

Nightingale News

For the Friends of Nightingale Garden

February 2023

Looking forward

The garden volunteers have been on 'Winter break' since late November so garden news is a bit thin on the ground. But we can look forward to a good year for the garden for 2023, starting with our Spring bulbs bursting into flower (see photo). Perhaps the best news is that work has just started on the groundworks for the new park pavilion. We don't have an opening date yet but the build is modular, from March, and so should be relatively fast.

The City Council know we need our water supply to not be interrupted and that we'd like our power to the club hut restored. But we are especially relieved about the prospect of having access again to flush toilets. This will mean volunteers can travel from further afield in more comfort, and also events can last longer. See our article about the review of events on page 2.

As many of you know, Julian and I will stop volunteering for the garden during this year and so we have been busy reviewing what we do and



finding ways of passing on our responsibilities. We will need some new volunteers – see the article on page 3 about this.

Rebecca Jones, Newsletter Editor

Being kind to nesting birds



On Saturday 11 February, we will be hosting in the garden a nestbox-making session with On the Verge Cambridge.

We have three kinds of kits for assembly, made by garden volunteers, from untreated larch bought from a local small business. The photo shows a small bird box

suitable for sparrows and tits. The others are for wrens and robins.

If you'd like to join us, you need to book via Rebecca (see the website for details). We request a donation of £5–10 per box to cover our materials - but let us know if this is a problem.

We are looking forward to meeting our box makers. And being kind to birds who find it increasingly tricky to find safe places to nest in our urban green spaces.

Events in the garden: a new 'means of use'

Over the Winter, we have been working with the City Council to review how events in the garden are organised and managed. The use of the garden has increased in recent years and its use has also changed, partly due to the new covered spaces available but also reflecting the interests of garden volunteers.



The garden is owned by the City Council and is considered part of the park so needs to follow the rules for all the Council's parks, which were revised in 2018. The garden is also close to residences and we don't want it to become a nuisance to them. We also don't want to have the garden so event-packed that it stops working as an often quiet and intentionally biodiverse space. These are attributes highly valued by garden users and the local community.

By March 2023, we will have a new 'means of use' document, agreed with the Council, to share on the garden website. This makes it clear what is possible and the procedures to make bookings for different uses. For some of these, a fee can be charged, which will be managed by the Council. This is in accordance with rules for all green spaces owned by the City Council.



We want to have this guidance ready before the park pavilion opens because people will be able to hire that space and might also use the garden. We hope this review will also help those garden volunteers who take responsibility for garden events when Julian and Rebecca leave. We

have a new event planning document and risk assessment template to help them too.

In brief, we have decided **not** to host private parties in the garden. Birthdays (etc) will need to be based in the park itself – or the new pavilion – and then people can come into the garden (and playground) as part of the fun. There are thousands of potential party organisers locally and it would be time consuming and difficult for volunteers to manage the bookings fairly. Most of all, it means that people who just want to use the garden for informal leisure won't be put off by there being a party in the garden when they arrive.

In future, we won't support events extending after dark, which will make managing gate locking easier and because we think it is tricky to do these safely with no lighting. The garden is designed for daytime use and so we have lots of potential trip hazards. We can continue to have bat walks but

will locate them in the park where most of the bats are anyway. We can do moth traps but have them before dark (and/or in the park) and in the morning (see photo).



We have also implemented the Council's rules on size of events so anything likely to have more than 50 people attending needs to go through their system, which is available on their website. Commercial activities also need to be managed by the Council. The main impact of this is that contact needs to be made a few weeks before the event to allow the Council time to process the application. We hope this will result in a clear and fair system that isn't onerous for our volunteers – and these decisions and process can be kept under review by garden volunteers and the Council.

Finishing off the garden shelter

There haven't been many changes to the garden over the Winter – partly because it has been so cold (or wet). But, in early February, Julian and Rebecca grabbed the chance of a mild day and added two layers of left-over larch cladding to the back and sides of the garden shelter (see photo).

We hope this will make the shelter a bit more weather- (and leaf) proof and also give the neighbouring garden some better privacy.

Now, we just need to add a small dedication sign to the ramp and the shelter project is finished.



We need some new volunteers!

Weather allowing, we re-start organised garden volunteering on Monday 20 and Wednesday 21 February. See the garden website for dates we aim to meet and times. We aren't doing drop-ins so you need to 'book' with Rebecca, including so she can contact you if we need to cancel for unkind weather.

In the Spring, we will review when and how we garden together so Julian and Rebecca can pass on to new volunteers the responsibility of managing what needs to be achieved and how it is done safely.

Currently, most of the gardening is done by a small group of regulars and weekdays suit them. But, we will need to recruit some new gardeners and it is likely that weekends will be preferable for more of them. We think we will stop weekday gardening at Easter and re-start Sunday afternoon sessions after Easter. This slot worked well for us in the past.

But there is much more volunteering for the garden than just during organised sessions. People come to the garden between sessions to look after their adopted areas – they bring their own tools and do not need to unlock the toolshed. In Summer 2022, some people came into the garden to help water, which was great.

We also have a rota of fantastic volunteers to unlock and lock the gate each day. They take

responsibility for a day and share it with their friends and neighbours when necessary.

We are developing some new garden roles that can be done fairly independently, like looking after the pond, or doing the mowing. These are actually done better outside garden sessions and would suit someone who likes to work on their own at less busy times – but with support from the other volunteers.

It would be great to have one or more people act as 'first responders' to keep the garden clean, tidy and safe and do simple repairs.

People who can be contacted by the gate rota volunteers when there is an issue they can't respond to themselves.



The photo shows an untidy polytunnel first thing in the morning in early February. A table was broken beyond repair, the furniture needed a quick re-arrange, the floor a sweep up (there were many sweet and crisp wrappers) and some holes in the polythene repairing with tape. It didn't take long but it needed to be put right quickly.

The broken table was taken away by Council staff, who happened to be in the park that morning.

This role would suit someone with a bit of common sense and a basic toolkit who comes to the garden often but doesn't want to garden. Someone who knows who to contact at the Council when more help is needed (the details are now on the 'Contact' page of the garden website) and to make sure it is done.

There are also 'desk' jobs, like acting as the Secretary and Treasurer, keeping the website up

to date and advertising events and projects on social media. These could be done remotely.

These unpaid jobs are now listed on the 'Support' page of the garden website with names of volunteers as we recruit them.

So, if you would be interested in volunteering for the garden, do let us know. You will find it very rewarding being part of the garden project and, if you choose, you can make some good friends too. And spot some nature doing it.

Decorators for the garden for Xmas

Xmas seems a long time ago, but we'd like to thank all the volunteers who met and decorated the polytunnel and made wreaths for the gate, garden shelter and veranda. And took them down. The bird theme worked really well and we had lots of nice comments about it. For the past few years, this has been a happy experience and very valued by garden users. We hope it will continue – and we have the Xmas tree and a stash of decorations in the club hut ready for December 2023. Do contact us if you have a good idea for a theme and would like to get involved.



About the Friends

This newsletter is produced by Nightingale Gardeners, a constituted group run by volunteers, for the Friends of Nightingale Garden. Join for £10, or as much as you can afford, annually (see the website for details). This helps support the garden for expenses like insurance, tools and plants.

One-off donations are also very gratefully received: Nightingale Gardeners, Lloyds Bank; Sort code: 30 65 65 Account number: 631 76568. You can donate via the garden website:

nightingalegarden.org.uk (or use the QR code below).

Also online on Facebook:
NightingaleGardenCambridgeUK
E-mail: info@nightingalegarden.org.uk.

Visit us: Nightingale Community Garden, Nightingale Park, Nightingale Avenue, Cambridge CB1 8SQ

