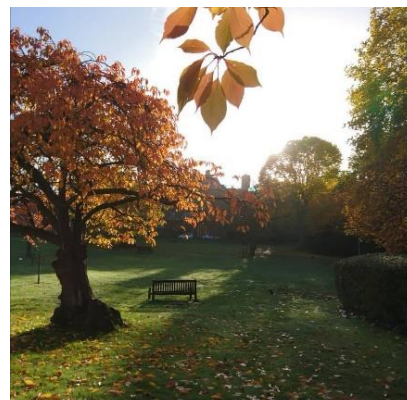


Manor Fields Garden Newsletter October/November 2019



At the request of several residents, this newsletter describes the gardening year at Manor Fields. It includes more photos and answers questions put to the Gardeners from time to time; it is therefore a little longer than usual!

When I was asked to compile an end of year garden newsletter, I was amazed just how much new planting we have achieved in 2019. It has been much easier to manage the gardens this year compared with thirteen weeks of drought conditions last summer. Saying that, our newest member of the Gardens Team, James, started at Manor Fields when temperatures reached 37°C on two consecutive days!

We regularly get asked how many people work in the gardens department. There is Jo, Zoltan, Stuart and James who are all full-time, permanent members of staff. The last couple of years Nan has worked for us on a seasonal basis, over busy times and to cover holidays. Residents enquire about Mariliis, the Estonian girl who worked for Manor Fields over the summers of 2017/18. She returned to Estonia last October and is now the proud Mum of Ott-Eerik. She still keeps in touch and I regularly send her photos of the gardens.

The Gardeners have recently attended and completed a HAVS course, this is so they are knowledgeable about hand, arm vibration levels and monitoring when working with petrol machinery. HAVi monitors have been purchased and each member of staff attaches the device to individual pieces of equipment, so the vibration level can be monitored and recorded.

Alongside the new planting projects (which follow in detail), the general garden maintenance takes priority with many daily tasks including, pruning, weeding, edging, mowing, hedge cutting, irrigating, strimming and litter picking...to name but a few. All the future projects and new planting designs are interesting and great for motivation. Lots of planning and preparation for the gardens takes place behind the scenes. We currently plan at least six months in advance; for example, I am already designing and ordering the plants for the summer-flowering window boxes and main gate bedding display.

Inevitably, some of the planting will have suffered from the scaffolding and external refurbishment. If your block hasn't been addressed yet, you have not been forgotten. The work can only be practically done either in September or when the ground starts to warm up again at the end of March.

Heath Roundabout

Despite the Victorian-style bedding planted on the roundabout constantly being a colourful display, it was proving to be an extremely costly and high maintenance area. It has divided opinions of the residents with half enjoying the bright flower displays while other residents thought the planting style made the estate look like a municipal park. Historically the bed has been planted up twice a year with colourful annual flowers; October for winter/spring bedding and May for summer bedding. The bed contained 1,500 bedding plants which needed deadheading and irrigating on a regular basis. It has been decided by myself and The Garden Committee to change the roundabout to include permanent planting containing summer-flowering drought-tolerant perennials. We have phased the work in gradually, starting at the end of May when we planted *Ilex crenata*, a low, evergreen hedge that resembles *Buxus sempervirens* (Box) but being in the Holly family it comes without the problems of Box Blight and Box Caterpillar. The *Ilex* has been planted to create a permanent framework, like spokes of a wheel, which only needs clipping once a year (May). A couple of weeks ago we planted each section with a variety of purple, pink and white Hebe's. These will form all year-round evergreen structure and interest. Once the plants are established

they will be pruned into dome-shapes. We have just planted 200 pink fringed tulips in the roundabout for impact each spring. Once the tulips have finished flowering herbaceous perennials will be added to create a pastel palette of soft yellows, pale pinks, creams and lilac flowers synonymous with Arts and Crafts-style gardens.



Roundabout in August with the *Ilex crenata* hedge and summer bedding

Rear of Prospect House School

A low hedge of evergreen *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella' has been planted behind Prospect House School, using Skimmia's from the winter/spring bedding. Four highly scented climbers have been added to disguise the boundary fence, a mixture of winter-flowering *Clematis urophylla* 'Winter Beauty' and pink, summer-flowering *Jasminum beesianum*.

Pond

The planting in the pond has been completely redesigned to incorporate native but non-invasive varieties because the previous, more exotic plants were struggling to put on new growth. There is now a varied selection of deep water, marginal, floating and oxygenating plants which the fish and other wildlife should find beneficial for shelter, shade and food. The waterlilies remain with some additional beautiful colours this year of cream, pale pink and pale yellows. Covering 60% of the water surface with plants also reduces the growth of blanket weed, algae and duckweed. We have added two frog ramps in opposite corners of the pond to assist emerging young frogs and toads out of the pond in late spring. They return to the same spawning ground every year and these new ramps have already proved to be a success. We purchased a pond water testing kit earlier in the year and the water is now being monitored once a month, the clarity and pH levels are both excellent.



View from the south end of the pond in July



Juvenile toads using one of the new frog ramps

Bog Garden (at the rear of Mansfield House)

All the surplus healthy plants that were removed from the corners of the pond have been incorporated in a new bog garden. Measuring only a metre square, the area is always shady and damp and the plants there are thriving. This creates a different habitat for insects, looks colourful and cost nothing to construct and plant. Dragonflies and Damselflies have already been spotted on the plants in this area.



Bog Garden at rear of Mansfield House

Seated Area in the Woodland

Whilst on the subject of reusing plants, the Gardeners have pruned back the Rhododendrons and other evergreen shrubs near the seating area in the woodland. Yellow Polyanthus and cream Primroses from the winter/spring window boxes were planted in drifts here in May to add some colour whilst maintaining a woodland environment.

Armstrong Boundary

Work on the Armstrong boundary has been completed. A double hedge of *Carpinus betulus* (Hornbeam) has been planted to create a tall, dense screen. Hornbeam keeps its brown leaves in winter, similar to Beech, which in this case is an advantage. Clump-forming bamboo has been planted either side of the small gate, again to act as a screen but eventually to reduce some of the traffic noise especially from the

bus terminus. A dense, evergreen *Griselinia littoralis* hedge has also been planted to eventually camouflage the bus shelter. All the remaining Polyanthus, Forget-me-nots and Primroses from the winter/spring bedding were planted here and a small herbaceous border added. After much irrigation this summer until the plants became established, the area is now thriving and putting on lots of healthy new growth. Over two hundred yellow fringed tulips have recently been planted to enhance the area next spring.

Main Gates

A decaying *Ceanothus* has been removed from the north-facing side of the main gates. The area has been redesigned and planted with drifts of foliage plants to not distract from the adjacent colourful bedding display. A more suitably sized *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* 'Skylark' has been planted against a bamboo framework and underplanted with *Euphorbia characias* 'Silver Swan', *Euphorbia polychroma*, *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Betty Bowring' and *Heuchera* 'Obsidian'. This enhances the vista into Manor Fields Estate for residents and the public.

Ripon House

Many residents have commented on the new colourful planting on the corner of Ripon House. The area is such a popular focal point from the main gates and along the main drive. Planting choices were restricted by an enormous but stunning *Magnolia grandiflora* that casts a lot of shade, but we chose compact, low-growing purple and white Hebe's for all year round interest and contrasting *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty' which produces long-flowering, orange daisy-like flowers mid and late summer.



Helenium outside Ripon House



New planting on the corner of Ripon House

Seated Area Opposite 1-8 Bede House

A mixture of one-hundred and fifty native hedgerow plug plants were purchased this summer which the Gardeners potted-on in the greenhouse. In late September the 15cm established plants were planted in the area behind the seat with four hundred *Fritillaria Meleagris* (Snakehead Fritillaria) bulbs. Look out for the results in late spring when the area should be full of red campion, cowslips, yarrow, Lady's bedstraw, hawkbit and knapweed and hopefully plenty of early butterflies and bees.



Hedgerow plug plants potted-on in the greenhouse

Mansfield House

In September the redesign and new planting was added to the front and east side of Mansfield House. It was an ideal opportunity to add some new varieties of plants to an area of Manor Fields. Many herbaceous perennials were planted to inject some colour including *Salvia 'Amistad'* and *Thalictrum delavayi*. Most of the new planting is fragrant and nectar-rich for wildlife. Some large specimen *Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn'* have been added at the front of Mansfield. This is a late winter/early spring flowering shrub that produces honey-scented delicate pink flowers on bare stems. In addition, we have planted three *Hamamelis x intermedia* (Witch Hazel) along the east side of the building, two of a yellow variety and a single orange variety in the centre. These are stunning shrubs when they are in flower in spring, they produce flowers on bare stems and the fragrance is intoxicating. These large shrubs have been planted in their locations to eventually hide two bare walls and cover some pipework on another.

New trees

Manor Fields annual tree survey was completed at the end of June. The full report included Tree Condition Survey Report, Full Action Plan, Priority Action Plan and plotted GPS co-ordinates.

Luckily, we managed to evade the Oak Processionary Moth this year despite an influx of the caterpillar across oak trees around Putney Heath and Roehampton.

This year we have planted four new tree species:

- *Cornus kousa 'Milky Way'* (Chinese Dogwood) on the boundary near Mansfield House
- *Cornus mas* (Cornelian Cherry) on the sundial lawn opposite 17-24 Bede
- *Euonymus europaeus 'Red Cascade'* (Spindle Tree) on the boundary near Mansfield House
- *Parrotia persica* (Persian Ironwood) on the main lawn

As the Gardeners are busy putting the gardens to bed for the winter, we still have a long list of tasks to complete in the colder season. We are currently planting 1,700 spring-flowering bulbs around the estate and are scheduled for the final grass and hedge cutting of the year (weather permitting). Here's just some of the tasks we have scheduled in the next couple of months:

- Rose pruning – the climbing roses have already been pruned. The Hybrid Teas and Floribundas will be lightly pruned in November and then moderately pruned in February
- Tree work – removing all dead, diseased, duplicate and damaged wood
Lifting canopies and thinning out branches where appropriate
- Window boxes – planting and installing the winter/spring window boxes in early November
- Leaf clearance
- Seed sowing – will start in January through until April in the greenhouse
- Cutting down herbaceous perennials
- Woodland area – rejuvenate willow arch and insect hotels
- Gritting – fingers crossed it will be another mild winter and there will not be much call for gritting the roads!

So, as you will see, it is a misconception that winter is a quiet season for Gardeners.

I will sign off for 2019 with a few photos of my favourite trees and shrubs for autumn colour and interest, on the estate. Do keep an eye on the tall *Taxodium distichum* (Swamp Cypress) on the sundial lawn near Magdalene House. It's an unusual deciduous conifer that will change from bright green to bright orange over the next few weeks and then shed all its leaves.

Jo Morris



Cornus kousa 'Milky Way' (Chinese Dogwood) on the boundary near Mansfield House



Symphoricarpos albus (Snowberry) in-front of Harvard House and behind Mansfield House



Euonymus europaeus 'Red Cascade' (Spindle Tree) on the boundary near Mansfield House

Acer Rubrum (Red Maple) in-front of Selwyn House



Photo taken 30th September



Photo taken 23rd October

Liquidambar styraciflua (Sweetgum) in the middle of the roundabout



Photo taken 30th September

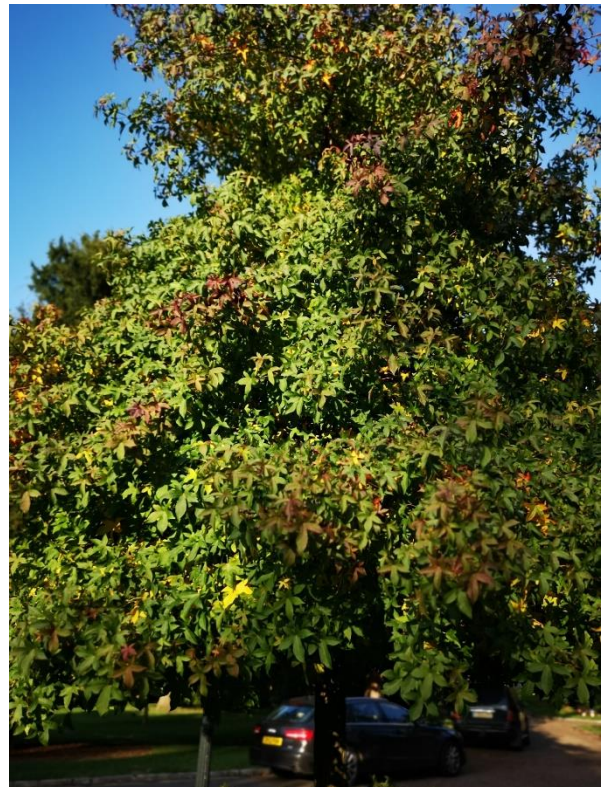


Photo taken 23rd October