

Shuttington Community Wildlife Garden

We began the community wildlife garden project 6 months later than planned due to delays with permissions and to the lateness of the autumn season. Our wildflower seed supplier advised against sowing seed into November. The residents bordering the site were notified of the delay, and of the plan to recommence in spring 2022.

Consequently there was a flurry of activity once the ground warmed in March, and it was dry enough for the groundworks contractor Steve Barnsley, to get onto the site with his machinery. On 16th march, which was a very wet Wednesday!!, a group of volunteers from Tamworth Climate Action, Alvecote Wood, and the Shuttington Playground Group joined residents to plant 22 metres of woodland trust mixed native hedging to border the site. Using hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, dogrose and elder to give year round colour and autumn fruits, the low hedging will provide habitat, food and shelter to wildlife as well as a windbreak, and texture and colour to the site.

The groundworker was then able to put in the concrete accessible path to the bench area, and excavate the pond, at differing levels to create shallower and deeper areas, and some security fencing was installed temporarily. Volunteer residents then underlaid and lined the pond, and the Wolferstan Arms kindly offered their outside tap to fill the 15x15ft wildlife pond. The diamond decking safety grid system was then professionally installed just under the surface of the water, to protect the pond and liner from damage, and also as a safety measure against children, and animals falling in.

Next the whole 800sq m site was sown with our 70/30 wild grasses/wildflower seed mix and mother nature was then in charge to do her thing. We erected signs asking people to avoid treading on the seedlings as the site begins to grow. The final addition to the site was the 3rd composite bench to be sited in the village, which now sits at the end of the accessible concrete path, allowing room for wheelchairs and pushchairs to turn, and visitors to sit and enjoy the site as it grows. Once the grasses and flowers have grown up sufficiently, our maintenance gardener will be able to create the grass mown paths through the site, leading walkers through the site to enjoy the meadow and pond area.

To date, due to the unseasonably dry weather we have had to top up the pond once, as the water level had fallen, and the grid became exposed., we hope that the benefits to wildlife and residents, will be appreciated in time.

With regular reporting and updates, our WCC funder will in time release the remainder of our grant to allow us to fund mowing and trimming of the site.

Our 22 metres of UK native hedging has now been registered as part of the West Midlands Virtual Forest, and our project is to be included as a case study going forward, as an example of what is possible with the support of the Green Shoots Fund, and to be an example of how those funds can be used to mitigate climate change and benefit wildlife and the environment.