedlings potted up to bring for planting in the herbaceous border. Two (2) oxalis and three (3) salvias all donated by Nic added near the top gate. Six (6) salvias added to the herbaceous border, also from Nic.

Garden Observations:

Musk mallow in SE quarter of meadow; scabious now in the NW quarter, new to the meadow; annual larkspur is also spreading across the north half of the meadow; corn marigold in the meadow; also observed in meadow midweek: cinquefoil and wall rocket; in third week of July Cherry plum and hawthorn berries ripening in the Fann St border, wayfarer and elders ripening and brambles fruiting in the shrubbery. while rowans ripening and hazelnuts falling early; meadow still with many flowering third week of July including burdock, birds foot trefoil, cinquefoil, wall rocket, wild carrot, prickly ox tongue, knapweed, ragwort and larkspur; white and bladder campion dropping seeds; nepeta and lavender still flowering in herbaceous border, enjoyed by many bees;

Rescue plantings - 3 snapdragons and 1 wood aster in the herbaceous border; 4 skimmias and a hellebore in the spinney; 9 salvos and 2 oxalis from Nic;

August

Activities:

Clearing around all fruit trees and whips to keep bases free from weeds and other fast growing plants. Mulched afterwards. Clearing in meadow orchard revealed a field maple with a branch that is split and needs cutting to make safe. Continued clearing of nettles throughout August to keep goat willows near pond free.

TCV has again been booked to scythe the meadow. The suggestion is that we ask them to look at the Fann St hedge while they are in the Garden and either cut it, if they have time, or provide advice on its maintenance.

Discussions also began on autumn meadow seeding. Suggestions include more campion (SE quarter), Devil's bit scabious, vipers bugloss (again as it didn't take last year) and bloody cranesbill. Also some discussion about whether we should consider cutting the meadow in the Spring as well as the autumn scything.

Water mint planted in Annes pond and a donated vinca planted nearby in the old bird bath.

Jo ordered autumn bulbs mid August. Order to include winter aconite, erythronium, narcissus lobularis, english bluebells, tulip turkestanica, leucojum, camass, snakehead fritillia, allium siculum. Order to be placed from peat free nursery.

Tree obstructing the new composting area cut down to assist access. Marsh marigolds around Annes pond split and replanted. Watering of whips and new plantings continued to month end.

Garden Observations:

Cyclamen flowering at top gate in mid month; quince and fruit trees fruiting in meadow; first autumn crocuses flowering in the meadow by end of month;

Rescue plantings - Water mint in Annes pond; vinca in the old bird bath; 3 foxgloves donated by Francis in the herbaceous border; hellebore donated by Vicky planted near the old stone bath in spinney;

September

Activities:

Whips watering continued into September and throughout month. Two (2) liriopes (from Bunhill) planted along the path near the compost area.

Discussions have started again about the tree work which was carried over from winter 2022/2023. Helen Davinson is going to assist in approach Jake to get the work scheduled. Francis will update his scope of work from last year, following the heavy winds in the middle of September.

Seed order for the meadow placed mid month. Order to include 250g of Emorsgate Wildflowers for Clay Soils EM4F for the SW quarter and 500g of Emorsgate Wildflowers for Hedgerows EH1F for the SE quarter and orchard. The SE quarter is to be left unscythed this year.

Some cutting back of the rosemary in the herbaceous border in order to make space for the bee hotel. Needs further pruning in the autumn. The ivy on the outside of the Bunyan ramp fence also cut back in order to keep the security lights on the ramp clear.

Two more foraged sarcococca planted in the spinney and two rescue ferns into the fernery.

Garden Observations: Insert text

Rescue plantings -Two (2) liriopes from Bunhill planted near compost area; two sarcococca into the spinney; two ferns into the fernery;

October

Activities:

Bulbs delivered and stored in the chateau bin ahead of planting. Fernery and meeting area cleared of vinca and ivy first week of month ready for planting mid month. Clearing of weeds in Fann St pits started but so many insects still foraging that work was halted for now. Nettles cleared from south end of the herbaceous border. Encroaching ivy cut back in the fernery.

Meadow scythed on 12 October with SE left unscythed. Arisings raked into heaps. Arisings moved from meadow on 25th October and spread as mulch at the end of the meadow orchard, spinney, copse and at the foot of the steps. Areas under the heaps scarified to open up the bare patches ahead of seeding. The NW quarter may need mowing again later in the season. Advice received on the Fann St hedge. The street size shrubs have sufficient length to be laid (recommended this be carried out in October 2024) and the meadow side shrubs should be lowered by 6 foot (could be done immediately).

Bulb planting proceeded in mid month including:

- 100 narcissus lobular (Lent daffodil) and 50 leucojum in cleared area near meeting area.
- 100 English bluebells in the copse
- 25 winter aconite and 10 dogs tooth violets into the spinney
- 25 winter aconite and 10 dogs tooth violet in the fernery
- 100 camassia spread across the SE and SW quarters, with some added behind the meadow pond;
- 50 fritellaria mileagris planted in NW quarter (around 30) and orchard (remainder)
- 100 tulipa turkestanica planted in the NW quarter, along northern edge of path, some along the SW edge of meadow and the remainder along northern edge of the orchard.

Cherry rescued from the Peabody Estate planted behind the new compost area. Dead birch removed from copse. Dead bird cherry cut back behind the meadow pond. Following meeting in the Garden with Jake Tibbets and Helen Davinson, the tree surgeons are hoping to do the tree work in the shrubbery, carried over from last year, by Christmas.

Broken poles along the palisade mended.

Garden Observations:

Last years bulbs in fernery appearing by mid month;

Rescue plantings -rescue Cherry donated by Peabody Estate;