

Addiscombe Recreation Ground Annual Report for 2022

Since the last AGM, the gardening group has had another successful year. Working parties were held on a monthly basis between March and October to continue the maintenance of the two flower beds in the park.

There is a small cohort of regular volunteers with others joining when they are available. Sometimes there have just been three volunteers, while on other occasions it has been wonderful to have more than eight. The proverb 'many hands make light work' is certainly true for the gardeners.

Plant donations have been received from local residents which have been greatly welcomed. Even better has been seeing residents planting and continuing to water their plant donations throughout the year. This epitomises the ethos of the community engaging with the project and having some 'ownership'. Park users really enjoyed the delightful sunflowers nurtured by a resident during the summer.

Of particular importance in 2022 was the diligence of local residents and park users watering the plants in the flower beds. It was a particularly hot year with a hosepipe ban in place between the end of August and late November. This brought a considerable challenge as the plants would usually be watered via a hose pipe and it took much effort and time to use watering cans to keep plants alive.

Of particular concern were the young cherry trees. They had started to show signs of distress due to the drought. One local resident and her young daughter brought a container of water into the park on a trolley and helped the trees to survive. A really valiant effort!

On a less positive note, there was some anti-social behaviour. The gardeners have access to the water supply in the old ladies' toilet, and keep some minimal gardening equipment there, all behind a padlocked metal gate. Unfortunately, this was broken into with only the hose pipe being stolen. Considerable time, and additional cost, was needed to make the area secure again.

There has been colour in the beds during every season. Bulbs, including daffodils, crocuses and snowdrops appearing in Spring. Summer perennials and shrubs flowered through to Autumn and variable foliage provided interest in Winter.

There has been limited input to the park entrance beds. It is an aspiration to add interest to these areas with some new planting, but this can only be achieved with an increase in active volunteers.

At the beginning of 2023 dates were set for the year's gardening sessions and the dates were posted on the three entrance gates. They take place on Saturdays between 09.30 and 12.00. The remaining dates are 1 April, 13 May, 3 June, 1 July, 5 August, 2 September and 7 October.

With two volunteers no longer available going forward, we are very keen to recruit new gardeners. But it's important to stress they don't have to be 'gardeners', but happy to do some digging, pruning and weeding guided by one of the regulars. It's

fun, sociable and therapeutic! It's also important to emphasise that anyone can help maintain the gardens at any time. They belong to everyone, and everyone can contribute.

Many thanks to all this year's volunteers and any anonymous residents who have 'done their bit' outside the regular monthly sessions.

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