

Communities in Action



CASE STUDY: Oakdale Library Gardens Association

Tell us a bit about your group

We are a group of local people who came together in 2013 with encouragement from Creekmoor with Oakdale Women's Institute who wanted to create a garden that benefited the local community, to encourage people to use the local library and to encourage more wildlife into the garden.

What actions did you or your group want to take and why?

We wanted to improve the library's outside space for nature, for the community and those who visit the library. We wanted to create a beautiful space and somewhere people could come and sit quietly to enjoy their books amongst the wildlife we hoped to encourage into the garden.

What have you done for nature so far?

The garden was initially just a green space with one shrub and some seasonal plants. Our planting scheme for the garden had wildlife in mind. We named the garden 'The Bookerie'. We've created a bug mansion, dead log pile and a bucket pond. We've added bird feeders and bird baths of differing heights. The top of the garden, where most of the above features are, is volunteer Ray's favourite area and it was fun to do. We worked with children who came with their parents into the library to build the bug mansion and to paint stones which now surround the pond.

We built a compost and recycling area at the back of the garden, and we grow comfrey to use as a feed on the garden.



We grow herbs to attract pollinators and people! © James Killik

All the plants we planted in the garden encourage wildlife. Pollinator-friendly plants attract many pollinators such as bees and hover flies. There are a lot more holly blue, large and small white and brimstone butterflies. Birds nest regularly in our nest boxes and in the now mature shrubs.

What resources or support have you used?

More places can do something like this because it needn't cost very much. We had support from local businesses, individual donors and organisations including the Creekmoor with Oakdale Women's Institute and the Co-op Local Community Fund. We are fortunate to have skilled support from Poole Men's Shed and many people from the local community.



Youngsters are encouraged to paint stones for our pond during events at the Library. © James Killik



Oxeye daisies © James Killik

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“ Noticing the look on people’s faces when they see something for the first time, and watching them explore the garden; that’s great, makes it all worthwhile! ”

Did you involve others?

Ed and Rob, two volunteers from Poole Men’s Shed, were contacted by Ray to build a bench so visitors to the library could sit and enjoy the view from the top of the garden. All the benches in the garden, where visitors can sit and read with books from the library, were donated by members of the local community.

One child who comes here now goes straight to the tools we have for children and pretends to dig in the garden. If that helps him to be a gardener and think “I must help the badgers and the foxes”, then that’s fantastic!

We’ve tried to involve others by creating little places for wildlife information dotted around the garden, like creating small doorways at the base of the big sycamore tree which open to reveal what has been seen recently in the garden. Information from Dorset Wildlife Trust is also available in the library.

What do you plan to do next?

A garden never stays the same and it can always be enhanced. So that’s what we are continuing to do! The garden is part of Dorset Wildlife Trust’s wildlife-friendly Space Award scheme.

Film:

<https://youtu.be/qFMe4CUVXPc>

HOW DOES IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Ray commented, “It made a real difference to my life and gave me a sense of purpose. Good socially, and good to see things you wouldn’t normally see. Noticing the look on people’s faces when they see something for the first time, and watching them explore the garden; that’s great, makes it all worthwhile!”

Audrey and Alison are two volunteers that popped into the library and asked, “Do you need any help in the garden?” Audrey said: “I kind of garden, but I don’t know anything about the plants and the shrubs, so I ask. I’ve dug up or cut back the wrong thing at times, but that’s ok and luckily, they do grow back! So, you don’t need to know a lot about gardening. Everyone has little quirks about what they like to do, so they can find their own little niche area that they are happy to work in”.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE NATURE MOMENTS OR ENCOUNTERS WITH WILDLIFE WHILST DOING THIS?

- Seeing bees enjoy the pollinator-friendly plants and a frog in the pond.
- Seeing birds (blue tits) coming in and out of the nest boxes.
- Spotting wildlife we haven’t seen before such as a hummingbird hawk-moth.
- Seeing bees nest in one of the bird boxes that were keeping cool in the heat of summer by creating their own air conditioning at its entrance.
- Discovering birds’ nests when checking the boxes in the autumn.
- Finding out there are 37 different types of moths visiting the garden following a Bournemouth Natural Science Society survey.



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