

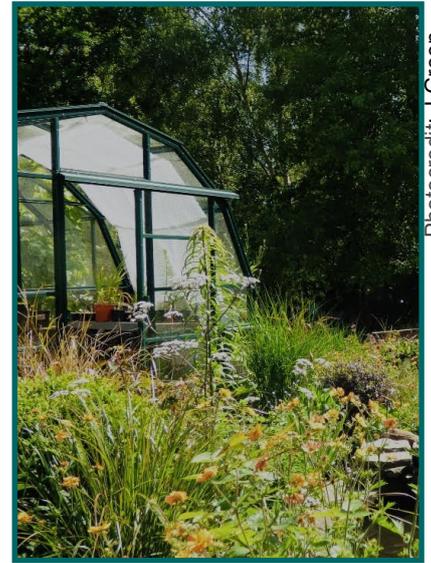
Newsletter Summer 2020

Welcome to this summer edition of the newsletter. We've missed you! We may have seemed quieter than usual: no events, fewer emails and social media updates — but we haven't gone away. Most of the staff at Martineau Gardens are furloughed. Despite the difficulties, the Gardens are going from strength to strength thanks to the incredible determination of a strong team of staff, sessional workers and volunteers who have been working even harder than usual behind the closed blue gates 'sailing the ship with only half the crew'. Nature carries on, of course - the Gardens

are being tended, weeded, watered and well looked after and the Therapeutic Horticulture service continues. In this newsletter, we'll be sharing the good things that have been happening and whilst we are not yet open for public visits, we wanted to update you of our plans and thank you for your donations and your messages of support.

We hope you stay safe and well and we look forward to the time, when we can welcome you back to the tranquillity of Martineau Gardens.

Staff team at Martineau Gardens



Photocredit: J Green

Colour splash beside the pond



Weathering the storm We need your help more than ever. Please help us to carry on so that we can still be the hope in many people's lives. **Please donate here:** <https://localgiving.org/charity/martineau-gardens/>

Therapeutic Horticulture continues



Martineau Gardens is most definitely not closed – the therapeutic horticulture project, which is at the heart of all that we do and how the community at Martineau Gardens interacts, remains a vital service. In the early days of the pandemic, our staff were doing their best to provide telephone support to the more vulnerable of our volunteers, a service that still continues. As lockdown eased, we wanted to facilitate the return of some volunteers, and this has been made possible by the Heart of England Community Foundation. Due to their support we

have engaged additional staff and the volunteers are now gardening in socially distanced pairs. It's through their efforts our two and a half acre site has remained nurtured despite this summer's extreme weather. Whilst most staff have remained on furlough, a slimmed down core team have been delivering fresh, organically grown garden produce to those volunteers not yet able to return to the Gardens and many volunteers are delighted to be receiving medals, in honour of our recent Queens Award for Voluntary Service.

Pictured above, the Pavilion Garden. Nasturiums herbs inside Keider House and vegetables

Changes in place

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak and during our temporary closure, Martineau Gardens remains closed to the public. Our latest statement is displayed here: <http://bit.ly/33CbtMK>



Pictured left, Sam Walker, volunteer bee keeper appearing in one of our live on-line nature events. **See article overleaf.**

What is Martineau Gardens?

Our Therapeutic Community Garden is looked after by Volunteers, many of whom have mental health issues or learning disabilities. Hundreds of school children visit the Gardens to learn about science and the environment. Every year, Birmingham people (now in their thousands) visit the Gardens to enjoy its peace and tranquillity. We host events and courses and sell plants and produce.

Bon voyage to Sue Roberts



Sue Roberts thoughtfully signalled her intention to step down as the Chair of Trustees at Martineau Gardens, at last year's AGM. We are all sad to see Sue go, as the organisation has benefitted so much under her stewardship. Sue says of her six years with the Gardens:

'Martineau Gardens is a charity that I truly believe is a jewel in the city's crown. Receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is a testament to the amazing work of our volunteers, staff and trustees and to the generosity of our supporters.' Please read her full message here: <https://bit.ly/2OFk22N>

We are delighted that Tim Bruton, a long-standing Trustee, has accepted the nomination to succeed Sue as Chair, and this will be put to voting members at the 2020 AGM.

Connecting families with nature



The pandemic has forced us all to look at new ways to stay connected with each other, but has also seen so many of us connecting with nature more frequently. Martineau Gardens' Environmental Education Officer Juliette Green created a series of on-line events for children and their families to bring a bit of a sparkle to their daily exercise by encouraging them to look deeper at the nature around them. Over five weeks, Juliette filmed various locations around Martineau Gardens and broadcast her videos live. There's a range of themes to enjoy, including a pond-dip, a minibeast hunt, a tree tour, a dinosaur hunt and, with Sam Walker (our volunteer beekeeper, pictured overleaf) a close up investigation of one of our beehives. Not just for children, these films are very informative and will further knowledge of the natural world around us. Click here to view them:

<https://bit.ly/2OpWqjb>



Connect with us ...

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Plant Sale Success

Behind closed gates, our volunteers have been dividing and propagating plants and caring for seedlings sown in early Spring. Without our regular visitors popping in, the Plant Sales area had amassed quite a stock. With some trepidation we organised a one-off plant sale earlier this month, with social distancing measures in place, and were delighted to have such warm support from Friends and supporters. Sales included strawberry plants, herbs, scented geraniums, and irises. Visitors commented on how wonderful it was to be back in the Gardens again, despite not being able to explore the full area, and appreciated being able to buy plants and compost in a safe place. A small cohort of staff and volunteers ran the event and we were delighted to raise £800 which is so vital at this time.



An update on public access

The temporary closure of our gates (due to the pandemic) has meant we have lost a vital income stream that events and public visits generate. Remaining closed to visitors has not been an easy decision, but this is a time when the volunteers on our Therapeutic Horticulture programme need the service more than ever. To balance an operational Therapeutic Horticulture programme and have oversight for visitor safety would demand greater staffing resources than we possess, and we are reluctant to put our wonderful Visitor Welcome team in harm's way. We are constantly reviewing the situation and will update you when we feel the time is right to welcome everyone back.

