



FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022

Message from the Chairman

Spring has sprung with a week of beautiful warm weather followed by a week of frost accompanied by bitter winds. Every year is different and always keeps us guessing – not so good for gardening! Nevertheless, Crescent Garden has never looked better, and we are all feeling optimistic about the garden for 2022 – lots of changes!

We had a very successful AGM at the end of February, but sadly two of our head gardeners are stepping down - Stephanie Fisher and Sharon Miles. Irene Buggle and Gina Rowe are staying on as head gardeners and will be joined by Ginny Whelan and Christine Oldham who will all be sharing duties so that the job won't be too much of a tie.

Trish Kelly, our long-time treasurer, has stepped down and will be replaced by Dr Tony Morrall. A huge thank you to Trish for all of her support to the garden these past ten years. We also welcome two new committee members Guy Sitwell and Tony Billings.

We are looking forward to our Plant Sale in May and our Garden Party in June.

Please do come and support us.

Elaine Martin



Spring misty morning – photo by Sam Mawby

www.alverstokecrescentgardens.co.uk

Head Gardeners' Report

We would like to thank our two head gardeners, Stef Fisher and Sharon Miles, for doing an excellent job as head gardeners for the last four years. Both Sharon and Stef will continue to come on a regular basis as Green Team (GT) members.

We would also like to welcome Ginny Whelan and Christine Oldham as head gardeners joining the remaining head gardeners, Gina Rowe and Irene Buggle. Ginny has been a long serving member of the GT and is membership secretary for FOCG. Christine has also been a long serving member of the GT and has been instrumental in sourcing in-date plants for CG for many years.

It seems appropriate to recap on some of the highlights of the last four years, as two of our four head gardeners step down. We will also touch on some of the lowlights as well, which I think we faced in equal measure.

The aim over the four years has been to leave the gardens in a place that should make it a little bit easier for volunteers coming after us. Times change and help we relied on in the past, when we were all a bit younger, seemed to be a dwindling precious commodity. Lovely Dave Tinling who used to water the roses in CG in the Summer evenings was no longer able to help due to ill health. The box hedge seemed to take an ever-increasing time to cut each year with battery operated hedge cutters only holding their charge for a short time, which slowed the process down considerably. The cleaning of the fountain always seemed to be an onerous task, taking several volunteers off other important duties for the whole of the morning.

Leaky hose system

In 2019 we put in a very cost-effective leaky hose system in the rose bed near the railings and, later on, extended it to the beds around the fountain and along the box hedge to the west end of the garden. This has really made a difference to the vitality of the roses in particular, but be careful what you wish for - it also increased the health of all the shrubs and herbaceous plants in these beds and the WEEDS! Hence more weeding for the Green Team!

Electricity supply to shed and points

In 2017 the electric supply was extended from the black box kiosk eastward to half-way along the hedge, to make it easier to run electrics for events at the east end of the garden, mainly for the teas and coffees for the plant sale, music for the garden party and cutting the box hedge. In 2019 we had the electric supply extended westward from the kiosk along the front hedge to the large shed at the west end of the garden, providing light inside and outside the big shed, electric points inside the shed for recharging equipment and electric points strategically placed along the length to allow us to use mains-run hedge cutting equipment. This all comes at a price and obviously we had to spend money to pay a qualified electrician to safely install it. Money well spent we feel!

Fountain maintenance equipment and cleaning

The fountain also has posed its problems during our tenure and last year, during lockdown, there was a leak in the area near the fountain and GBC council contractors were sent to investigate. It took several meetings and persuasion and, eventually, thanks to Trevor Barker's and Tom Kaye's knowledge and persistence, the contractors repaired the solenoid and the leak was sorted. Tom also cleaned out the well and it is now much cleaner and working well for another few years we hope. Last year we invested in a water pump to pump out the water and a power hose to clean the fountain. Both purchases have resulted in a much more efficient and speedier way of cleaning the fountain.

Renovation of East end of CG

In 2019 we were hatching plans to rejuvenate the brash (east) end of CG. In the tree review with GBC arborist, Dave Stubington, several bay trees had been identified needing to be removed due to disease and in the autumn a large bay had fallen across the railings at the brash end. The area was looking severely unloved. We applied for and received a grant from Hampshire County Council and GBC which provided funds to conduct the groundwork - to remove tree stumps and landscape the area, and also to pay for Breedon gravel and materials to extend the path to the end of the area. This work was well on its way in February 2020, but we only managed to get the area laid out and, thanks to Tom, the path was constructed at the 11th hour. We were left with a pristine moon landscape when the first lockdown hit us on 16th March 2020. Imagine our horror! What was going to happen to the area - for nearly 5 months without attention! Well nature did its thing and provided a spectacular display of annuals from seeds that had been lying dormant in the soil from all our years of carrying plants to the brash end. Poppies, foxgloves, *Lychnis coronaria*, *Echiums*, Shoo fly plants, Kangaroo Apples, Cotton thistle (*Onopodium acanthium*), Sweet rocket, Greater mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), Red Orach (*Atriplex hortensis*) to name just a few. Once we were allowed back we carried on planning and ordering plants to be strategically placed in the Naturalised Flower Zone. We wanted to retain many of the natural features but add in interesting plants to provide structure to the area. Some of the plants we added included: Myrtle, miniature pomegranate, camellias, Lion's Tail (*Leonotis leonurus*), fuchsia *microphyla*, ferns and many spring and autumn bulbs and corms. It is still evolving but continues to charm as a more natural area of the garden in keeping with the Georgian ethos.

Head Gardeners' Report

Rectory allotment plot for Crescent Garden

If we were not allowed to garden in CG during lockdown we thought why not garden at the allotment. Serendipity played its part and luckily half a plot became available to rent at the Rectory Allotments. Thereby we hatched a plan to take on a small plot in the Rectory Allotments for Crescent Garden to use to bring on plants for both CG itself and for the plant sale. What we were missing in CG was an area to nurture seedlings and plants that were tender and to overwinter cuttings in a warm environment. During lockdown we purchased a polytunnel and, thanks to Sharon's brother's generosity, were given materials to set up three raised beds, a compost bin and extensive protection from badgers and foxes for the polytunnel. We would like to thank Tom Kaye for his work in erecting the polytunnel, making the raised beds and building the fortifications to protect the polytunnel from animal and wind attack. Sharon, Stef, Tom and Irene are continuing to maintain the allotment plot.

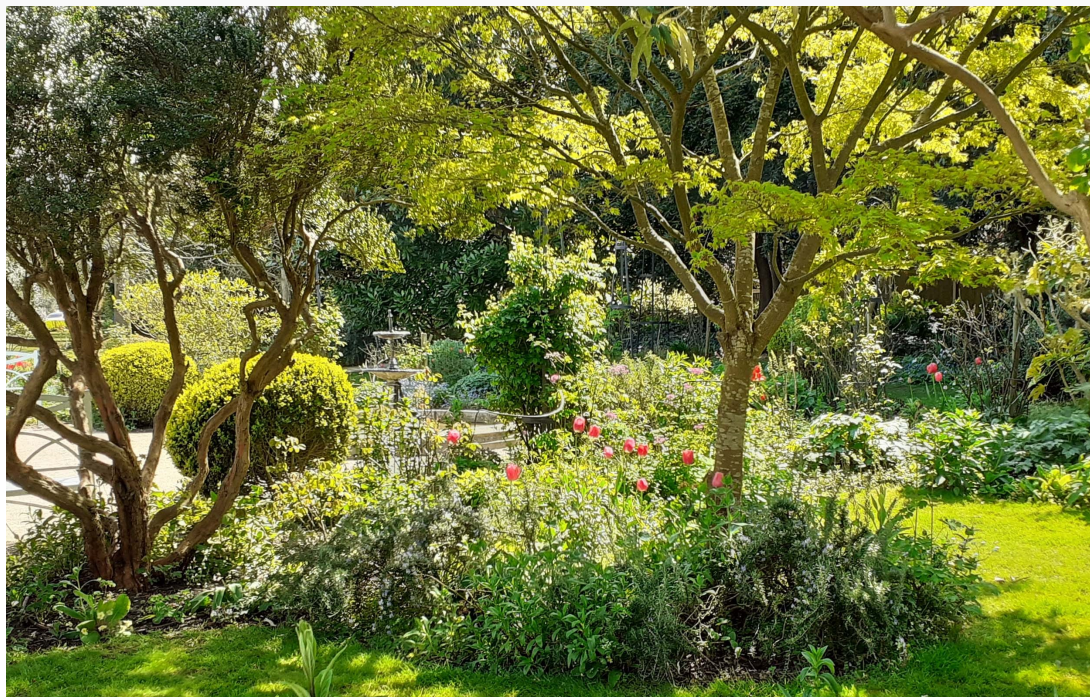
Refurbishment of compost bins

Another highlight has been the refurbishment of the compost bins in Crescent Garden. We would like to thank Ed Ball for taking over responsibility for the compost in CG and doing an excellent job maintaining the excellent quality. However, the compost bins were rotting and we needed urgently to get them replaced. We would like to thank Tom Kaye with his excellent woodworking skills - all bins have now been extended and refurbished.

Spring 2022

Going forward many spring bulbs were planted in the autumn and winter which have given a beautiful display of snowdrops, bluebells, aconites, and tulips. The tulips along the front railings bed are particularly spectacular this year. Box moth caterpillars are back but the GT sprayed them with biological pest control in mid-April 2022.

Irene Buggle



Garden Volunteers by Rita Rundle

Summertime

Nearly here, things are growing.

Plants are flow'ring

And the bushes, the bushes are green

Oh, that garden, it's good

And your eyes are just lookin'

To see coloured flowers

Full in bloom



One of these mornings

You'll maybe join us digging

You gonna have some fun

And love, and love Crescent plants.

Until that morning

Just enjoy this garden

With babies and children running around

With apologies to Gershwin!

New volunteers are always welcome! Come and see us on

Wednesday mornings – coffee time is at 11am

...and finally

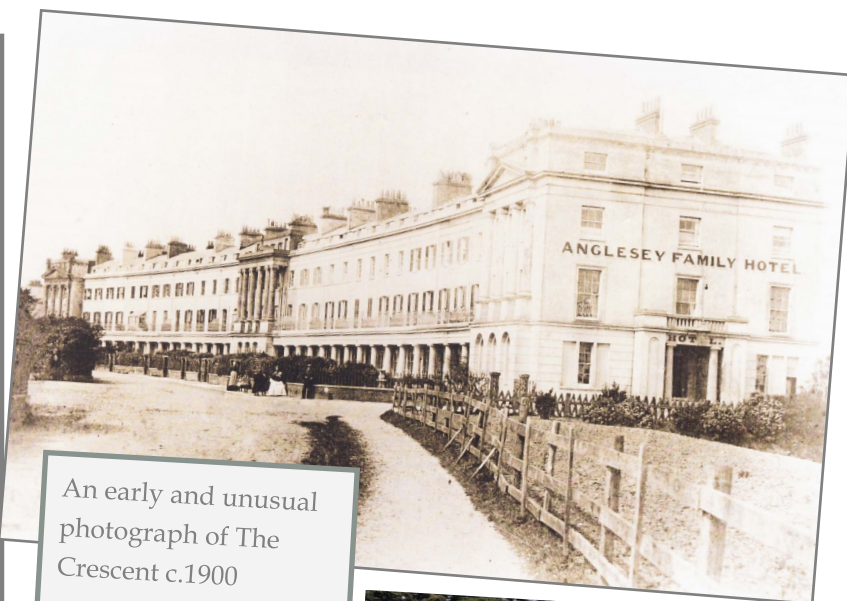
Dates for your Diary

Saturday 14 May 10am – 4pm
Friends' Plant Sale

If you would like to donate any plants then bring them along on the morning clearly labelled. Gardeners and plants are both welcome and anyone who enjoys homemade tea and cakes!

Saturday 18 June 6pm – 8pm
Annual Garden Party

Pimms, canapés and music – a lovely way to spend a summer evening
Booking form enclosed



An early and unusual photograph of The Crescent c.1900



Richard hard at work



Stef, Ron, Tom & Sharon hoisting our new Green Flag



Felicity Anderson sadly passed away in April. She was never happier than when she had found a quiet place to paint or sketch. Felicity was a loyal member of Crescent Garden, always attending our outings and events, and always so supportive. We shall miss her.

JOIN THE FRIENDS!

For all membership enquiries contact Ginny Whelan at virginia@fridaywhelan.plus.com
Any other enquiries contact Gina Rowe on 02392 358207