

GARDENER'S REPORT 2012

JEREMY MOULSDALE

There have been quite a few changes in the garden this year. The most obvious development has been the new Jubilee garden. But there were also several other projects as well as some changes in the way the work has been done.

The most unfortunate change is that Ben, our groundsman, who gives the garden so much care and support and has been a central figure in the gardens over the last 10 years, has not been well. He has not been able to do any heavy work and has therefore very much reduced the number of hours that he does. We are all hoping that his condition improves, but, at the present time, he is not able to do very much garden work.

As a consequence we have had contractors in to cut the hedges over the summer. They didn't do it with the care and attention to detail that Ben did, but because there were four of them they did get a lot done in a short time. They also cut some of the hedges in Lewes Crescent hard back from the railings, which means they look a bit hacked about at the moment. This was done to allow the railings to be painted and also to try and keep the hedge further back from the railings in the long term.

As well as the contractors we have had extra help from Afke who looks after Chichester Terrace one day a week. She has increased her hours to help me out in the main garden.

So the summer was challenging, I spent so much time on the Jubilee garden in the spring, that I was already behind on some of the regular tasks. Then Ben started to reduce his hours and the heavens opened and it rained and rained and rained, then blew a gale and rained some more! So it wasn't easy to work and the weeds grew like mad. I will always think of this as the year of the bindweed - it just loved the wet. When one of the gales in June covered the garden in sea spray scorching the trees and destroying flower buds, I could not help to think what a daft idea it was to have a garden on a wind swept chalk cliff top.

However, the rain did also bring some advantages, most notably to all the new plants in the Jubilee garden which managed to establish well. The wildflower banks kept flowering for much longer than normal and I've never seen the garden look so green and lush in July and August.

Projects

The Jubilee garden has been the biggest project in the garden this year. It began with the reluctant removal of the trees opposite 12 Lewes Crescent. It was a shock to see the trees go, but once they had gone the new path and borders were quickly put in place and the new character of the area was formed. Six new trees were generously donated and the planting completed. My main worry when planting was about the hosepipe ban and the terrible drought that was predicted, well I needn't have worried about that! By the summer I was pleased with how the beds had developed and how colourful they looked, I was particularly pleased by the huge number of butterflies and bees that also enjoyed it. There are still a couple of bits that need tweaking and I will do this over the autumn as well as plant bulbs which it was too late to plant when the bed was made.

Two of the smaller projects done last winter were

- 1) Reshaping of the rose beds, turning them from 4 small beds to 2 large ones.
- 2) Extending and planting the bed opposite the N.E gate.

Benches

Quite a few of the benches in the garden have deteriorated this year, so the worst ones were renovated recently along with the North garden shed (which is on its last legs). There are more that will need attention soon, but there is a limit to how much they can be repaired and some will probably have to be removed. We have been donated one extra garden bench this year and will have another one replaced by a donation in the winter.

Rats

I was surprised to suddenly see so many rats in the garden over the summer. I don't know why they suddenly appeared since I have not seen any for several years. However I think the problem has now been sorted by the council pest control officer.

Trees

There is no tree work planned for this year

Lawns

The lawns have had an application of weed and feed this September to keep them weed free and give them a boost to nourish them through the winter.

Volunteers

No garden report would be complete without mention of the garden volunteers (The Voles) who come every Tuesday to weed, dig, cut and prune. When I think I can't cope anymore with all the weeding, they come in, transform an area and keep us all going with coffee and biscuits! We have had some new members this year, which is nice, if you want to join you are always welcome.

Future plans

Over this winter I have no big projects planned, I want to do a lot tweaking, replacing old or dying shrubs and improve areas of borders that I thought didn't work so well. I also want to have time to dig out all those bindweed roots that grew through the summer! I have also done quite a lot of propagation in the poly tunnel this year (escaping some of the rain), so I will be planting out a lot of those new plants.