

FRIENDS OF OLD DURHAM GARDENS

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3, Spring 2011

Dear Friend

Spring is sprung—the bulbs are finishing and the flowers trees are in bloom. Very much like spring flowers the Friends of Old Durham Gardens (FODG) has been dormant over the winter months and is now sending out tender shoots.

While FODG has appeared dormant, it certainly hasn't been inactive. For instance, we've had a successful planting day in November and an incredibly informative pruning day at the beginning of March.

However, the majority of the actions have been those unseen, underground developments. The steering group (myself, Paul Beard, Gordon Hull, Colin Jubb, Steve Monks and Adam Offler) have been working to set up the basic structures of the friends group—the root system as it were. We owe a lot of thanks to CVS for their support throughout this initial stage. Julie Taylor and John Atkinson have provided invaluable help.

We have been developing our relationship with the County Council and are particularly grateful for their support. The City will manage the bulk of the heavy lifting and grass cutting.

We also have the insurance policy to cover all the work, events, volunteers and visitors in OGD.

And last, but not least, we have set up the website and email address so that there will be an online go-to for FODG news and events.

Now that we have our basis, the main task is to seek the support that will feed the group and the Gardens and allow it to blossom into a beautiful community resource everyone can enjoy. **Please read on to find out how you can support the group and the gardens.**

November Border Planting

Maybe November is unusual for a lot of garden activity, but we were keen to get out there.

A variety of herbaceous plants were supplied by Tony Ewin and these were healed in by a small but dedicated team of gardeners: Chris, Angela, Carole, Colin, Gordon and Paul.

These hardy volunteers cleared away the weeds and put in many plants that have overwintered and are now settling into their new homes.



Some of the hardy volunteers posing for a photo

Thank you to all those who volunteered. This day was a significant first step for the Friends group.

If you are walking by the Gardens, stop and have a look at the border at the top of the stairs.

Old Durham Gardens Friends at work



Winter in the Gardens

Right after our border planting day, Durham was subject to a massive early snow fall. All plants went dormant and gardens reluctantly had to hibernate.

But what a beautiful sight it was



Love your fruit—Learn to Prune

We all love the autumn fruits—or to be more specific the puddings! Well if we want the produce come September/October, the ODG fruit trees needed a little love and attention earlier this spring.

ODG is full of many heritage varieties of apple and pear planted when the garden orchard was restored in 1997-98. Using the restoration plans, the volunteer pruners (both expert and beginner) identified the surviving trees, among them Calville Rouge d'Autumne, Catshead, Leathercoat Russet, Harvey and Golden Harvey, Old Pearmain, Golden Pippin and Black Worcester.

If you know about these varieties or some good uses for them, get in touch!

Matt, Warren, Chris and Neil brought their significant expertise and enthusiasm to the rest of us who were gleaning tips for our own trees.

We left the plum and damson trees for another day as it's best to prune them when the sap is running and the tree can heal itself more effectively.

Thank you to everyone who volunteered that day and especial thanks to those who were sharing their knowledge.

The majority of the fruit trees in the Gardens are of old fashioned varieties grafted on to new rootstocks. We all wanted to know more about them, so thought we would describe some of the more important ones through the newsletter.

Pyrus communis Black Worcester

Black Worcester pear is a very old variety of uncertain origin possibly dating back to Roman



times. It is known to have grown in and around Worcester, before 1575 when Queen Elizabeth I saw it a farm on one of her visits and allowed it to appear on the coat of arms of the city of Worcester.

It is a large fruit, with dull green and reddish brown russet skin and often with purple flushes. Which gives the fruit a black appearance and hence the name. It has pale yellow, hard, gritty flesh with little flavour when eaten raw. It is one of the best cooking pears, requiring slow cooking for 1-2 hours and never softens sufficiently to be used as a dessert pear.

We have two of these trees in the orchard out of the original four planted and hopefully with the 'Friends' involvement their future will be guaranteed.

Sit and relax in Old Durham Gardens

There's a lot to be said for appreciating ODG from a comfortable vantage point. Carillion, the construction company working on the Marketplace has kindly donated the time and effort to install some benches. The benches from the marketplace will find a new home in ODG at the top of the stairs along the herbaceous border. We're looking forward to this addition and hope there will be many lovely summer evenings to sit and enjoy the view.

Support ODG—Become a member

The Friends Group has been started to support the Gardens and make it a usable community resource. Now that the Steering Group has got the basic structures in place, the Gardens needs volun

unteers to make the developments happen: planting and redevelopment, events, administrative help, donations. Anything and everything can be helpful. Come along to on 25 May to learn more about the Gardens and the ways you can become involved and enjoy the little gem Durham has.

Upcoming Events

There are a few more activities planned for the coming months.

ODG Past and Future: Talk and refreshments

Come down to City Hall—the Lantern Room—to hear about the history of the Gardens and to become a member. Wednesday 25 May, 7pm

Light Gardening days—11&21 May

The Gardens need regular attention now that the days are longer and warmer, so we're organising some light, maintenance gardening days. We hope you'll come along to pick a few weeds and have a stroll in the Gardens. Join us anytime from 1pm for the afternoon or only for an hour or so.

Want to help plan activities?

Get involved and become a member. Come to the talk on 25 May for more detail about how you could be involved in events in ODG.



Contact Us:

Website: www.olddurhamgardens.co.uk

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Get in touch at anytime. We're always happy to hear from you.

