

Arnside Parish Council
Wildflower Verges Update
Summer 2022

The main part of the 2022 growing season is now coming to an end. Many of the annual plants have finished flowering and have set seed, although there are still some late-flowering species evident. The hedgerow shrubs at the recycling site have made a fair start but some have had to be replaced - the current dry spell isn't helping them!

The three pilot verges also show improvement. The seeds sown last Autumn have germinated well and the plug plants have also thrived. We are particularly pleased that so much Yellow Rattle has appeared; this is not only an attractive flower and a good pollinator but also a parasite on grasses and will, over time, inhibit the tall grasses which tend to overwhelm the verges at this time of year. We've recorded over 60 species in flower on one verge alone so far this year! Noticeable plug plants were Ragged Robin, Bird's-foot Trefoil and Ox-eye Daisy. The verges look somewhat untidy now as the grasses die off, so we've decided to do a summer cut of all three verges at the end of July/ early August. This mimics traditional cutting for hay and will help the seeds from the annuals to get down into the soil. By removing the cuttings, we keep reducing the soil fertility, further helping the lower-growing plants to thrive as the rank grasses decline.

The change in the ground cover at the Beachwood since the Pine trees failed is quite impressive. The variety of flowers has increased and some species we hadn't seen there before have appeared in abundance - notably the Twayblade orchid in June. The better light intensity has probably had an influence here. We have well-advanced plans for Beachwood; we are required to replace the lost trees and the Council is looking at more fruit trees (apple and damson), in keeping with the Beachwood's historical function as an orchard. An information board to explain all this is in production.

As well as the new trees, the Council is working with the staff and pupils at Arnside School on a project to plant up the bare areas left after the trees were removed. The children will grow some wildflower seeds themselves, then plant them out on the bare soil and follow their progress. They'll start with a survey of the site then monitor the plants over time. They will also design an information board to explain what they're doing. The project was kicked off when we spoke to an assembly recently at the school - and we were mightily impressed by the childrens' knowledge and enthusiasm!

We are now in the process of planning the next phase of the project. We would like to extend the improved verge along the south side of Sandside Road from the current pilot zone to the point at which the Leighton Beck crosses the the road, which is the Parish boundary. It is an ambitious scheme and may take more than one growing season to complete. At the same time, maintenance of the first-phase verges will be necessary, with reseedling and replanting done this autumn and probably continuing. We are in it for the long haul but it will be worth it!

SP
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