



## Heart of England in Bloom Newsletter February 2020

Hello.

Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2020. I hope it is not too late to wish you a Happy New Year and lots of successful gardening. We have quite a full Newsletter and it's clear that Bloomers are getting into action. It is a little bit early to be doing very much in the garden but I have snowdrops flowering in mine. The Heart of England in Bloom is already busy. We have a new Chair - Roger Tait (see Newsletter September 2019). Roger Bache now becomes Deputy Chair. You should now have received information from Mark Wiltshire about your entries for this year. We look forward to receiving them.



Best wishes

Carol

[doctorcarolmiller@gmail.com](mailto:doctorcarolmiller@gmail.com)





## Grow Social

The theme for the RHS Britain in Bloom campaign this year is 'Grow Social', something that we can all understand. As we often say, it's not just about the plants, it's about the people we meet and join with in our gardening. Community Participation is given great importance in the campaign and is always considered in the judging criteria.

The RHS is offering support and resources to groups to enable social growing. Have a look at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/get-involved/community-gardening> for information on what is available.



## Heart of England in Bloom entries 2020

Mark Wiltshire has sent out an email with links to the website for groups to enter this year. He has included all of the new groups that he is aware of but if you know of others who may be thinking of entering, please encourage them to contact Mark. [mark@heartofenglandinbloom.org](mailto:mark@heartofenglandinbloom.org)

Forms are to be submitted online only and fees are to be paid directly into the bank. This reduces paper, petrol and time. Judges will start to contact groups soon and where possible, will arrange judging dates.

We would like to have all entries and judging dates finalised by April this year.

The Spring Seminar will be on 2 April at Cookley Leisure Centre, Kidderminster. The application form will be available online shortly.

Awards Ceremonies will be on Thursday 10 September at Keele University for the Bloom awards and on Thursday 17 September at JCB Headquarters near Uttoxeter for the It's Your Neighbourhood awards.

For all information go to the Heart of England in Bloom website: [www.heartofenglandinbloom.org](http://www.heartofenglandinbloom.org)





## **New Judges for the Heart of England in Bloom**

On a very wet Saturday in November, the Heart of England in Bloom ran a training session for new judges. Six ladies - yes, all the new judges are women, came to Moseley in Birmingham, to learn how our assessments work. They then braved the weather, as judges do, with umbrellas and raincoats and visited two sites in Moseley that will be assessed in 2020. Then, back at the Moseley Exchange, they shared ideas on what they had seen, with Roger Bache, Mark Wiltshire and other experienced assessors. It is always amazing and reassuring to see how strong the agreement is between assessors. Within a few points, there is usually little argument about the level achieved. Some of the new judges have experienced assessment from the 'other side'. That is, they have been entrants to the Heart of England in Bloom campaign. They are all keen 'social gardeners' and so understand well the principles and philosophy of Britain in Bloom. Below is information about five of them. We hope we will have more next month. We welcome them to the Heart of England in Bloom team.

### **Helen Betts**

After retiring from full time employment in 2006 I began volunteering with Paul Stead at the East Staffordshire Borough Council (ESBC) Horticultural Centre in Stapenhill, Burton on Trent, working in the nursery and maintaining nearby open spaces. This led to becoming a judge for Paul's Burton in Bloom initiative. I, and the other volunteers, travelled all over the ESBC area visiting gardens. This gave us an opportunity to meet some interesting and talented gardeners. Gardening had always been an essential interest for me, either creating and planting my own gardens, or visiting 'Yellow Book' gardens across Europe and USA. I became the co-ordinator for Branston in Bloom's entry for the Heart of England in Bloom campaign and led the group to a Gold Award in 2019 after only two years, an achievement for which we were very proud. I am a member of the RHS and enjoy visiting their gardens. I am very much looking forward to joining the judging team for Heart of England in Bloom and hope my experience will stand me in good stead.





### **Anne Brookes**

Following early retirement in 2011 I have worked as a garden volunteer and in environmental conservation. I am particularly interested in sustainability and enhancing biodiversity in gardens and public spaces. I currently work in three community gardening projects, an organic garden owned by a Quaker study centre and in an education centre for the local wildlife trust. In the latter my main focus is on the propagation of native plants which are then given to schools, community groups, local parks and green spaces to enhance the biodiversity of the local area. my experience in these settings has convinced me that community gardening not only improves local environments but generates goodwill and enjoyment among residents and visitors as well as among the gardeners.



### **Jackie Careless**

From a very young age I learned how to grow by following my dad around the garden and spending many hours helping him in his greenhouse. I have always had a passion for being outdoors, conservation and horticulture. I studied at the University of Wolverhampton and gained a BSc Environmental Science degree in 1998. I have volunteered in conservation and at community gardens for most of my adult life. At present, I work as a Project Coordinator with Ecobirmingham, mainly around food growing and healthy eating within the local community. I also coordinate two community gardens, one through Ecobirmingham and one as self-employed. It's great to see people and gardens flourish when they come together as a community.





### **Janet Gwinnett**

I am a recently retired science teacher where I have encouraged children to enjoy horticulture and I believe in the benefits of gardening to communities and individuals.

I have also studied for an HNC in Garden Design and Management where I indulged my passion for plants and have a genuine interest in this area. I have a life long interest in all aspects of growing plants am currently chair of my local gardening club.

I can't wait to get stuck in to judging for HOEIB. As a new member of the team I am really looking forward to seeing some of the entries in the summer.



### **Sharon Miles**

I work for a Housing Association within the Estates Services Team as an Estates Team Manager. My work involves overseeing the delivery of grounds maintenance in the SE Midlands through our in-house teams and contractors. Part of my role involves liaising with our customers to encourage people to come together as part of their community, to improve their health and wellbeing and to encourage people to get outdoors and enjoy their surroundings, as well as finding out what they would like to see within their green spaces. In addition to this, we are looking to set up a variety of gardening clubs at our Independent Living schemes to further encourage people to actively engage in their surroundings.



I am really looking forward to becoming a Heart of England in Bloom judge, and look forward to seeing some of you soon.





## Warndon Community Garden

Warndon and Warndon Villages lie to the north east of Worcester. They have a combination of both private and social housing over a large area of Worcester. The Community garden is quite small and surrounded by starter homes and flats to give residents the chance of an allotment. The homes and garden are now managed by Fortis Housing.

Our involvement with the Community Garden started about 12 months ago. The last group that looked after the garden had to retire, apart from two ladies who live very close. After having been left unattended for almost a year; it was in a sorry state. It took some time before we could recruit, or should I say `press gang` two ladies from our local U3A (University of the Third Age ) gardening group that we also run, to join us and make a team of six.

The growing year has been a very good one, with plenty of successes and the sheer elation of pulling the first carrot or picking a beautiful ripe tomato and eating it fresh from the plant. Growing your own veg comes at a price of having the occasional disaster too. Like putting a couple of trays of French Beans in the cold frame overnight, only to come back in the morning to find the snails had got there first, or a strong wind snapping all the runner bean canes.

We have been very experimental in growing vegetables that are not the `usual`, both for our amusement and to see what the soil conditions would support. Examples are: kohlrabi, mooli, pak choi, soy beans, chick peas and a variety of heritage tomatoes, one of which produced a single tom of 0.8kg, so plenty of tomato soup!

Like any gardeners we look forward to next year when we will be making changes to improve not only the vegetable garden but also the flower beds. Some very established roots of Euphorbia and Verbena will have to go, to give an opportunity for a more balanced bed to be created. It is also our intention to invite more non-gardeners along to enjoy the garden as a social part of our community.



Derek and Pam Furby





## D – O – G – L spells ...?

Whitchurch C of E Primary School is in Herefordshire and is 'outstanding' according to Ofsted. The use of the school grounds is worthy of a Heart of England in Bloom 'Gold' award, according to us.

The entrance foyer has a superb display reflecting the school's commitment to ecological awareness and care for the environment. Crowning the display is a personal letter from David Attenborough written to the children in response to a letter they had sent him. This whole school commitment owes much to the leadership of Donna Powell, a teaching assistant and a worthy recipient of a H o E in Bloom award for 'outstanding achievement'.

We were invited to lead an assembly, not only to give out the certificate, which they knew about in advance, but also to present Donna with her award, which she did not know about. Ten minutes before the start, the school hall was empty apart from Lola, the school dog that belongs to one of the teachers. Lola was whizzing around, nose to the floor, hoovering up biscuit crumbs. Actually, she plays a very important role in the school, befriending all the pupils but especially those who feel troubled and in need of some emotional support. A few moments later the hall was filled with pupils and staff. After a brief introduction from the headteacher, I explained that when we judged the school grounds earlier in the year you had to be 'good' to get a bronze award, 'very good' for a silver but only 'excellent' would get you a gold.



Four children each held up a large card folded in half. The cards would eventually spell out the word GOLD, but I had deliberately mixed up the order so that when the first three cards were shown, they read DOG. At that moment Lola suddenly emerged from the front row, wagging her tail and staring at the cards. In a surreal moment I heard myself say, "it says dog. Can you read that Lola d,o,g, dog?" She really did appear to be reading as her nose and eyes followed the three cards displayed.





There was a moment of stunned silence followed by an uproar of laughter. Then we revealed the last letter 'L' substituting it for the letter D, but LOG D made no sense either. At this point I pretended it had all gone wrong and the children would have to sort it out themselves, which of course they did to spontaneous applause.

Lesley now took over and explained how each year a few people across the Heart of England in Bloom receive a special award for 'outstanding achievement'. "I know we are taught that it's rude to point but just for once can you all point to anyone here who deserves such an award". Without hesitation, staff and pupils pointed to Donna Powell who was overcome with embarrassment but delighted to receive it.



Lesley and David Pritchard

### **30 Bloomin' Years!**

2020 will be Newcastle's 30th consecutive entry to Bloom, an achievement we are extremely proud of.

The campaign has changed a great deal from what was a predominately municipal floral contest, to be much more community-focussed. Our working group has evolved and greatly improved the standard of our entry, to the point that last year saw our 18th consecutive Gold award. We are hugely honoured to have been nominated for the National Finals on five occasions and have also received many discretionary awards.

Bloom is a great way to engage with the local community and has helped to engender a real sense of ownership and pride in where you live. This fits beautifully with our Council's agenda, and is especially important considering the reduction in municipal resources in recent years. The costs of running the campaign are more than covered by the income received through sponsorship of our many floral displays and traffic circles.





Bloom acts as a catalyst for a whole range of community projects and activities, ranging from litter picks and planting projects to school talks and park events, and gives us a really effective way to collate all these things under one banner. We do our best to promote Bloom through every possible media stream and in recent years have seen a huge growth in areas such as Facebook and Twitter which have provided a great platform to raise awareness of its importance within our communities.

2020 will be an opportunity for us to reflect on the past 30 years, and how Bloom has developed, as well as looking to the future with our '2020 Vision of Bloom' theme. We have lots planned to celebrate this special milestone so please watch this space. We hope to continue to spread the 'Bloom' word and be involved with the campaign for many years to come, in our endeavour to make Newcastle the most beautiful place it can be.

Simon Long



### **School Half Term at the Albrighton Trust Moat and Gardens**



#### **Monday 17th February Creative Crafts**

Make a Bird Feeder to take home to feed our native birds during this critical time of the year. 10am and 1pm sessions. £5 per person.

#### **Wednesday 19th February Wild about Nature**

Enjoy our Wild about Nature sessions, fun activities and games while learning about the natural world. Learn how to light a natural fire using a fire steel or you could create clay creatures, handmade bird feeders, leaf pressed designs. Every session is different. 10am and 1pm. £5 per person.





### **Thursday 20th February Coached Angling**

Coaches available to help novice or inexperienced anglers. They will learn to put bait on a hook, cast a line, land a fish, unhook fish safely, handle fish and return them safely to the water. Equipment supplied - 10am and 1pm sessions. £5 per person.

Payment required in advance. Please contact the office to book your place on 01902 372441 or email [moat@albrightontrust.org.uk](mailto:moat@albrightontrust.org.uk)

