



## Barbican Wildlife Garden Activity Log January to July 2024

<https://twitter.com/BarbicanWLG>

<http://www.barbicanwildlifegarden.org/>

### Section A – Community Participation

#### March

Richard from TCV has agreed to visit the Garden to provide advice on improving the edge treatment of Annes pond. Unfortunately this won't be possible until April due to his annual leave but in the meantime he will provide a quotation for laying the Fann St hedge.

A meeting was held at Bartletts on 20th March for an initial meeting with students to discuss the proposed collaboration. Jo, Francis, Kathrin and Ruth attended with Ryan who gave a presentation which was very well received. Afterwards, 24 students signed up as interested in being part of the collaboration and a date will now be organised to visit the Garden for an initial introduction. Follow up emails have now been sent inviting students to attend induction on either the 17th or 24th with 10 places available for each session.

Second and third information boards have now been received. There is some damage to the frame and the look is slightly different to the first so discussion around resolution are ongoing. Metwins have been booked to come to the Garden on the 3rd to discuss installation.

Group agreed to donate £50 to Kabir Kaul who is walking the length of the Regents canal in support of Wild London and wildjustice.org. We have also been approached by some UCL students about a new panel they are developing for solitary bees. A meeting in the Garden is planned for 3 April to discuss potential collaboration.

Spreading of wood chip along the garden paths continued throughout the month. Plants on trolley in compost area cleared up and watered with those remaining to be brought on over the coming months for sale at Open gardens in June.

#### April

Justin and Alex from Charterhouse Square visited to talk about how we manage the garden for wildlife and biodiversity. Metwins also attended the garden in order to install the three new information boards which are now in place (3 April).

Bunhill BioBlitz event will take place in Bunhill on 28 April and two volunteers, Jules and Kathrin, will be helping out. Meeting with UCL students deferred from 3 April until later in the month.

On first weekend in April, someone was observed breaking into the Garden by climbing over the Bunyan ramp fence and hedge frame. On departure they were carrying a container but no information was available on their activities while in the Garden. Christine Phillips, our local City of London police representative,

visited the Garden on the Wednesday and is looking into the matter. Significant damage incurred to the top section of the hedge supports.

The BWG has agreed to participate as a supporting partner in a document being prepared by Ben Bishop about promoting biodiversity in the City. We have also been approached by the next door nursery, asking whether small groups of children, under good supervision, could visit the Garden, subject to an internal risk assessment. We have agreed and asked them to propose some dates.

The first Bartletts induction visit took place on 24 April. Students could not do a health and safety induction as Nic was off sick, but Francis, Jo and Ryan conducted a garden walk around, and then were offered free time to enjoy the Garden, sketch and otherwise acquaint themselves with the space.

Information boards now in place and an Estate Bulletin was submitted last week, inviting residents to send us their comments. Jo has written one about the pollinator bed for third week of April.

On the last Sunday in April, BWG volunteers helped run the Bunhill Bioblitz which is part of the City Nature Challenge 2024. In particular Jules ran a bug hunt for the children and aided the identifications.

## **May**

The garden will be opening for London Open Gardens weekend and two poets (Dorothy McCarthy and Natasha Anne Hamilton) have been recruited to be present over the weekend. Aryan Kaul will also be writing a poem. We have also decided not to have leaflets this year and be paperless, as the new information boards are now in place but someone will be assigned to be near the pollinator bed to talk about what we are doing and answer questions. Also agreed that 25th guest of the day will be given a copy of London in the Wild (with articles by Kabir Kaul) to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the event. Nic is still planning to open the nursery despite his hospitalisation and BWG will provide support and assistance.

Police horses have been invited to come by at some point over the weekend and have provisionally set 11:30am on the Sunday. We have been approached by London Parks and Gardens Trust about filming in the garden on the open gardens weekend and we have agreed to this.

First week of the month plants for sale at LOG potted up. Kabir has also written two articles about LOG. Posters have been delivered week of 8 May and put up on 15 May. More plants potted up and all plants watered.

We have been approached by Gentle Author, a blogger who is author of Spitalfields Life and many books about London, would like to write an article about the garden and Francis has agreed to speak with him. Lizzie has joined us up with the TCV network using our website address as the contact. Ruth Corb, a City Guide, is writing an article about the Garden and visited to gather information. The Garden was mentioned in the May edition of the RHS magazine.

Dan Saunders, the new assistant director of the BEO, visited the garden on 29th May to look around. Culture Mile BID filmed in the Garden on 29 May for a piece being prepared for a Culture Mile BID breakfast to be held on Tuesday 18 June between 8 and 10am.

Date for IYN judging set at 3 July and our judge this year will be Jo Scrivener. Nic's nursery will be judged on 15 June by Lisa Wilkinson. Our leaflets have been sent to both judges and a summary sheet of the years achievements will be prepared for the visit.

Approached on Twitter asked whether we would be interested in a donation of slow worms but after taking advice they were declined.

## **Section B – Environmental Responsibility**

### **March**

Month opened with dead frog tally at 107, with an additional 14 dead frogs in the first week of March. By end of the month the total stood at 136, but the numbers were now down to only a couple a week.

Bee mound in pollinator bed finished at beginning of month with extra sandy loam added and pebbles across some of the surface. Pollinator lagoon relocated into a sunny section of the bed towards the centre and sunken into the ground.

Work continued on reinforcing the scrub barrier. Continued and completed first week of April.

*Significant sightings:* early pollinators including queen bumblebees are being seen in numbers exploring the newly planted pollinator bed; bee mound in pollinator bed has early signs of holes made by investigating bees;

### **April**

James from McGees visited the garden to look at the issue with the new water butts not filling but concluded that they would not have the time to make the necessary correction. Another contractor will need to be found to sort this out.

Annes pond is now looking in better health after the substantial tree surgery which has admitted more light at ground level. Marsh marigolds are making a particularly good showing this year.

*Significant sightings:* blue tits appear to be using nesting box along Fann St; marsh marigolds are doing well indicating that the water quality in Annes pond is improving;

### **May**

Decision taken to purchase a mason bee box. Konstantinos visited mid month to look at our bee mound and particularly the holes that area appearing to ascertain whether bees or ants are making them. Male Mason bee seen investigating bee hotel.

Second water butt in compost area now filling up. Monkey flower, watercress, water buttercups, water forget me nots and red clover flowering around the meadow pond. Irises doing well in Annes pond. Butt water added to meadow pond on 15th and 22nd May in order to empty the no 1 butt behind the bird hide to allow a levelling up plan (developed by Lionel) to be effected.

Many spindle larvae (ermine moth) eating away at the spindle near the entrance. There is significant build up of duck weed in Annes pond and remediation work over the winter will be necessary. TCV has been consulted for their advice.

*Significant sightings:* presence of spindle moth in the garden; red damselfly spotted mid month; tadpoles still developing well and frog seen jumping to try to catch a moth; one dead frog spotted on 15 May in shrubbery after a long period of no deaths; mason bee seen investigating new bee hotel; bee mound with evidence of occupation; newly planted pollinator bed and lagoon covered with insects and pollinators.

## Section C – Gardening Achievement

### March

#### *Activities:*

Short meeting held during the 6 March session to discuss plantings for the Fann St tree pits and agreed as follows:

Pit 1 (western most) Curry plant, wild bergamot

Pit 2 species of Cranesbill

Pit 3 Salvia yang

Pit 4 Lavender, rosemary and thyme

Plants orders from Crowders and delivered week of 18 March. Plants for the bed delivered on 6 March, unpacked and checked against the order list. One omission reported to Crowders who said they would supply with the next order.

Planting of the pollinator bed carried out on 13 March both during the session and continued into the afternoon. Skimmia, two salvias and a hebe relocated from the bottom of the pollinator bed. In the following weeks, 20th and 27th, removal of bind weed and wood avens continued at south end of bed. This is going to need to be ongoing as there is significant residual roots in the bed.

Hot lip salvia relocated from pollinator bed to the top end of the shrubbery. Also significantly pruned back to encourage new growth. Foraged celandine planted nearby in the shrubbery. three violets planted in the fernery.

Marsh marigolds starting to flower in Annes pond around 20th March. Ground ivy foraged from Bunhill and added to the insect hotel together with two honeysuckles. Alexander now about to flower in SE quarter of meadow, a foraged plant from Bunhill last year. Another Alexander planted near by on 27th March.

Wild garlic now out along southern edge of orchard and three cornered garlic in the copse and in front of the bird hide. Recently planted weeping cherry flowering in the orchard. Garlic mustard flowering near the tap in Fann St border.

Fifty (50) sarcococca planted along the edge of the spinney and thirty (30) daffodils bulbs planted to the south of the fernery where other daffodils are currently flowering.

Work started on threading new growth in to the palisade in the meadow orchard at month end.

*Garden Observations:* Fann St hedge leafing and budding well after winter cut back; red dead nettle flowering throughout the meadow; all trees in orchard flowering up especially the quince and goat willows; first cowslip in the meadow observed on 13 March; snakehead fritillary bulbs budding mid month; comfrey now flowering; marsh marigolds flowering in Annes pond on 20th; cowslips coming out all over the meadow by 20th, together with 3 snakeshead fritillary; weeping cherry flowering on 20th; marsh marigolds now fully out in Annes pond; snakehead fritillaries are flowering in significant numbers around 20 by months end; garlic mustard flowering by the tap;

*Rescue plantings* -ground ivy and two honeysuckles foraged from Bunhill planted on the insect hotel; another alexander planted in the SE quarter of the meadow near the existing flowering plant; hot lip salvia relocated

from pollinator bed to shrubbery; foraged celandine planted in the shrubbery; three foraged violets planted in the fernery.

## **April**

### *Activities:*

Rescue plants added to the pollinator bed, including: 8 artemis schmidtiana (from City Gardeners), 1 ajuga reptans "Burgundy Glow", 8 hebe dwarf magic colours (all donated by residents), small rosemary, lavender, geranium and celery leaf plant (foraged from podium). Clearing of bind weed and burdock continued. Foraged skimmia japonica added to the spinney.

Ferns in fernery trimmed back to new growth. Bird cherry near the compost area which was overhanging the path cut back. Nettles in the orchard thinned, especially under and around the fruit trees and saplings.

Three good clumps of spent snakeshead fritillary bulbs added to the meadow near the meeting area. Camassia bulbs also added to SE quarter and two pots of miniature daffodils to NW quarter. Two foraged sisyrinchium striatum and two rudbeckia fulgida added to pollinator bed.

Fann St tree pits planted up with plants purchased using the Friends of City Gardens grant, specifically:

Pit 1 Rosemary, thyme, lavender

Pit 2 Sedum, santolina

Pit 3 Cranesbill, salvia

Pit 4 Cranesbill, curry plant.

Selective removal of bind weed in the SE quarter of the meadow where it is rampant and in the pollinator bed.

*Garden Observations:* Snakeshead fritillaries, cowslips and red and white dead nettle all flowering well in the meadow at month start; meadow saffron leaves growing along the edge of the meadow; spearwort in leaf by the pond; cherry plum in Fann St border which was believed dead after pruning now coming back to life; white honesty flowering by the top gate; three good clumps of marsh marigolds flowering in Annes pond; first buttercups appearing around 17 April; wild marjoram doing well in NW quarter; native bluebells and buttercups appearing in all parts of the meadow at the end of the month; Star of Bethlehem flowering in NW and SW quarters; red campion in SE quarter and orchard; plentiful blossom on apple and other fruit trees in the orchard; grass and wild garlic doing well in the copse and bird cherry in full flower in the spinney.

*Rescue plantings* -8 artemis schmidtiana (from City Gardeners), 1 ajuga reptans "Burgundy Glow", 8 hebe dwarf magic colours (all donated by residents), small rosemary, lavender, geranium and celery leaf plant (foraged from podium), all into pollinator bed; skimmia japonica into the spinney; foraged winter heliotrope added to the concrete bird bath opposite Annes pond; more ground ivy added to insect hotel; three good clumps of spent snakeshead fritillary bulbs added to the meadow near the meeting area; Camassia bulbs also added to SE quarter and two pots of miniature daffodils to NW quarter; two foraged sisyrinchium striatum and two rudbeckia fulgida added to pollinator bed;

## **May**

### *Activities:*

Bindweed removal continuing in both the meadow and pollinator bed.

Additions made to the pollinator bed including 3 x agastache Blue Fortune, 5 x Eremurus (foxtails), 5 x rudbeckia fulgida deami, 5 x ferula communis (giant fennel) and all watered in. On 8 May 2 x agastache, 5 x

dodecatheon meadow, 5 x helenium modrheim beauty, 5 x red valerian, 7 x monarda didyma. 5 x rudbeckia goldstream need to be planted once they have matured in the pots. 4 x Cephalaria gigantes added to the bed on 22 May.

5 x lysimachia przewalskii and 5 x yellow loosestrife planted near meadow pond. Giant scabious, ligularia prewalstii planted near meadow pond on 22 May.

At beginning of month additions made to the Fann St tree pits including 7 x monarda didyma then mulched and watered in. On 15 May geranium macronhizum replanted and erigeron added.

Elder in compost area that was encroaching on the water butts cut back. Thistles removed from north edge of meadow. Goose grass clumps removed from NE quarter of meadow. Cutting back of overhanging branches along paths. Nettles removed from SE quarter. Burdock removed from Fann St border and as it was covered in black fly it was left to wilt at the top of the shrubbery where insects and birds could feast on the insects. Selective weeding of mugwort in Fann St tree pits carried out at month end.

*Garden Observations:* Irises doing well in Annes pond; yellow rattle, knapweed, buttercups and camissia all growing well in the meadow; cow parsley in flower in the orchard from month beginning; bladder campion flowering in NE quarter of meadow; much speedwell and small patches of vetch flowering; Wayfaring shrubs flowering near Annes pond; yellow rattle now appearing in SW quarter of meadow; mouse ear chickweed observed near meadow pond which is good nectar for bees and flies; flattened grass in meadow indication that foxes have been playing there; by month end, meadow in full flower with cut leaf geranium and buttercups flowering throughout, bladder campion, ox eye daisies and ripening knapweed; pollinator bed now also well established and looking good.