



Heart of England in Bloom Newsletter

June 2020

Greetings

Thank goodness for Spring! My impression is that it has been a really good one, with plenty of sunshine. There have been challenges, with some pesky cold weather and even frost in May which didn't help the seedlings to grow. However, I hope that you have all managed to get out into your gardens or into the green spaces we have around us. In South Birmingham we have spectacular parks and it has been wonderful to watch the progress of the trees and flowers as they change and flourish. I know that Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood groups are still busy in different ways because I have seen it on Twitter. Please send news of your activities in to the Newsletter so that we can all keep in touch. Stay well!

Carol
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The Painted Lady

The Lady, unpainted, was rediscovered in the Malvern Hills. No, not the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to the south-west of where we live, but the David Austin repeat-flowering Rambler Rose (Rosa Canary) which covers our north-facing garden fence. It does amazingly well, except that every year we must tie in and redirect all the vigorous growth. That is when I found her, staring back at me, with a somewhat (un)glazed expression.

The Lady made an inauspicious start in life. She began as a lump of clay at my very first pottery group, run by Age Concern in Coventry. Adorned with a coronet of grapes, vine leaves and tendrils, she made the journey to Ludlow 10 years ago, where she looked down at us from a bare fence. That was before Malvern Hills took possession.

On discovery, we realised that she had not aged well, which of us has? She had lost all her subtle glazes. She was deathly pale. She was released from her leafy bower in order to receive a cosmetic makeover. But we were in viral lockdown and no new ceramic glazes were available, let alone a kiln to fire them in. So, we just had to scabble around to find restorative remedies.

And this is what we came up with: two abandoned nail varnishes, two glass beads from under a houseplant, several tester pots of paint, the scant remainder of a Christmas gold glitter paint spray, and one tube of gorilla glue.

A 'beauty counter' facial transformation ensued: the nail varnish coloured the grapes and her lips, the beads were glued into the eye sockets, the mixed-up tester pots decorated her coronet and gold glitter paint covered her face and cheeks.

Now, in truth, I may have overdone it a bit, and, as time goes by, her beauty may fade. But for now, she hangs in glorious technicoloured splendour, on the front of the garden shed. She can be admired, or not, by all those who use the footpath along the side of our garden.



So, what I'm suggesting you do, is this: dig around the corners and unfrequented areas of your own garden or patio. You never know what you may find: an old spade, a fork or wheelbarrow that can be brightly painted; a chair, a row of plant pots, or parts of a fence or balcony that can have a similar treatment; a cushion cover that can be knitted out of scraps of wool or even strips of differently coloured plastic from old shopping and garden bags. You don't have to use nail varnish, beads, tester pots of paint and glue ... just discover your own creative side.

Meanwhile, I'm not suggesting my painted lady is a thing of beauty, but as I write this in Coronavirus Lockdown, she gives us something to smile at and sometimes, just sometimes, I swear that she is smiling back.

Lesley Pritchard, Judge

News from Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton BID, in partnership with The City of Wolverhampton Council has brightened up four large flower beds, located in the heart of the city centre leading to the new railway station. The planters, located to the rear of Bilston Street Police Station had become a target for litter and general waste during works undertaken by the Midland Metro Alliance (MMA) when installing the new tram line connection between the Metro and the Bus Station.



The planters are owned by West Midlands Police, and with their help, the BID asked the local Council for support with any plants they could supply to brighten the somewhat unsightly planters on what is a very busy transport route into the city centre.



The MMA kindly filled the planters with soil when the works finished in January this year, and the planting was secured by the BID in early March at the start of lockdown to improve the environment of the city centre.

We are hoping that with all the dry and sunny weather, the new planters have settled in well, and are now blessed with a drop of rain!



Donna Loasby Britain in Bloom Coordinator for Newcastle-Under -Lyme has sent this useful information

In the current lockdown, I believe more and more people are considering growing their own fruit and vegetables at home. Now that the garden centres are open, the information below on how to make a raised bed will be helpful:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/How-to-make-a-raised-bed>

and this link suggests fruit, vegetables and herbs to grow around this time

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/grow-your-own>

Halesowen giving the NHS a big blooming thank you!

Halesowen in Bloom won Gold in the Heart of England in Bloom in 2018 and went on to win Silver Gilt in the National Finals. They then went on to the International Challenge involving winners from communities in Britain, USA, America, Japan and Europe.

Like the rest of the world we are dealing with unprecedented times. We would normally be looking forward to our summer bedding in Halesowen. However with many of our faithful volunteers in self isolation, we do not have the capacity to water and maintain the displays this summer. We are therefore donating our plants to Dudley NHS Foundation Trust to be planted at Russell's Hall Hospital to show our support and say a big blooming thank you for all that they do.



As a voluntary organisation we rely on sponsorship for our displays. This year, we will not have any revenue, therefore we are asking for contributions to cover the cost of the plants with any excess funds donated going to the Dudley NHS Foundation Trust.

Halesowen In Bloom has also started an on-line initiative to bring people together at this difficult time, launched to coincide with the RHS gardening week. We want our community to share on our social media their blooming flora, fauna and wildlife from home or on their walks. In time we will be creating a giant rainbow from all the pictures provided.

Eve O'Connor



AN INITIATIVE BY
HALESOWEN IN BLOOM

Moseley in Bloom Open Gardens

Normally at this time of year, in B13 we are very busy preparing for our Open Gardens event in the last weekend of June. Planning starts in the new year and we already had 22 gardens lined up to open over the two days. The event inevitably had to be cancelled in its usual form but, just like the Chelsea Flower Show, the National Theatre and many other spectacles, we are going online!

Moseley's Virtual Open Gardens will be broadcast on a dedicated YouTube channel on Saturday 27th June and we want to make this feel like a real community event. Gardeners in Moseley are now making short video tours of their garden or allotment. It means that the event will be open, not only to people living in or near to us, but anywhere around the UK - or even the world!



For more information about Open Gardens please go to

www.MoseleyInBloom.org.uk/open-gardens

Sadly, teas and cakes will be off the menu this year but the lovely gardens will be there for all to see. There is no reason not to eat cakes while you watch. See you there!

Pebworth in Bloom

For thirty years the gardeners of Pebworth have welcomed visitors to the village in support of the National Garden Scheme, helping to raise thousands of pounds for charities. So we were all saddened when the two-day May event was cancelled, especially as we had planned even better horticultural displays throughout the village in preparation for the UK Britain in Bloom finals judging day.

We thought that no-one would see the gardens this year due to social distancing. How wrong we were ! Not hundreds but thousands saw our delightful village as, completely unannounced, a Sky News crew turned up and spent the day interviewing volunteers and broadcasting live to the nation and beyond with repeats many times in the evening ! Yvonne, our Chair, described how the In Bloom campaign had brought the community together. Then Fred, our youngest committee member, busy as usual mowing the grass verges when he would normally have been at school revising for A Levels, found himself on camera and Wendi, our NGS organiser was also tracked down in her garden, to describe how gardening at this time is so important for people's well-being.

If Pebworth in Bloom volunteers have learned anything from this exciting day, it's this - always be ready for the unexpected ! Thank goodness that volunteers have continued, since lock-down, with maintenance work during daily exercise and with time on everyone's hands, even more volunteers have made sure that the village has looked spectacular all Spring. The film has been put on the Pebworth in Bloom Facebook page and on the Pebworth Village Facebook page.

Jenny McLeish

Don't forget to send in your news and other stories to the Newsletter. We know you are still busy. Tell us about it!



