



EAST MIDLANDS

East Midlands in Bloom Spring 2020

An Introduction from your Chair:

Our Spring newsletter is usually geared up towards In Bloom and the excitement of judging and assessing for us, and planting, painting and sweeping for you and organising volunteers and planning routes and tours for us all. These are strange times indeed, where greeting a friend is not allowed and only after weeks in lock down has discussion around the importance of toilet paper returned to normal!

This season's newsletter is obviously going to be a bit different this year, but I hope you will still enjoy it and take part in some of our suggestions both within the newsletter and on our website and email correspondence.

We will endeavour to try and do our best to keep communities motivated and will always be here to offer help and support when needed. We hope this year goes well for all our In Bloom and IYN groups and wish you all good health.

Sharon Sutton



Photo: Friends of Radcliffe Station



Positives from Newark Town Council

I keep hearing rumours about Councils cancelling orders for bedding, baskets and the like, nurseries struggling to stay afloat etc and thought you might like to know what Newark has done. The Town Council has recognised that businesses in the town will struggle this year, and our suppliers could be facing difficulties, so they have agreed to provide a basket to every business that purchased one off us last year, free of charge. That's about £10,000 worth. We have also secured bedding plants for the Town, so as soon as restrictions are lifted we will be in a position to put baskets up and plant out. Hopefully that will be around June time.

The town centre businesses will then at least have a nice environment to try and trade in, and two suppliers know they have business to come back to after the restrictions are lifted. The Bloom group itself is keeping in touch through emails and has plans to spring back into life after this horrible mess is over. The Coronavirus might have delayed us, but it isn't stopping us.

James Radley

Deputy Town Clerk, Newark Town Council

Crow Wood: Water Savings



Water, water everywhere: use your wastewater to keep your plants happy!

The water butts have run out of rainwater here, so we've been getting back into using "grey" wastewater for the plants. Grey water is water that's been used but hasn't gone down the loo (if it's been mixed with wee and poo it's called black water).

There are a few main rules with grey water:

Think about what you're putting into the water to make sure it will be OK for the plants- put it down the drain if it has anything likely to be harmful in it- such as strong cleaners. Don't use dishwasher water (even if you can get at it) - dishwasher cleaners and salt will be really bad for plants.

Don't use bath or shower water on plants like salad where you're going to eat the bits that the water has been on - if your bottom has been in the water, eating that salad could give you any bugs that were in your poo... and a very nasty tummy upset.

NEVER store grey water- it will contain bacteria and other germs which will grow if it's left in a container. It will quickly go smelly and could cause illnesses if then used or touched. Filtering grey water through soil straight away will clean the water.

Saying that- if it's really hot, leave it to cool for a little while- your plants aren't going to appreciate being cooked!

One useful thing to bear in mind is that mild soap is a great way to treat plants for greenfly: If you use mild dish soap to wash up then water your plants with the leftovers, you'll have a two for the price of one situation every time!

If you're in a house, kitchens are usually near to an outside door, so carrying out the washing up water is fairly easy (and if you have little people interested in watering very slowly with a small watering can, you can pour the water into a bucket then they can refill a tiny watering can to their heart's content and you get the dish washing bowl back- that would be why the bucket is in the picture above!).

Bath (and shower, if it's over the bath or you have a way to collect the water) water is more difficult but can be used with a siphon pump or other small pump. We had one of these siphon pumps for years when we were in our last house- it meant we could grow bumper crops of pumpkins every time as the bath was by a back window and the drop onto the garden meant water got easily down onto the vegetable plot.

We also have a squishy bucket to chuck water straight out of the window onto the green roof and here's hoping this can help with getting bumper crops and very small water bills this summer!

East Midlands in Bloom History

In 2019 I was asked to give a talk on the history of Britain in Bloom and in particular, East Midlands in Bloom. This has started me on the road of the ubiquitous Google search, reading a book on BiB, liaising with former chairman etc. I now have the general background and gained enough information to give the talk, which was well received. With some updates it was repeated in early (pre lock down) 2020.

The more I look into the history the more I realise there is something major missing. Yes, I need more information on facts and figures etc but what I am really missing is the human story, the story of bloom groups. This is a great opportunity to collate all the information that's out there and why we've been asking you to get involved. This newsletter is already able to share some of those stories.

To continue to gather facts we would be really grateful if you could send us any information such as:

Name of Group (silly, but useless if you forget this!)

When did you form?

How long involved with EMiB?

Have you entered BiB?

Any early photos or before /afters

Early memories/anecdotes of your entry or even the judges!

Major influencers on your group that deserve a mention

Calling any trophy holders; can you list (or photograph) previous holders of your trophy, along with the trophy name of course!? Believe it or not I am not aware of a written record! Many of you have been judges, or still are, we want your stories as well.

I will try and put all of this together so that a 'final' document can be shared later this year. It will greatly assist us if you can send text in as a Word document and any photos separately as jpegs, suitably named/labelled. Sorry but if photos are embedded in a document we may not be able to easily extract them. Equally send us a larger photo file size and we can adjust to suit our needs (unfortunately Facebook photos are often too small)

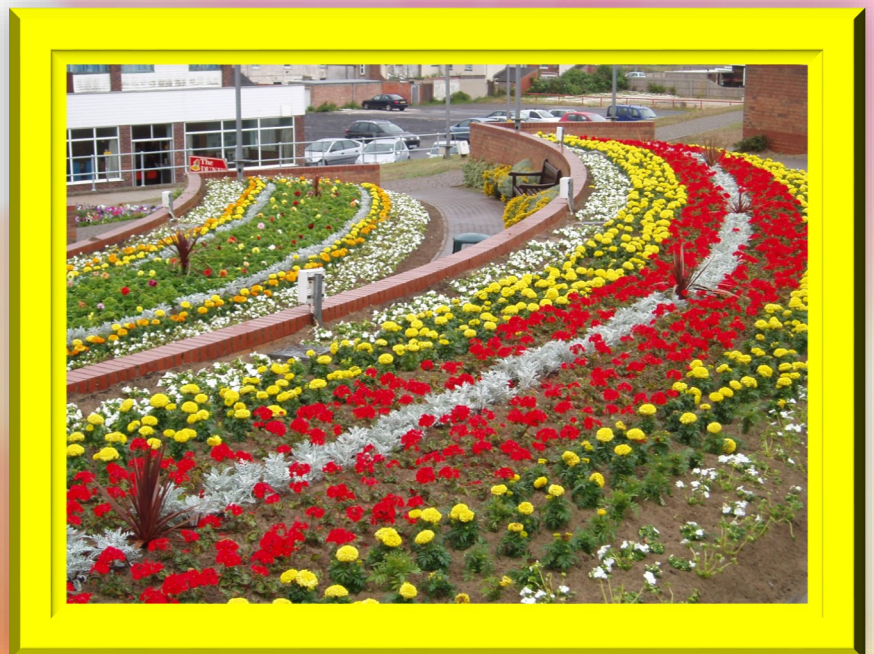
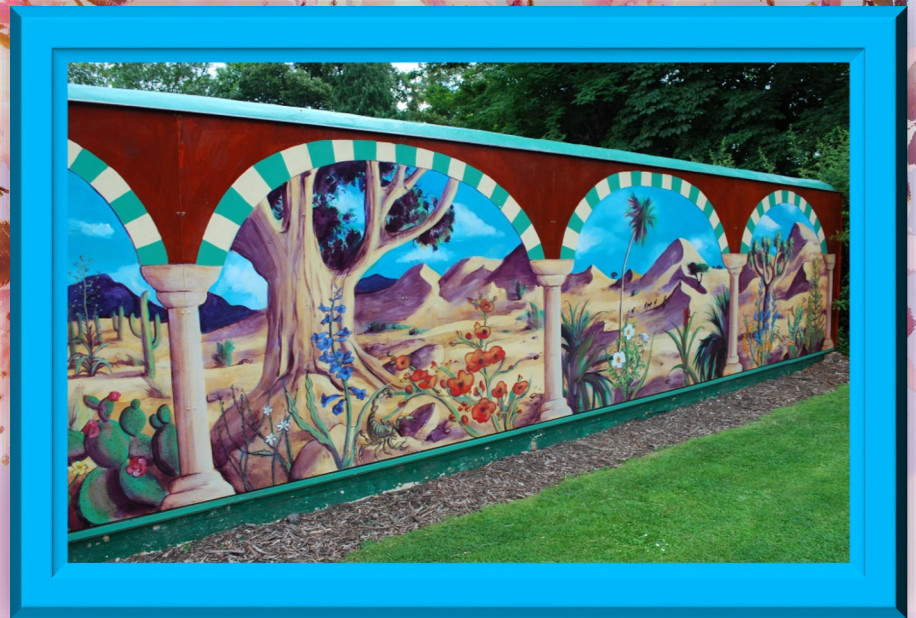
This could be an exciting project that can be undertaken while we're all in isolation!

Many thanks from Simon



**BRITAIN
IN BLOOM®**
with the RHS

EAST MIDLANDS



Photos: Jeff Bates

**From Top—Loughborough,
Grimsby and Mablethorpe**

Financial Update

As we are all aware EMiB competition and IYN has been suspended in 2020. This will have mixed fortunes on us. Following the suspension, and as businesses struggle to stay afloat and keep jobs, we will not be asking sponsors for a donation this year. Equally we do not anticipate to be receiving an income from the RHS.

On a slightly more positive note, our outgoings will be reduced by not having judges' expenses nor that of the annual seminar. Elaine has volunteered to take a reduction in salary reflecting a reduced workload, but she is still very much in place acting as a central link for all things EMiB related. The grant scheme has also been suspended for 2020.

I think you can safely say my budget sheet has had holes shot through it!

It has been EMiB's long standing practice of maintaining at least 2 years balance to cover costs should we have no sponsorship. This is now proving to be an extremely good situation to be in as we have reserves that mean we can stand the extra costs in this extraordinary year. There are many Regions that are not so fortunate as us.

Simon



Photos: Friends of Radcliffe Station

Stamford in Bloom

We visited our HQ recently to return tools and bits from our garage to a place that has central access for our lone gardeners. Some of our volunteers have been forced to stay in for their own or others health. Others are using exercising with partners to continue watering or solo outings to clear isolated areas or plant.

We remembered we had ordered tubers, corms and seeds much earlier. We've planted some in pots ready for whenever when?? They can sit outside our HQ for drive-by visitors food shopping.

Others are in a newly planted bed on a quiet courtyard in town with a cafe in the corner and usually lots of appreciative viewers. But it will be ready when we all come out. My walk allowed me to take photos of our pots and smell the hyacinths and encourage others to take a similar route.

We may not be able to plant peach pelargonium with black grass and silver cineraria but as we have always grown perennials there is greenery to see with blooms to come.

The town is cleaner but too quiet.

A bit of a rest and yet to get to working on the diary with the computer and thousands of photos to sort. We really miss our Duke of Edinburgh volunteer for office skills. Our volunteers are our inveterate travellers but now they are home and I know where they are they are not able to come out and play!

We are all well and safe and keeping the town with some colour and perfume.

Our spectacular chair planters are mostly tucked away which is a decorative loss- but safe for next time.

We will be back.... **Now Wash Your Hands....**

From Ann Ellis



Photos: Stamford in Bloom



Blooming Lutterworth

In 2018 there was a steady drip of complaints to the Town Council about the state of the Memorial Garden. This grew into a babel of rhetoric on the town Face Book site.

The garden is in the very centre of town. It is square, with a war memorial in the centre. There are four central beds facing the memorial, each backed by a low box hedge. Two long paths form a cross in the garden. Behind the hedges are some grass areas and at the very edges, a mixture of perennial plants and shrubbery borders the garden, separated from the pavement by low railings. There are several small trees providing shade too.

I knew that the central beds had been plated rather haphazardly for a few years and I went to have a proper look.

I was dismayed to find large nettles in the central beds, two foot high in places, and a mess of bind weed and brambles in the shrubbery. The Hebes planted ten years ago were dead and all of the shrubbery and perennials were in a parlous state.

A combination of years of poor maintenance, the 'Beast from the East' winter and the hottest summer for years, had turned what should be a haven of peace into a total mess.

Rather than complaining I put out a call on FB for helpers to put things right. Two of us met at the council offices with the clerk and the chair to the parks and recreation committee. It seemed we were caught in a difficult spot. The town was not big enough and held too small a budget, for large contractors to bid for the work, nor small enough for a one or two man band. The council had been dealing with some contractors who were struggling financially and didn't seem to care two ticks about the look of the beds. The plants they used were obviously 'tail end charlies' from several other orders, and they planted into beds riddled with weeds and ignored any shrubbery completely.

It was going to be the 100th anniversary of the WW1 armistice in the November, and we wanted the garden to represent the respect we felt for the fallen soldiers. So, with the councils blessing, we got to work.

We had a band of about five people and we decided to work hard all summer, so as to concentrate our efforts where it would be best used and then set up a proper constituted group in the September.

We worked and worked and managed to pull back the shrubbery and perennials to a decent state. In the central beds we concentrated on improving the hedges that bordered them and weeding and improving the soil. We discarded the leggy annuals and waited to plant in October. As we worked three of those original five people fell by the wayside.

In September we advertised and held a meeting. To my relief lots of people attended. We formed a committee, wrote a constitution, opened a bank account and joined EMIB, taking advantage of the insurance scheme. We also planned our planting.



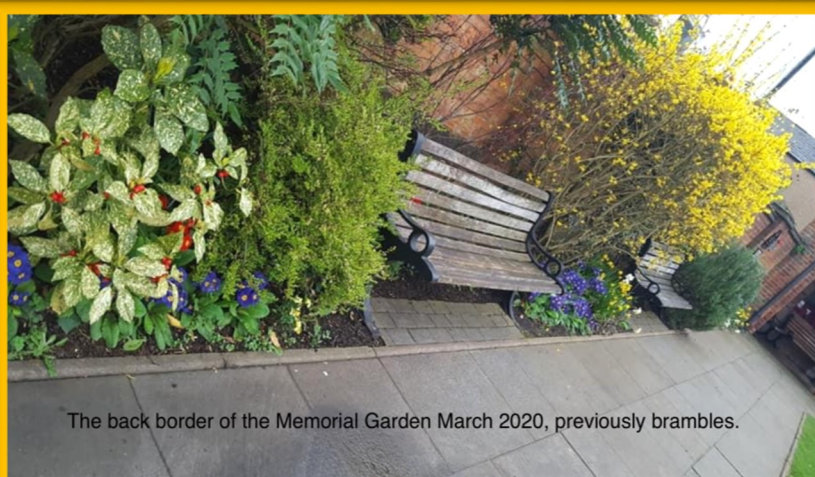
EAST MIDLANDS

That autumn we raised £700 from the green token scheme in Waitrose and planted the central beds with huge poppy shapes made of red Viola on a background of yellow Viola. We involved the two local primary schools to get involved, and they made us 196 'poppies' on sticks to plant in the spaces we had where dead shrubs had been received moved; one poppy for each fallen soldier memorialised in the garden.

We had so many positive comments that it encouraged us to move forward. We managed to secure funding from the council for the following two seasons and we also took over all of the town planters! We are now 17 in number. Every single one of those people helps in some way or other, most help with practical gardening. There are seven of us on the committee, and we are blessed to have one person who is expert at writing bids and also a professional gardener.

Two years on and the council passed this year's proposal of planting with no question. They agreed to fund the annual plants and also agreed to continue to water all the planters and the garden throughout dry weather. We have ordered all our plants for the summer planting to be grown from seed by a local nursery. I am hoping against hope that lockdown will be lifted by the beginning of June so we can get them all in!

Meanwhile, due to the COVID_19 pandemic, the council have ceased all activity, except that required in the cemetery, and have stopped watering. So each planter in the town has been 'adopted' by either a group member or a resident in the town centre. They water and dead head these regularly, engaging in this as part of their daily exercise.



The back border of the Memorial Garden March 2020, previously brambles.



Blooming Lutterworth continued

I have adopted The Memorial Garden. It doesn't need much watering but is a largish area. Each early evening you will find me in the deserted town centre, weeding, dead heading, edging grass and tidying as required. It is my daily exercise for both the body and the soul. I walk there with a spring in my step, surrounded by bird song and walk home with a slight ache in my back but peace in my heart and dirt under my nails.

This year I am hoping that the two primary schools, currently open only for a handful of vulnerable children or those whose parents are key workers, will build us some bug hotels to go in the gardens. In September we will ask the two secondary schools to help us by building some bird boxes too.

When 'all this' is over I hope that Memorial Garden will be a busy space once again, where shop workers eat their lunches, children look for ladybirds and beetles, giggling youngsters on bikes eat their chips in the evening and where young mums meet with their prams to sit in the sun and gossip.

The oldest memorial in the garden is for a young lad who died in the Battle of Waterloo. The most recent is for a young man who fought in Helmund Province. Both attended the school where my grandchildren are, as did very many of those who fell in the two world wars. This is a small town. The surnames on the memorial are echoed in nearly every classroom in the town. These fallen are the ancestors of the residents of today. I hope we have done them proud.

Blooming Lutterworth would not exist or be successful without the seventeen members, RC Smiths nursery and the support of the local Town Council. Thank you team!!

Liz Crosskey, Chair of Blooming Lutterworth



The Fire brigade helping us access the high baskets May 2019



EAST MIDLANDS

Recollections from 12 years as a National Judge

As you might imagine, there are many examples of wonderful gardening seen during 100 or so places across the length and breadth of Britain, but a quick flip through some of the most amusing moments seems appropriate at this difficult time. So, in no particular order, here are just a few – and some have had the locations omitted to protect the innocent...

In my very first year, we visited Cleethorpes, in the Nationals for the first time, and in those days representing Yorkshire in Bloom. They were 'first-timers' in the Nationals and thought it would be good to include a ride on the (rather lovely) light railway that ran up the coast into town. Unfortunately, they forgot that the judges would be looking out from the tiny, open carriages...as we crossed a couple of ponds where thousands of empty beer cans were floating...

A year or two later we visited Stockton on Tees, again in the first time in the Nationals, and put forward by Northumbria in Bloom. The advice from the Northumbria team was to ensure that the judges had a comfortable vehicle in which to travel the route, so they hired an executive coach. Which would have been lovely, except it was the sort with darkened windows, so we saw nothing as we toured the first half hour. As we pointed out at the first halt, we can't give you marks for things we can't see! An alternative was quickly found (a normal mini bus).

Visits to London Boroughs are always interesting, one of the first left a lasting impression; it was to Bromley, and we'd had an excellent presentation in the civic centre, from which we left to walk into an adjacent park. As we stood enjoying the view across the floral beds and lawns, three teenage girls were walking in our direction...one of whom walked straight through a bed of petunias without any consideration. Two Bloom judges and four from the Bromley team stood open-mouthed...



Photos: Blooming Lutterworth

Recollections from 12 years as a National Judge continued

Other travel highlights over the years included a puncture (Starbeck, Yorkshire), and a driver who reversed our mini-bus into a lamp-post (somewhere in Scotland).

Another taxi arrival was into Garstang in Lancashire, again in the evening before judging. As we drove into the middle of town, it seemed to be full of 'upturned bottoms' as umpteen members of the local Bloom group were on hands and knees scraping weeds from street gutters, bases of walls etc, and picking up dead flowers that had dropped from hanging baskets.

And finally in Scotland, a memorable visit was to Coatbridge, in Lanarkshire. Beautiful Scotland had very bravely entered this old industrial community into the Nationals. We arrived by train one grey, cold, drizzly evening in mid-August; the station was closed and unlit; no taxi rank; no instructions. As we were reading notices to see if a taxi firm advertised, a cab turned up to drop someone off, so we asked if he was available, and he said he'd be back after his next pick up, which true to his word, he was, 10 minutes later. Two cold, slightly bedraggled judges got in and gave him the name of the hotel we were booked for, 5 miles out of town. He enquired what we were doing in Coatbridge, so we said 'Judging Britain in Bloom', and his amazed look was wonderful. In broad Glaswegian, he said he'd give us a tour. 'That tower block on the left is Heroin Heights, that one on the right is Cannabis Towers' etc...all the way to the hotel. In daylight the following day, it was rather better than that, fortunately!

Jeff Bates



Photos: Jeff Bates

Dates for your Diary:

Obviously all large and small gatherings are currently not permitted so our plans for the presentation have been cancelled and the dates for the committee meeting and AGM will be confirmed nearer the time

16th September 2020 - Presentation at Grimsby - **cancelled**

18th November 2020 - Committee Meeting -**TBC**

24th February 2021 - AGM and Seminar **TBC**



Photo: Stamford in Bloom



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Our Sponsors:



Amberol: the nation's leading provider of Self-watering planters. Our vision is to transform communities: with stunning floral displays that beautify and attract; with bins that help keep Britain tidy and the environment safe; and with seating to encourage people to pause and enjoy



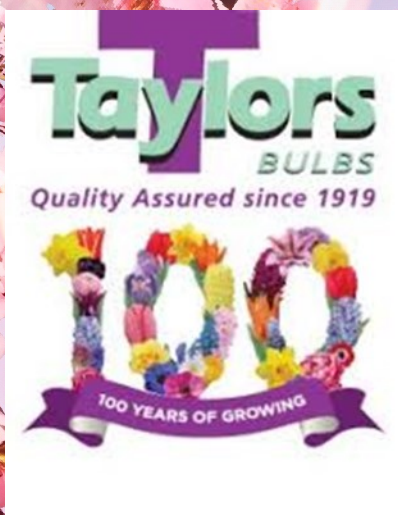
FCC Environment is one of the UK's leading waste and resource management companies. Our approach is to minimise the amount of waste that ends up in landfill by transforming it into valuable resources wherever possible.



geViews: Planters and street furniture that save you time and money. Every part of our range is designed for easy planting, maintenance and upkeep, with self-watering reservoirs, durable materials and clever design touches. Take advantage of our 150 years of UK manufacturing experience.



The Art Department: We opened our doors in 1986. Since that time, we have developed into one of the nation's leading large format graphics providers.



Taylors Bulbs are a fourth generation family business, growing and supplying flower bulbs and associated products since 1919. Daffodils are grown on our farm in Holbeach, Lincolnshire where we also design and pack a large range of products for the UK and Irish markets. We pride ourselves on the award-winning service we offer our customers.



DART was founded in 1999 to meet a growing demand for work-based training and development. Since then, we have expanded geographically and offer Apprenticeships, Study Programmes, Traineeships, Schools programmes and short courses in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, the West Midlands Leicestershire, Staffordshire and South Yorkshire. We also provide high quality training within Agriculture, Animal Care, Horticulture, Trees and Timber, Street Scene and Veterinary Nursing .

Thanks for reading

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, any future suggestions / contributions are very welcome, please email ideas to: **secretary@emib.org.uk**

Please find “East Midlands in Bloom” on Facebook and post comments and pictures of your wonderful flora, fauna and people!